

to the nations of the West the India of the past and to evoke an interest in the India of the present.

In conclusion, we earnestly and sincerely pray that long may it be given to you to serve your country with the devotion and zeal you have hitherto evinced in her cause.

We Remain,
SIR,
YOUR GRATEFUL FELLOW-CITIZENS.

XI. FAREWELL SPEECH IN BOMBAY.

*[Delivered in the rooms of the Presidency Association
on March 14, 1900]*

MR. PRESIDENT and Gentlemen,—I feel the great honour done to me by this Association in conveying to me their kind wishes and farewell greetings on the eve of my departure for Europe, and I sincerely appreciate the manner in which the Chairman has alluded to my humble services in the cause which we have all at heart. Nothing inspires me with greater confidence in our cause, and greater faith in the future, than to find that educated and patriotic men in all parts of India, living at a distance of a thousand miles or more from each other, join in the same endeavours, and devote themselves to the same cause—the cause of a loyal devotion to the British Rule—and loyal endeavours introduce reforms and extend self-government for the improvement of the administration and the welfare of the people. This is the purpose which animates educated men in all parts of India, which I have visited within the last three months, in Madras, in Calcutta, in Lucknow and last though not the least, in the enlightened city of Bombay. And these endeavours, which are always needful, are specially so at the present moment, when our country is suffering from a severe pestilence and a wide-spread famine, and when we, the people of India, should do all we

can to loyally help the Government by co-operating in the measures undertaken for relief, and by submitting our advice and suggestions, based on our knowledge of the condition of our suffering countrymen.

The New Governor of Bombay.

Amidst all these disasters and calamities, you have worked in Bombay in a spirit of moderation, which has earned for you a graceful recognition from the kind-hearted nobleman who was lately the Governor of Bombay. You have chosen to forget the early mistakes of his administration, you have recognized the qualities of his generous heart, and you have parted with him with sincere expressions of good wishes and loyalty. And you have extended a cordial welcome to the nobleman who has now come in your midst, and who brings with him the best traditions of good government—of government for the good of the people of India. Gentlemen, it is now more than thirty years since the time when I was living in England as a young student, and when Sir Stafford Northcote was the Secretary of State for India. In those early days I learned to entertain a sincere and genuine admiration for Sir Stafford Northcote's conscientious zeal for the good of the people of India, which I have never since forgotten in life. I do not often use the language of vain compliments, but I am expressing to you my candid and honest opinion, when I state that within the last thirty years there has been no Secretary of State for India, Nobleman or Commoner, Conservative

or Liberal, who has worked with a more single-hearted devotion for the good of the people of India than Sir Stafford Northcote. I am expressing to you my candid and honest opinion when I state that, great and valuable as have been the services of all Secretaries of State for India, there has been no Secretary of State within my life-time who brought to the performance of his duties a higher and more sincere regard for the good of the people. This, gentlemen, is high praise when it is honestly spoken, not by political colleagues in England, but by the people of India, and this high praise was won by Lord Iddlesleigh. And let us hope and trust, this high praise will be won by his son whom you so cordially welcomed to these shores only the other day.

Representations of the People.

Gentlemen, you have all read the account, which appeared in the papers, of a dinner which was given to Lord Northcote on the eve of his departure as Governor of Bombay; and you have all read the speech which the present Secretary of State for India made on that occasion. Lord George Hamilton was good enough to refer on this occasion in complimentary terms to my Presidential speech at the Lucknow Congress in December last; and if his Lordship somewhat misapprehended our aims and aspirations, I do not wish to dwell on the fact on this occasion. Our aim and our aspiration under the British Rule is not to change the present form of Government, as Lord George Hamilton supposed, but to maintain and

strengthen the present system of Government by popular support and by some representation of popular opinion. I wish on the present occasion rather to refer to the other portion of Lord George Hamilton's speech, in which his Lordship urged on his Excellency, the new Governor of Bombay, to consider the representations of the people in a generous and liberal spirit, to reject them when they are impracticable, and to accede to them when they are practicable, and moderate. Gentlemen, if we could presume to give any advice to his Excellency, we would couch it in the very same words ;—consider the representations of the people in a liberal and generous spirit, reject them when they are impracticable, accede to them when they are reasonable and moderate. Our complaint in the past has been that our representations, whether reasonable or unreasonable, have not been heard at all ; that the Government has been guided entirely by official opinions which were sometimes sound and sometimes influenced by causeless panic ; and that the most moderate and practicable representations of the people have received virtually no hearing and no consideration in the work of administration performed ostensibly for the good of the people.

Executive Council of Bombay.

