PREFACE.

In laying before the public the third volume of my edition of the Rig-veda and its Commentary by Sāyaṇa Āchārya, it gives me much pleasure to acknowledge the increasing interest which of late years has been evinced by the most eminent scholars in England, in India, and on the continent, with regard to these ancient remnants of the sacred poetry of the Brahmans. Their importance for Sanskrit literature had been felt ever since Sir William Jones, Colebrooke, and F. Rosen informed us of their existence, and gave us the first specimens of their contents; and no one acquainted with the later literature of India, the epic poems, the law-books, the systems of philosophy, could fail to see that our knowledge of the historical growth of the Indian mind must remain incomplete until we had gained an insight into that period of literature which precedes Vyāsa and Valmīki, Manu and Jaimini, and to which the poets, the lawgivers, and philosophers of India point with common consent as the highest authority for their inspirations, their belief, and their institutions. Sanskrit literature without the Veda was like Greek literature without Homer, like Arabic literature without the Koran, like English without Shakespear.

But as the study of Sanskrit owes its permanent interest chiefly to the fact that the ancient language of India has been proved to be most intimately connected with the classical languages of Europe, and that in it has been found the key to the most secret archives of the history of language in general, the Veda would never have engaged the serious attention of a large class of scholars, if this ancient literary relic had not been found to shed the most unexpected light on the darkest periods in the history of the most prominent nations of antiquity. The religious traditions of the Persians or the Zoroastrians have been traced back to their source in the Veda. Many of the most obscure grammatical forms in the arrow-headed inscriptions of Darius and Xerxes have

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been deciphered by means of the *Veda*. The mythology of Greece and Italy, nay of Germany and Iceland, has suddenly assumed a new aspect and an intelligible expression by being confronted with the poetical language of the *Veda*. Even civil institutions, local customs, and proverbial expressions, which we meet with in the later history of the Arian nations, have received an unexpected explanation in the simple poetry of the *Veda*. In this manner the *Veda*, though not yet known in its completeness, has assumed an importance which no other literary production of India could ever have claimed; and we may rest convinced, that as long as man cherishes the records of his family, in the widest sense of the word, these simple songs will maintain their place among the most valued annals of ancient history. There is one class of readers that may have been disappointed—men who study ancient literature less on account of its historical than its poetical value. Those who expected in the *Veda*, strains like the elaborate odes of Pindar, or the vague and misty exhalations of Ossian, will have found but very little answering their expectations. But the true historian values facts, ancient and genuine; and a corroded copper As of the Roman republic is of greater value to him than an imperial gold medal of the most exquisite workmanship. What Schelling says with regard to the deities of the later Hindu pantheon, such as they are represented to us in the Mahābhārata, the poems of Kalidāsa, and the Purāṇas, applies to all facts of history: "Hideous or not, they stand before us, and so require a rational explanation."

But it has been a still greater pleasure to me, while engaged for so many years in preparing a critical edition, not only of the text of the Rig-veda, but also of its Commentary by Sāyāna Āchārya, to observe how the conviction seems to be growing more and more general, that without this Commentary an accurate and scholarlike knowledge of the *Veda* could never have been obtained. There was at first much controversy as to the value of Sāyāna, and as to the necessity of an edition, and particularly of a critical edition, of his Commentary. Now it seemed to me, that his strong and his weak points must have been so apparent to all who entered honestly into the study of Sāyāna, that I hardly thought it incumbent on me to defend him against his enemies, or to save him from his friends. For though we all admired the quick perception and the brilliant divination displayed by some distinguished scholars in their attempts to guess the meaning of these ancient hymns without the help of that tradition which

* Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology, p. 24.
Sāyāṇa embodied in his Commentary—and though a work like that of the late M. Langlois, who actually published a complete translation of the Veda at a time when most scholars were content with deciphering a few lines, will always excite our admiration by the boldness, the perseverance, and the undoubted ingenuity which it displays—yet before the tribunal of a more severe scholarship such works could not be approved; and it begins to be recognised that the errors which they propagated have proved so mischievous as to outweigh the many right guesses which no doubt they contained.