What are our representations ? It is not possible for me this evening to enumerate them all within the time at my disposal but I will mention a few to indicate their drift and their purpose. You have in this Presidency an

Executive Council formed of trained and experienced English administrators who help the Governor by their advice and deliberations in the affairs of the State. Our humble representation is, appoint one experienced, and moderate Indian in that Council to represent the views of the people, and specially to represent the interests of the millions of cultivators and the industrial population who form the bulk of the people. This would be not introducing a new form of Government, but strengthening the present system of Government by bringing it in touch with the people. This would be, not taking away the control of affairs from the hands of the present rulers, but conceding to us a humble share in that control, so that our opinions may be heard and our views represented in that secret Council Chamber which shapes the destiny of the nation. Is there any Ruler of Bombay who would not feel himself better informed and more in touch with the people if he had by his side an experienced representative of the people to help him and advise him in the management of the affairs of the people? Is there any Governor of Bombay who would not feel himself stronger for such advice and support at all times, and specially in times of famine and pestilence and panic? And if this is a moderate and reasonable and practicable suggestion, may we not expect that his Excellency the present Governor of Bombay will find it possible within his term of office to consider it, in the words of Lord George Hamilton, in a liberal and generous spirit, and make his rule both stronger and more popular by acceding to it?

Legislative Council of Bombay.

You have in this Presidency a Legislative Council, partly consisting of members elected by popular bodies. The object of this elective system was to obtain some real representation of popular opinion in matters of legislation affecting the well-being of the people. Those who have watched the legislative work of the last seven years will be unanimously of opinion that the admission of elected members has improved the work of the Council, and has secured a more careful consideration of the views and wishes of the people, at least in the minor details of the laws which are enacted. All that we ask for now is that after seven years of a successful experiment the principle may be extended further, and that every district in the Province may be represented in the Council. Indian districts are so vast in area, so varied population, and present such a variety of conditions of agriculture, industries and trade, that some representation of the local needs and circumstances of each district is necessary for the purposes of good administration and useful legislation. We have no objection to a corresponding increase in the number of official members, but we desire that each district may have a chance of being heard through its own member before Legislative Acts are passed. And if this be a moderate and reasonable and practicable suggestion, may we not expect that his Excellency the Governor may take it into his favorable consideration, and may even find it possible to give partial effect to it before he lays down the reins of administration?

Separation of Judicial and Executive Services.

You have in this Presidency, generally in each district a Judge who is the head of important judicial work and a Collector who is the head of the revenue and executive work and of the police. You have asked that the whole of the judicial work be placed under the Judge, and that no portion of it be kept under the officer who is the head of the executive and of the police. You have represented that to place subordinate Judicial officers under the officer who is the head of the police, not only leads to occasional failure of justice, but oftener leads to the suspicion of injustice, which, in a country like India, should not be tolerated. Is there anything unreasonable in this prayer? Do not the highest judicial authorities in England, including men who have had long experience of Indian administration, condemn the present system and demand a separation of the Judicial and executive functions as perfectly feasible and likely to be beneficial in India? And may we not expect then that his Excellency the Governor of Bombay, in accordance with the sound advice of the Secretary of State for India, will give a favourable consideration to this representation of the people, and mark his administration of an important Province of India by giving effect to this representation?

Admission of the people to the Higher Services.

You have in this Province, as elsewhere in India, the higher ranks of all the Civil Departments of the State filled under a system, which virtually excludes

the people of India from getting a fair share of the appointments. I am not speaking only of the great Civil Service of India, but of all services—the educational service, the medical service, the police service, the engineering service, the post and telegraph services, the jail and forest services—all the great services, of India. By a system of exclusion, unexampled in the history of any civilised country in ancient or modern times, we, the people of India, are virtually excluded from the higher ranks of these services, and all the higher appointments in these services, barring a very small percentage, are held by Europeans. I have said, this is a state of things unexampled in the history of any civilised country, for I can call to mind no instance, in ancient or modern history, in which the rulers of a civilised and great country so entirely excluded the people of the country from all the higher ranks of the civil administration. The British nation do not desire this act of injustice to be perpetrated and continued. Her Majesty the Queen-Empress has declared in the most solemn manner her desire to admit all her subjects to all offices without distinction of race, caste or creed; and yet the rules of admission to the Civil services have been framed so, as to 'virtually exclude us from holding a reasonable share of the high appointments in our own country. From a parliamentary return issued in 1892, it appears that nearly one-fifth of the revenues of India went in the payment of salaries' to Europeans drawing more than a thousand rupees a year. You have asked that this unjust and ungenerous rule of

exclusion should be modified, and that after we have been educated for three generations in English schools and colleges, we may now be permitted, under more equitable rules of admission, to have a fair share of those appointments for which we have proved our fitness. Is this representation unfair or unreasonable? If they be not so, if they be reasonable and moderate, may we not expect his Excellency the new Governor of Bombay will signalize his administration by modifying the present system of exclusion, and admitting us to a fair share of those high appointments to which our claim is recognized by our Queen and Sovereign?

**Relief to Cultivators by moderate and
fixed Land Assessments.**

But, gentlemen, I turn from these and many other subjects, on which you have from time to time submitted your representations to the Government, to that vaster subject which is at present engaging the attention of his Excellency, the poverty and distress of the agricultural population, and the famine which is desolating Western India at the present moment. If there is one subject which should be above the sphere of party controversies, and should appeal to the humanity of all, it is the subject of those famines which are desolating the country so frequently in recent years. And if any of you, gentlemen, have visited relief centres as I have recently done, and seen hundreds and thousands of starving and tottering men and women, our brothers and our sisters, crawling along the roads, resting under trees, lying down on the

wayside perhaps to die before the hand of relief can reach them, you will have felt, as I felt, that this calamity, this overwhelming scene of human suffering and distress and death, cries to Heaven for a permanent redress. The way in which a permanent redress can be provided, and the condition of the agricultural population of India can be improved is not unknown to the authorities. In Provinces like Bengal, where private zemindars make their own arrangements with ryots, the cultivators do not pay more than one-sixth the gross produce of their lands as rent, and in many districts they pay a still more moderate rent. In parts of India like Madras and Bombay where the Government is virtually the landlord, the land-tax is screwed up to something near one third of the gross produce, and the peasantry is necessarily reduced to poverty and indebtedness. In Bengal there is no such thing as enhancement of rents except on very strong and equitable grounds which landlords have to establish in Courts of Justice ; in Bombay and Madras, every recurring settlement means an enhancement of the land-tax, and this uncertainty of assessments paralyses agricultural industry and impoverishes the peasantry. In Bengal I have known the cultivators of entire districts fall back on thier past savings in years of failure of crops ; in Bombay and Madras there are no such savings to fall back upon, and every year of bad harvests is a year of famine and of deaths. These facts are not unknown to the authorities, and able and distinguished administrators have from time to time suggested the true remedy. As far back as 1862, Lord Canning proposed a permanent

settlement for all India ; and if Lord Canning had lived five years longer, his proposal would have been acted upon, and famines in their present intense and disastrous forms would have been unknown. Lord Mayo and Lord Northbrook placed on record their view against frequent and harassing surveys and settlements ; and acting on their suggestions, Lord Ripon finally proposed a modified form of permanent settlement which seemed to meet all objections and to provide a satisfactory solution to the whole question. • Lord Ripon claimed for the State the right to enhance revenue in the future on the ground of a rise in prices ; but he assured the cultivators against recurring settlements and against all enhancements except on this one equitable ground, Gentlemen, this equitable solution was accepted and acted upon in Madras, and I am informed, also in Bombay ; but Lord Ripon left India in December 1884, and his wise decision was vetoed by the Secretary of State for India in January 1885. And India has thus once more been plunged into another era of uncertain assessments, frequent enhancements, agricultural distress, and disastrous famines. We appeal, gentlemen, to the new Governor of Bombay, who comes in our midst with the best traditions of good government, to fix a moderate limit to the land-tax, which in Northern India does not exceed ten percent. of the produce We appeal to him in this year of famine and distress to extend to us that relief which is connected with the names of Canning and of Ripon, and to proclaim that in districts which have been once surveyed and settled, and in which most

of the cultivable lands are under cultivation, there shall be no further harassing surveys and settlements, and no enhancement of rents except on the sole and equitable ground of a rise in prices. Gentlemen, I thank you once more for the cordial welcome you have given me and for the kind farewell you have accorded to me. This time to-morrow, I shall be on the sea on my way to Europe, but wherever I may be, your aims and aspirations shall be mine, your endeavours shall be my endeavours, and we shall work for a common purpose and a common object—for the happiness and prosperity and good government of our common motherland.

XII. MAHA-BHARATA, THE ILIAD OF INDIA.

*[Paper read before the Royal Society of Literature,
London, on June 14, 1899. Mr. Brabrook, C. B.
presiding.]*

AMONG the many brilliant discoveries in the different departments of human knowledge for which the present century will always be remembered in the history of mankind, the discoveries in the sphere of Archæology and Ancient History are by no means the least brilliant or the least important. The successful researches of scholars and explorers in Egypt and in Babylonia, in India and in China, have effected a complete revolution in our knowledge, have widened the horizon of human history, and have broadened our ideas of the destiny of the human race. There are not a few of us, present here to-night, who were taught in our early school days to look for the origin of human civilisation, of philosophy, arts, and religion, in the annals of Greece and Rome, some six or seven hundred years before the birth of Christ.

But we have revised these early impressions, and we now trace the origin of civilisation from a period, not some hundred years, but some thousands of years before the birth of Christ. It almost seems as if an impenetrable mist which bounded the horizon of our knowledge has suddenly lifted, and beyond that mist, which marked the extreme limit of our historical knowledge, we now perceive for the first time long vistas of human civilisation

stretching back through endless cycles and ages. This wonderful extension of our historical knowledge, almost within our lifetime, may be not inaptly compared to the experience of many a traveller who visits lofty mountains for the first time in his life. It often occurs to a traveller in the Himalayas, as it occurred to me some twelve years ago at Darjeeling, that during the first few days of his visit he sees nothing before him but the lower ranges of hills, rising to a height of eight or ten thousand feet; and he admires these graceful ranges in all their wild beauty. Suddenly one fine morning the mists clear up, and the traveller turns his admiring eyes from the lower ranges, which bounded his horizon before, to the loftiest mountains in the world—the wonderful peaks of the snow-covered Himalayas—rising to a height of 28,000 or 29,000 feet. The first sight of this lofty array of stupendous peaks strikes him speechless with wonder, and creates in him, as it created in me, an impression never to be forgotten in life. It is with something like this feeling of wonder that we turn from the civilisation of Greece and Rome to the hoary antiquity of Egypt and Babylon, of China and of India, which has now been revealed to us.