It would have been equally wrong, however, to consider Sāyāṇa’s Commentary as an infallible authority with regard to the interpretation of the Veda. Sāyāṇa gives the traditional, but not the original, sense of the Vaidik hymns. These hymns—originally popular songs, short prayers and thanksgivings, sometimes true, genuine, and even sublime, but frequently childish, vulgar, and obscure—were invested by the Brahmans with the character of an inspired revelation, and made the basis of a complete system of dogmatic theology. If therefore we wish to know how the Brahmans, from the time of the composition of the first Brāhmaṇa to the present day, understood and interpreted the hymns of their ancient Rishis, we ought to translate them in strict accordance with Sāyāṇa’s gloss. This is the object which Professor Wilson has always kept in view in his translation of the Veda; and for the history of religion, which in India, as elsewhere, represents the gradual corruption of simple truth into hierarchical dogmatism and philosophical hallucination, his work will always remain the most trustworthy guide. Nor could it be said, that the tradition of the Brahmans, which Sāyāṇa embodied in his work, after the lapse of at least three thousand years, had changed the character of the whole of the Rig-veda. By far the greater part of these hymns is so simple and straightforward, that there can be no doubt that their original meaning was exactly the same as their traditional interpretation. But no religion, no poetry, no law, no language, can resist the wear and tear of thirty centuries; and in the Veda, as in other works, handed down to us from a very remote antiquity, the sharp edges of primitive thought, the delicate features of a young language, the fresh hue of unconscious poetry, have been washed away by the successive waves of what we call tradition, whether we look upon it as a principle of growth or decay. To restore the primitive outlines of the Vaidik period of thought will be a work of great
difficulty. * "We may collect all the passages where an obscure word occurs, we may compare them and look for a meaning which would be appropriate to all; but the difficulty lies in finding a sense which we can appropriate and transfer by analogy into our own language and thought. We must be able to translate our feelings and ideas into their language at the same time that we translate their poems and prayers into our own. We must not despair even where their words seem meaningless and their ideas barren or wild. What seems at first childish may at a happier moment disclose a sublime simplicity, and even in helpless expressions we may recognise aspirations after some high and noble idea. When the scholar has done his work, the poet and philosopher must take it up and finish it. Let the scholar collect, collate, sift, and reject—let him say what is possible or not according to the laws of the Vaidik language—let him study the commentaries, the Sūtras, the Brāhmaṇas, and even later works, in order to exhaust all the sources from which information can be derived. He must not despise the tradition of the Brahmanas, even where their misconceptions and the causes of their misconceptions are palpable. To know what a passage cannot mean is frequently the key to its real meaning; and whatever reasons may be pleaded for declining a careful perusal of the traditional interpretations of Yāska or Sāyana they can all be traced back to an ill-concealed 'argumentum paupertatis.' Not a corner in the Brāhmaṇas, the Sūtras, Yāska, and Sāyana should be left unexplored before we venture to propose a rendering of our own. Sāyana, though the most modern, is on the whole the most sober interpreter. Most of his etymological absurdities must be placed to Yāska's account, and the optional renderings which he allows for metaphysical, theological, or ceremonial purposes, are mostly due to his regard for the Brāhmaṇas. These Brāhmaṇas, though nearest in time to the hymns of the Rig-veda, indulge in the most frivolous and ill-judged interpretations. When the ancient Rishi exclaims with a troubled heart, ‘Who is the greatest of the gods? Who shall first be praised by our songs?’—the author of the Brāhmaṇa sees in the interrogative pronoun ‘Who’ some divine name, a place is allotted in the sacrificial invocations to a god ‘Who,’ and hymns addressed to him are called ‘Whoish’ hymns. To make such misunderstandings possible, we must assume a considerable interval between the composition of the hymns and the Brāhmaṇas. As the authors of the Brāhmaṇas were blinded by theology, the