So far as we know now, the edifice of human civilisation was first reared in these four gifted lands, and curiously enough it was reared by the four great families of men of the old world. The Semitic race developed their earliest civilisation in Babylon, the Hamitic race in Egypt, and the Turanian race in China; and the great Aryan race who now rule the best portions of Europe

Asia, and America, developed the earliest form of their civilisation in India.

The early civilisation of India must necessarily have a greater interest for all of us than the civilisation of other ancient countries not only because India and England are at the present moment bound together by political ties, and are proud to own the sovereignty of the beloved Queen whose eightieth birthday we have recently celebrated, but also because early Aryan thought and culture must always have a deeper interest for all Aryan nations. We cannot fix the earliest date of Indian civilisation, but we know from records which have been unearthed in Babylon and Egypt, that some two or three thousand years before Christ, a Sanscrit-speaking nation, *i. e.* the ancient Hindus, lived on the banks of the Indus, and exported cotton and other products and manufactures of their land to Babylonia and to Egypt. For many centuries the Hindus lived in the Punjab, and it was there that they composed these beautiful hymns in their beautiful Sanscrit language, some of which are still left to us and are known under the collective name of the 'Rig Veda.' The period during which the Hindus lived in the Punjab is therefore known as the Vedic Age, and extended from some unknown date, two or three thousand years before Christ, to about fourteen or fifteen hundred years before the Christian era.

But to-night I wish to speak—not of the remote Vedic Age—but of the next succeeding age, the Epic Age of ancient India, extending from fourteen or fifteen hundred years B.C. to about a thousand or

eight hundred years B.C. You will, therefore, perceive that the Epic Age of India partially corresponds in point of time with the Epic Age of Greece, and that the great war of the 'Maha-Bharata' was contemporaneous, within a century or two, with the Trojan War. But while the Epic Age of Greece was the very infancy of Greek civilisation, the Epic Age of India is a comparatively recent period of Indian history, and comes after a long period of an anterior and remote civilisation. India was old in her civilisation in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries before Christ, when Greece was in her early infancy, receiving her first nourishment from the East.

In this Epic Age, extending, roughly speaking, from 1500 to 1000 B.C., the whole of Northern India had attained a high state of civilisation, and was parcelled out into small states and kingdoms, flourishing side by side, bound together by a common language, a common civilisation, and a common religion, and thus forming a great confederation of cultured Hindu nations. Among these nations there were four which distinguished themselves above the rest by their prowess, arts, and civilisation. Two of these nations, the Kurus and the Panchalas, lived along the upper course of the Ganges, and their great war is celebrated in the great epic, the 'Maha-Bharata' which may justly be called the Iliad of ancient India. Two other nations, the Kosalas and the V'idehas, lived in the tracts of the country now known as Oudh and North Behar, and their supposed deeds are celebrated in another old

Indian epic, the 'Ramayana,' which may be called the Odyssey of ancient India. These are the two great epics of ancient India, and it is of the first of these, the Iliad of India, that I wish to give a brief account to-night.

The 'Maha-Bharata' is a vast and encyclopædic work, and is, in fact, the growth of ages. Its subject is a great war of the Kurus or Bharatas—hence the name 'Maha-Bharata,' which means the great Bharata nation,—and the authorship of the work is ascribed to a saint, Vyasa, who is supposed to have lived at the time of the war. But apparently the work has grown with the lapse of centuries. Songs and ballads relating to the war were composed and recited in the courts of Northern India during the centuries immediately succeeding the event, and thus the war became the centre of a cycle of poems, traditions, and legends, a thousand years before Christ, even as Arthur and Charlemagne became the centres of legends and songs in Europe a thousand years after Christ. The real facts of the war were obliterated by age; legendary or mythological heroes became the principal actors, and thus an imaginary account of an historical event grew up and became the national epic of the great confederation of ancient Hindu nations. Every succeeding generation of poets had something to add, every distant nation of Northern India interpolated some account of its deeds in the old national chronicle, every preacher of a new creed sought to have in it some sanction for the truths he promulgated. Legal codes and rules of

caste were interpolated, and all the floating mass of tales, traditions, legends, and myths, for which ancient India was always famous, found shelter under the expanding wings of this wonderful epic. By the first centuries after Christ the epic had grown to nearly its present proportions, a poem of over ninety thousand couplets, in which the crystal rill of the epic itself is almost lost in a sea-like delta of religious and didactic episodes, legends, and myths, tales and traditions.

To ancient Indians this storehouse and encyclopædia of Indian thought and tradition was suitable because it was the study of their life-time. But the modern reader has a wider field of knowledge and a greater variety of subjects before him; he has to economise his time and to arrange and classify his subjects; and in order to judge the great Indian epic he has to sift it from the mass of superincumbent matter in which he finds it embedded. Fortunately this is still possible. The leading incidents and characters of the 'Maha-Bharata' are still clearly discernible, uninjured by the mass of foreign matter in which they lie covered, even as the immortal marbles of ancient Greece and Rome remained embedded in earth or amidst ruins for centuries, and have now been recovered, and form the most valuable treasures of the museums of modern Europe. It is in this manner that the leading story of the ancient Indian epic has to be recovered, and to be judged as an epic, and as a work of art.

Judged in this way the Indian epic will be pronounced one of the greatest works of art the human mind has

ever conceived. And it is in that highest form of art—the delineation of human character and the development of human incidents—that the ‘Maha-Bharata’ takes its pre-eminent place among the master works of the world. No work of the imagination, except perhaps the Iliad, is so rich and so true as this Indian epic in the portraiture of the human character—not in torment and suffering as in Dante, not under strong and overwhelming passions as in Shakespeare, but human character in its calm dignity, in healthy action and in healthy repose.

As we read this venerable, ancient poem, the first epic of the Aryan race, the characters live and move round us, act and suffer amid us, distinct and lifelike, and with all the simplicity and truth of ancient life. The old monarch of the Kurus, sightless and feeble, but majestic in his ancient grandeur, is the Priam of the Indian Iliad. The venerable Bhishma, righteous and truthful and unconquerable in war; the doughty Drona, a warrior priest and a Brahman fighter; the proud and fiery Karna—each of them has a distinct character of his own.

The righteous and pious Yudhishtir, the stalwart and “tiger-waisted” Bhima, and the accomplished and “helmet-wearing” Arjun, are the Agamemnon, the Ajax, and the Achilles of the Indian epic. The Kuru prince Duryodhan is proud and jealous, vindictive and relentless, and as a character of flesh and blood, as a man of undying hatred and unyielding determination, has no superior in the epic of any nation. And

Krishna possesses a character higher than that of Ulysses; unmatched in human wisdom, ever striving for justice and peace, he is unrelenting in war when war has begun. And the women of the Indian epic possess characters equally marked and pronounced. The stately and majestic Kuru queen Gandhari; the doting and loving mother Pritha; the proud and scornful Draupadi, nursing her wrath till her wrongs are fearfully revenged; and the bright and brilliant and sunny Subhadra—these are distinct images pencilled by the hand of a true master in the realms of creative imagination.

Such is the opinion which is formed from the study of the epic as an epic, separated and recovered from the mass of foreign matter in which it lies embedded.

I may perhaps be permitted to mention here that I have myself recently ventured to attempt this task, and to translate into English verse those portions of the 'Maha-Bharata' which narrate the leading incidents of the real epic. My plan is very simple; I have added nothing to the original, and, except in the description of the actual war itself, I have condensed very little. I have simply selected those passages which tell the leading incidents of the epic, separated them from all episodical matter, and have placed them before the English reader in an English metre which best preserves the rhythmical movement, the sweep and majestic flow of the Sanscrit *Sloka*. I have generally rendered each Sanscrit couplet into a corresponding English couplet, thereby making my translation tolerably faithful; but

I have not attempted a literal, word for word translation, but have rather sought to convey the spirit and the full import and significance of the original in my English version. I may be pardoned for making these few remarks about my own work ; it was necessary to do so, as in the brief narration of the story of the epic which I am about to undertake it will be necessary to read a few passages from my own translation. I may add that while the selected passages which I have translated virtually tell the story within the reasonable limit of about 2000 English couplets, instead of 90,000 couplets as in the original work. With these remarks I now turn to the story.

According to the epic, Pandu was the king of the Kurus or Bharatas, but died early. His brother Dhritarashtra became king, and brought up the five sons of Pandu along with his own hundred sons. The jealousies and wars between those cousins, *i. e.* between the five sons of Pandu and the hundred sons of Dhritarashtra, form the subject of the epic.

Yudhisthir, the eldest son of Pandu, was a man of truth and piety. Bhima, the second son, was a stalwart fighter, and, as I have said before, is the Ajax of the poem. Arjun, the third son, is the hero, the Achilles of the poem. On the other side, Duryodhan, the eldest son of the Kuru king, was renowned for his strength of character and his undying hatred for his cousins.

The princes were all instructed in arms, and a great tournament was held, in which the five sons of Pandu

and the hundred sons of Dhritra-rashtra showed their proficiency in arms. Arjun, the third son of Pandu, excelled all others, until suddenly an unknown warrior, Karna, entered the arena, and then Arjun met his equal and his lifelong rival. The rivalry between Arjun and Karna is the leading thought of the Indian epic, as the rivalry between Achilles and Hector is the leading thought of the Greek epic.

I will quote only a few lines describing the first advent of these great rivals—the real heroes of the epic—on the field of tournament.

THE ADVENT OF ARJUN.

Gauntleted and jewel-girdled, with his bow of ample height,
Archer Arjun, pious-hearted, to the gods performed a rite,
Then he stepped forth proud and stately in his golden mail
encased,

Like the sunlit cloud of evening with the radiant rainbow
graced ;

And a gladness stirred the people all around the listed plain,
Beat of drum and blare of trumpet rose with *Sankha's* festive
strain !

"Mark the gallant son of Pandu, whom the happy Pritha bore ;
Mark the heir of India's prowess, matchless in his arms and
lore ;

Mark the chief of dauntless valour, peerless in his skill of arms ;
Mark the prince of stainless virtue, decked with grace and
varied charms !"

Pritha heard such grateful accents borne aloft unto the sky,
Milk of love suffused her bosom, tear of joy was in her eye !