* See the Author's Essay on the Veda and Zendavesta, page 13.
authors of the still later Niruktas were deceived by etymological fictions, and both conspired to mislead by their authority later and more sensible commentators, such as Sāyāna. Where Sāyāna has no authority to mislead him, his Commentary is at all events rational; but still his scholastic notions would never allow him to accept the free interpretation which a comparative study of these venerable documents forces upon the unprejudiced scholar. We must therefore discover ourselves the real vestiges of these ancient poets; and if we follow them cautiously, we shall find that with some effort we are still able to walk in their footsteps. We shall feel that we are brought face to face and mind to mind with men yet intelligible to us, after we have freed ourselves from our modern conceits. We shall not succeed always: words, verses, nay, whole hymns in the Rig-veda, will and must remain to us a dead letter. But where we can inspire those early relics of thought and devotion with new life, we shall have before us more real antiquity than in all the inscriptions of Egypt or Nineveh; not only old names and dates, and kingdoms and battles, but old thoughts, old hopes, old faith, and old errors, the old ‘Man’ altogether—old now, but then young and fresh, and simple and real in his prayers and in his praises.”

How the Veda should be interpreted, and how Sāyāna’s Commentary should be made use of for that purpose, has lately been shown in a work by M. Ad. Regnier, “Étude sur l’idiole des Védas et les origines de la Langue Sanscrite, Première Partie, Paris 1855.” I may be allowed to quote from this excellent essay the following passage, which lays down with fairness and exactness the principles which ought to be followed by every student of the Veda. “Je joins au texte des hymnes celui du commentaire de Sāyāna Āchárya, que je suivrai, dans son interprétation, partout où il me semblera que la logique et la grammaire le permettent; toutes les fois que j’adopterai un autre avis que le sien, j’en donnerai les raisons: d’abord pour bien établir le sens, parce que, dans une matière souvent aussi obscure, il faut toujours savoir d’abord l’avis des Indiens eux-mêmes; puis, parce que ces scolies nous donneront l’occasion de faire connaissance avec quelques-unes des habitudes les plus ordinaires d’interprétation des glossateurs. Tous ceux qui ont eu le bonheur de suivre le cours de M. Eugène Burnouf savent quelle importance il attachait à l’explication des commentaires. Le meilleur moyen, selon lui, d’assurer et de hâter les progrès et de se rompre aux difficultés de la langue, c’était de se familiariser de bonne
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heure avec la méthode et le style des grammairiens, style souvent très-abstrait et où les procédés d'expression synthétique sont poussés fréquemment à l'excès."

Even if the author had not paid this tribute to the memory of E. Burnouf, the accuracy and painstaking minuteness of his work would have shown that he belonged to Burnouf's school; and it is pleasing to see how the spirit of that eminent scholar seems still to be alive in that brilliant senate of learning of which he once formed so illustrious a member, when we read that the French Academy has proposed as one of its last prizes—

"Un commentaire particulièrement exégétique et grammatical, soit sur une partie suivie, soit sur un choix d'hymnes du Rig-védâ, où l'on aura soin d'exposer toujours et de discuter, s'il y a lieu, même quand on ne l'adoptera pas, l'opinion du commentateur Sâyâna Áchárya."

Such a prize, while it gives a sanction to my work, for which I cannot sufficiently express my gratitude, will, it is to be hoped, act as an encouragement, and bring some of our young Sanskrit scholars toward that line of study which Burnouf pointed out to all of his pupils, as the most sure to lead to real and lasting results.

After what has been stated in the prefaces to the first and second volumes, I have little to add with regard to the MSS. which I used for the third volume. There is one notice which I lately received from the Rev. Dr. Stevenson, the distinguished editor and translator of the Sámai-védâ, and which I subjoin here in confirmation of my views on the local origin of the three families of the MSS. of Sáyâna's Commentary.

"As I see you have formed a particular family of the two MSS. B 1. and B 2, I may as well mention to you all I have learnt of their history. B 1. was procured at Puna from a Wakil, who procured it from the family of the Guru of the late Peshwáh; at least, so he said; and, as the family was poor, and no one else likely to have such a work, there is no reason to discredit his story. It is, as you will see, written by two different scribes, the greater part in what we at Bombay call Káyasthi lipi, the handwriting of Káyasths from the province of Guzerat. The letters in this portion are very deep. The rest is written by a Deccani Brahmán in what we call the Dakshani lipi, and not so deep as the other. This difference is discernible even in the Cave inscriptions in the old character.