* * * * *

Now the voices of the people died away and all was still ;
Arjun to his proud piececeptor showed his might and match-
less skill,

Towering high or lowly bending, on the turf or on his car,
With his bow and ample quiver Arjun waged the mimic war.
Targets on the wide arena, mighty tough or wondrous small,
With his arrows still unfailing, Arjun pierced them one and
all ;

Wild-boar shaped in plates of iron coursed the wide extending field,
 In its jaws five glist'ning arrows sent the archer wondrous skilled;
 Cow-horn by a thread suspended was by winds unceasing swayed,
 One and twenty {well-aimed arrows on this moving mark he laid;
 And with equal skill his rapier did the god-like Arjun wield,
 Whirling round his mace of battle ranged the spacious tourney field!

THE ADVENT OF KARNA.

Now the feats of arms are ended, and the closing hour draws nigh,
 Music's voice is hushed in silence, slow disperse the passers by,
 Hark! like welkin-shaking thunder wakes a deep and deadly sound,
 Clank and din of warlike weapons burst upon the tented ground!
 Are the solid mountains splitting? Is it bursting of the earth?
 Is it tempest's pealing accent whence the lightning takes its birth?
 Thoughts like these alarm the people, for the sound is dread and high,
 And upon the lofty gateway turns the crowd with anxious eye!

* * * *

Pale, before the unknown warrior, gathered nations part in twain,
 Conqueror of hostile cities lofty Karna treads the plain.
 In his golden mail accoutred, in his rings of yellow gold,
 Like a moving cliff in stature towering comes the chieftain bold!
 Like a tusk in his fury, like a lion in his ire,
 Like the sun in noontide radiance, like the all-consuming fire,
 Lion-like in build and muscle, stately as a golden palm,
 Blessed with every manly virtue, peerless, dauntless, proud and calm!

Karna then showed his proficiency in arms, rivalling the hitherto unrivalled Arjun. The crowds applauded him with acclamation, and Prince Duryodhan, who hated his cousins, the sons of Pandu, embraced Karna as his friend and supporter. Arjun was fired by a dark but natural jealousy on meeting this new rival, and angry words were spoken. And a fight between the two rivals was about to ensue, probably ending in the death of one of the combatants; but the day was ended. Evening fell, and the combatants parted—to remain rivals ever after in life and unto death.

The jealousy between the five sons of Pandu and the hundred sons of Dhriti-rashtra increased from day to day, and at last the Pandavs, *i.e.* the sons of Pandu, were exiled. Prince Duryodhan laid a dark scheme to kill them. They were sent to a house in a distant town, and at the appointed time fire was set to this house. But the Pandavs with their mother escaped the conflagration, and travelled unknown in distant lands in the guise of Brahmans.

In course of time they heard of the approaching wedding of the princess of the Panchala kingdom—the renowned Draupadi, the heroine of the epic. Princes and suitors came from all lands, and it was ordained that whoever could hit a distant target through a revolving disc would win the bride. The five Pandavs came to the assembly dressed as Brahmans. After days of rejoicing and feasting the bride Draupadi appeared on the scene. Her brother led her by the hand amidst the assembled suitors, and introduced them to her, one by one, thus:

DRUPADI AND HER SUITORS (*condensed*).

"Brave Duryodhan and his brothers, princes of the
 Kuruland,
 Karna, proud and peerless archer, sister, seek thy noble
 hand;
 And Gandhara's warlike princes, Bhoja's monarch true
 and bold,
 And the son of mighty Drona, all bedecked in gems and
 gold !
 King and prince from Matsya kingdom grace his noble
 wedding feast,
 Monarchs from more distant regions north and south and
 west and east,
 Tamralipta and Kalinga on the eastern ocean wave,
 Pattan's port, whose hardy children western ocean's dangers
 brave !
 From the distant land of Madra car-borne monarch Salya
 came,
 And from Dwarka's sea-girt regions Valadeva known to
 fame,
 Valadeva and his brother, Krishna, sprung from Yadu's
 race,
 Of the Vrishni clan descended, soul of truth and righteous
 grace !
 This is mighty Jayadratha, come from Sindhu's sounding
 shore,
 Famed for warlike feats of valour, famed alike for sacred
 lore ;
 This is fair Kosala's monarch, whose bright deeds our
 heralds sing ;
 This is sturdy Sisupala, Chedi's proud and peerless king !
 This is mighty Jarasandha, come from far Magadha's land :
 These are other princely suitors, sister, eager for thy hand.
 All the wide earth's warlike rulers seek to shoot the distant
 aim ;
 Princess, whose whits the target, choose as thine that prince
 of fame !"

All the princes and suitors then tried to hit the target,
 and all failed one after another. Then Arjun, concealed
 in the guise of a Brahman, rose and performed the feat,
 and the father of the bride gave away the princess to the

victor. The disappointed suitors could stand it no longer. Their humiliation and rage were redoubled when they saw a youth, apparently of the Brahman or priestly caste, win the bride whom the kings of the Kshatra or warrior caste had failed to win. And in a moment of anger they rose in tumult, determined to kill the bride's father in their wrath. I read a few lines here, as the account of the disappointed suitors in the 'Maha-Bharata' reminds one of a well-known passage in Homer's Odyssey.

THE RAGE OF DISAPPOINTED SUITORS.

Spake the suitors, anger-shaken, like a forest tempest-torn,
As Panchala's courteous monarch came to greet a Brahman-born :

"Shall he like the grass of jungle trample us in haughty pride,
To a prating priest and Brahman wed the proud and peerless bride ?

To our hopes like nourished saplings shall he now the fruit deny ?

Monarch proud who insults monarchs, sure a traitor's death shall die !

Honour for his rank we know not, have no mercy for his age,
Perish foe of crowned monarchs, victim to our righteous rage !
Hath he asked us to his palace, favoured us with royal grace,
Feasted us with princely bounty but to compass our disgrace ?

In this concourse of great monarchs, glorious like a heavenly band,

Doth he find no likely suitor for his beauteous daughter's hand ?

And this right of *swayamvara*, so our scared jaws ordain,
Is for warlike monarchs only, priests that custom shall not stain !

If this maiden on a Brahman casts her eye, devoid of shame,
Let her expiate her folly in a pyre of blazing flame !

Leave the priestling, in his folly, sinning through a Brahman's greed,

For we wage on war with Brahmans and forgive a foolish deed ;

Much we owe to holy Brahmans for our kingdom, wealth
 and life,
 Blood of priest or wise preceptor shall not stain our noble
 strife :
 In the blood of sinful Drupad we the righteous laws
 maintain,
 Such disgrace in future ages monarchs shall not meet
 again !
 Spake the suitors, tiger hearted, iron-handed, bold and strong,
 Fiercely bent on blood and vengeance blindly rose the
 maddened throng !
 On they came, the angry monarchs, thirsting for revengeful
 strife,
 Drupad 'midst the holy Brahmans fled in terror of his life !
 Like wild tusked of the jungle rushed the suitors on their
 foes,
 Calm and bold, against the suitors, Bhima and proud Arjun
 rose !

The passage reminds one of the scene in the *Odyssey*
 in which the suitors of Penelope turned on her unknown
 husband, and Ulysses and his son were a match for them
 all. But in the Indian epic this tumult was not followed
 by actual bloodshed ; Krishna, the friend and kinsman
 of the Pandav brothers, pacified the enraged suitors, and
 Arjun led away the bride. Here Krishna appears for the
 first time on the scene as a peace-maker, as a wise and
 gifted chieftain who strove for right and justice, and
 throughout the epic he retains his character.

A curious incident here follows, which is somewhat
 discordant with the customs and manners of the Hindu
 nation. It is said that five brothers returned with the
 bride to a potter's house where they were living on alms,
 according to the custom of Brahmans, and they reported
 to their mother, "We have received a great gift to-day."
 Their mother, not knowing what the gift was, replied,

"Enjoy the gift among you in common." And as a mother's mandate is holy in India, and cannot be disregarded, Draupadi became the common wife of the five brothers. The custom of brothers marrying a wife in common prevails in Thibet and among some hill tribes in India, but has never prevailed among the Aryan Hindus in ancient or modern times, and this legend in the Hindu epic is therefore inexplicable.

Judging from the main incidents of the poem, Draupadi might be regarded as wedded to the eldest brother Yudhisthir, though won by the skill of the third brother Arjun. For Bhima, the second brother, had already mated himself to a female in a forest, and had by her a son who distinguished himself afterwards in the great war. Arjun, too, married the sister of Krishna, and had by her a son who also distinguished himself later in the war. On the other hand, the eldest brother Yudhisthir took to himself no wife save Draupadi, and she was crowned with Yudhisthir at the imperial sacrifice which shortly followed. Notwithstanding the legend of the communal marriage, therefore, Draupadi might be regarded as the wife of the eldest brother Yudhisthir, and this assumption would be in keeping with Hindu customs and laws, ancient and modern.

After this marriage, the five brothers came out of their disguise and demanded a share of the Kuru kingdom, and their demand could no longer be gainsaid. The kingdom was divided; Prince Duryodhan retained the best portion on the Ganges, and his cousins got a wild tract of country on the Jumna. They cleared the forest,

built a capital on the site of modern Delhi, and performed a great imperial sacrifice at which all the neighbouring kings, including Duryodhan himself, were present by invitation.

The cousins thus ruled two neighbouring kingdoms in peace for many years, but Duryodhan's hatred and jealousy were undying. Yudhisthir, with all his virtues and piety, had one failing—a besetting sin of the age—viz. a passion for gambling. Duryodhan knew this weakness; he challenged Yudhisthir to a game of dice, and defeated him unfairly, using loaded dice. As Yudhisthir lost game after game he was stung with his losses, and with the recklessness of a gambler staked everything and lost everything. He staked his newly acquired kingdom on the Jumna; he staked his brothers' and then his own liberty; and lastly he staked his wife Draupadi and lost her. One of the most stirring passages in the whole poem is the scene where the proud Queen Draupadi is dragged to the Council Hall as a slave woman, and insulted.

DRAUPADI INSULTED.