"B 2. was copied for M. Burnouf from that MS. by a Puna Brahmán, whom I got to transcribe it for him."
"I have also an imperfect copy of another MS. of the Bhāshya. The whole of the 7th Ashtāka is wanting, and I have only two Adhyāyas of the 8th. If you would like to see them, I shall be happy to send them; and indeed the whole MS. is at your service. There is a complete copy of the Bhāshya of the Rig-veda Sanhita in the library of the R. A. Society, Bombay branch. The first Ashtāka is copied from B. 1, and would be of no use to you; but the rest was taken, I am told, at Mr. Elphinstone's expense, or at that of the Bombay government, and deposited in the library, from a copy belonging to Dr. Taylor, which was carried to England, as I understood, to be deposited in the library of the India-House. As, however, you take no notice of such a work there*, I must have been under a mistake about that. However, there is no mistake about Dr. Taylor's having had such a work, and the Bombay copy having been taken, sometime about 1820, from it, with the exception of the first Ashtāka, which was omitted, why I cannot say. The imperfect copy I have is partly taken from this, and partly made up of portions of a MS. received from the Wakil."

Another communication on the MSS. of Sāyana's Commentary was kindly sent to me by my learned friend Mr. Fitz-Edward Hall, while yet at Benares. I had applied to him for help with regard to some extremely difficult passages in the fifth Ashtāka, and in the hope that some more fragments of the MS. mentioned in my preface to the second volume, p. xii, might still be discovered in India. He wrote to me, Benares, Jan. 15, 1855:

"I was much afraid that I should have to send off this letter without being able to furnish you with the means of perhaps supplying the lacunae you have encountered in the fifth Ashtāka. In fact, but a few hours have elapsed since I was able to put together the extracts from MS. β, which I enclose. We have in the College library but one MS. of Sāyana's Commentary on the R. V. It was copied in the Samvat year 1851, and is, as you will see under the heading of MS. α, of little value. Notwithstanding repeated enquiries, I was unable to get sight of any other MS. until β was brought to me yesterday. This MS. is without date of transcription, and has no external indications of any antiquity. I think the passages from it, which I now send, fully justify me in ordering a

* Dr. Taylor's copy was not mentioned in the preface to the first volume, because it only begins with the third Ashtāka. It will be seen from my preface to the second volume, which Dr. Stevenson had not received, that I recognised this MS. as one of the B. class, though, particularly in the later books, it has peculiar readings, and is sometimes evidently an abbreviation of the original text of the B. MSS.
copy to be made forthwith of the whole of the fifth Ashtaka*. If you request it, I will have the remainder of the MS. copied; but, as there is a possibility that its character will differ in different Ogdoads, you had better send some test-passages by which to decide its value in the subsequent Ashtakas.

"As for the sheet which I send you, it has reference to the last passage or passages noted in the paper you sent. I was not sure what it was you required. Accordingly, if I have erred, it has been on the right side. The first copy was made from α, which I afterwards changed by interlineations and erasures to correspond to β. I shall be happy if I hear that I have been the instrument of rescuing your work from even a single imperfection.

"Are you acquainted with an abridgment of Sāyaṇa’s Commentary by Mudgala? The grammatical explanations are omitted altogether, and the remainder of the comment so abridged that the whole takes up about a fourth part the space of the original. Our copy professes to be taken in the Samvat year 147-. The last figure is unsupplied. Strange to say, it does not break off in the fourth Adhyāya of the first Ashtaka, where all your MSS. of the A. and B. classes terminate; but it runs on to the words भित्रमास, p. 538, l. 5. Afterwards there occurs the same appearance of suppliant by a later hand, to which you call attention; a peculiarity which I observed also in the MS. β. If this epitome may be trusted, the mutilated passage at the bottom of page 969 should run thus: गुणुपुयु योपलेन निरति गयस्तहत ।

* This copy has since been received. It begins with the third Adhyāya of the fifth Ashtaka.
† This MS. has since been sent to the library of the East-India-House. It contains Ashtaka I, II, and III, and the last three Adhyāyas of Ashtaka IV. Some fragments of the first and seventh Ashtakas were presented to me by Mr. Fitz-Edward Hall. I subjoin the beginning of the first Ashtaka so far as it is legible, and without attempting to correct all mistakes:

\begin{quote}
चीरियोपयो नमः।
करों संतिदानं भूताय निग्राहन दिनायय च।
प्रदुःकोक्षवयो गणानूथ्रमण:।
गोङे योगाय नमस्तुयु निर्विकार्यय च।
सारस्वति तनिमधुं इत्यधि नामः।
शालोपयो पूर्ववयो न नकृत्यय संबंधः। (सम्भ:?)
गहनं सम्भावनं सुखे: सुभुंडः।
\end{quote}

रवनीर्यमः यथा चीरियोपवयो सहीरः।
तथा मुख्यत्वं सारं प्राप्तिं चोयनिः।
मीक्ष्योपवयो युक्तेन शालाचार्युं भवेयेन।
नयणोपवयो ना मुख्यात्मनः सुभुंडः मयानीमः।

पेट्रापृक्षयेन भाहाः। पेट्रापृक्षयेन च।
तदुद्ध चीरियोपवयो दृषं नब्जामालवयो शालाचार्युं।
चिन्तामण्डलवयो च। विषयोऽशालाचार्युं भवेयारी।

तवालाचार्योपारं परस्य निपुलं।
सुपरक्षवयो सहीरः।
करों संतिदानं भूताय निग्राहन दिनायय च।
“Did you ever hear of a Rig-bhāshya by Rāvaṇa? Sūrya Paṇḍit, in his Paramārtha-prabhā, a commentary on the Bhagavadgītā, professes to have seen it. I am also told, that a commentary by Rāvaṇa on one of the Sākhās of the Yajur-veda is still extant.

“I have failed entirely in all attempts to trace the history of the MS. of Sāyaṇa, of which I sent you some fragments. But I have since procured a fragment of the eighth Ashṭaka, very like it in outward appearance.”

In another letter, dated Ajmere, 24th May, 1856, the same distinguished scholar wrote to me:

“It must be perplexing to be obliged to illuminate Sāyaṇa’s text with stars. I am not going to say that the publication of this work was undertaken prematurely: but I am pretty well assured, from what I have observed, that there still lie hidden, in the libraries of rigid Brahmans, scores of hereditary copies of this Commentary; and it is scarcely unreasonable to suppose that, if procurable, they might supply your lacunae.”

There is one more MS. which ought to be mentioned here. It belongs to the library of the East-India-House (No. 2612), and bears the title चुरवेदाभास्करसंपूर्ण. It is, however, not the sixth, but the fifth Ashṭaka of the Rig-veda. As it bears the date संवतपं 9654, it might have been expected to yield some help towards the restoration of Sāyaṇa’s text; but on closer inspection it turned out an exact and literal reproduction of my own MS. Ca.

When I began this edition, I thought the whole of it would be completed in three or four volumes, and I now find that the first three volumes contain hardly more than half of the whole work. I must confess that I could have wished that the ancient poets of the Veda and their Indian commentators had been less diffuse; for though I believe that no edition of any author in Sanskrit or any other language, for which manuscripts had first to be copied, others to be collated, innumerable references to be verified, and an index to be made of every word, has ever been brought out so rapidly as this edition of the Rig-veda, yet I feel that ten years of my life are gone, and I know not whether I shall have sufficient time left to finish a work which I once undertook perhaps with too
much confidence. Yet even if I should not see the completion of this work, I should not be sorry for the time that I have spent on it; and nothing will ever induce me to change the principles which I have hitherto followed, and to give a hasty copy of a MS., instead of a critical edition of the text and commentary of the Rig-veda. I have had again for this volume the valuable assistance of my learned friend Dr. Aufrecht, and I sincerely regret that I shall no longer enjoy this advantage, as much of the correctness and accuracy of the last volumes was due to his conscientious cooperation, joined to the kind assistance which I have never failed to receive from my honoured friend Professor H. H. Wilson.

I have to express my deep obligation to the Court of Directors of the Honourable the East-India-Company, under the chairmanship of Colonel Sykes, and to the Board of Control, under the presidency of the Right Honourable Vernon Smith, for having sanctioned the continuation of this work, and granted funds necessary for its completion—an act of enlightened liberality, which will be applauded by all persons interested in the history of India and in the history of mankind, and by which one of the most important monuments of antiquity will be rescued from oblivion and restored in its integrity.

Oxford, June 5, 1856.

M. M.