"Silent all? And will no chieftain rise to save a woman's life,
Will no hand or voice be lifted to defend a virtuous wife?
Lost is Kurus' righteous glory, lost is Bharat's ancient name,
Lost is warrior's warlike prowess, lost is monarch's kingly frame!
Wherefore else like painted warriors tamely view this impious scene,
Wherefore gleam not righteous weapons to protect an outraged queen?"

Bhishma, hath he lost his-virtue ? Drona, hath he lost his
 might ?
 Hath the monarch of the Kurus ceased to battle for the
 right ?
 Wherefore are ye mute and voiceless, councillors of mighty
 fame,
 Vacant eye and palsied right arm watch this deed of
 Kuru's shame ?
 Spake Draupadi slender-waisted, and her words were stern
 and high,
 Anger flamed within her bosom and the tear was in her eye !
 And her sparkling speaking glances fell on Pandu's sons
 like fire,
 Stirred in them a mighty passion and a thirst for vengeance
 dire !
 Lost their empire, wealth, and fortune, little recked they
 for the fall,
 But Draupadi's pleading glances like a poniard smote them
 all !
 Darkly frowned the ancient Bhishma, wrathful Drona oit
 his tongue,
 Pale Vidura marked with anger insults on Draupadi flung
 Fulsome word nor foul dishonour could their truthful
 utterance taint,
 And they blamed Duryodhan's action when they heard
 Draupadi's plaint !

* * * *

Madness seized the proud Duryodhan, and inflamed by
 passion base,
 Sought the prince to stain Draupadi with a dire and deep
 disgrace,
 On the proud and peerless woman cast his wicked, lustful
 eye,
 Sought to hold the high-born princess as a slave upon his
 knee !
 Bhīma penned his wrath no longer, lightning-like his
 glance he flung,
 And the ancient hall of Kurus with his thunder accents rung :
 "May I never reach those mansions where my fathers live
 on high,
 May I never meet ancestors in the bright and happy sky,
 If that knee by which thou sinnest Bhīma breaks not in
 his ire,
 In the battle's red arena with his weapon dread and dire !"

Red fire flamed on Bhima's forehead, sparkled from his
angry eye,
As from tough and gnarled branches quick the crackling
red sparks fly !

A tumult was oviated, and the five brothers and Draupadi were spared further insults by the intervention of the blind old King Dhrita-rashtra. He restored them their liberty, but they were banished to forests for twelve years, to be succeeded by a year of concealment. It was agreed that if they were discovered during this year of concealment they would have to undergo another twelve years of exile by the terms of the sentence.

The hard conditions were faithfully observed. The five brothers with Draupadi spent twelve years in forests and then passed one year in concealment as menial servants of Virata, king of the Matsyas. Arjun, who was so well known, had to disguise his sex and to hide himself in the women's apartments, teaching dancing and music to the females of the royal house. A year passed away thus.

Cattle-lifting was a favourite occupation with ancient Indian chiefs as with those of Homer, and it so happened that Duryodhan came on a cattle-lifting expedition to Matsya-land where the Pandav brothers were concealed. Arjun, a true warrior in his instincts, could not stand this. He issued forth from his concealment among the women of the house ; he recovered the cattle ; but he was discovered. But the year of concealment had expired, the discovery brought no penalty with it, and the five brothers, having faithfully observed the

conditions of exile, now boldly demanded their lost kingdom on the Jumna.

One of the most remarkable portions of this remarkable epic is the Council of War which was held by the five brothers and their many friends to determine on the course to be followed. Each chief rose and made a speech which is truly Homeric in fire and spirit, giving his views as to the plan which should be adopted to recover the lost kingdom.

At last the venerable king of the Panchalas, the father-in-law of Yudhishthir, rose and advocated that policy which has always been found to be the soundest foreign policy in ancient as in modern times. His advice was : "Endeavour to maintain the peace, but be prepared for war."

Priests and Brahmans were sent to Hastinapura in vain ; Duryodhan would not render back the old kingdom to his cousins, and at last Krishna, the wise and righteous peace-maker, went personally to the court of the Kurus to plead for peace before the sightless old monarch, the father of Duryodhan. There is something touching and sublime in this last eloquent appeal for peace on the eve of the most disastrous war of ancient times in India.

I will quote only a few lines from Krishna's long appeal :

KRISHNA'S SPEECH.

"Ponder yet, O ancient monarch ! Rulers of each distant
state,
Nations from the farthest reigns gather thick to court their
fate,

Father of a righteous nation ! save the princes of the land,
On the armed and fated nations stretch, old man, thy
healing hand !

Say the word, and at thy bidding leaders of each hostile
race,

Not the gory field of battle, but the festive board will
grace,

Robed in jewels, decked in garlands, they will quaff the
ruddy wine,

Greet their foes in mutual kindness, bless thy holy name
and thine !

Think, O man of many seasons ! when good Pandu left this
throne,

And his helpless loving orphans thou didst cherish as thine
own,

'Twas thy helping, steadying fingers taught their infant
steps to frame,

'Twas thy loving gentle accents taught their lips to lisp
each name.

As thine own they grew and blossomed, dear to thee they
yet remain,

Take them back unto thy bosom, be a father once again !

Take their love, O gracious monarch ! let thy closing days
be fair,

Let Duryodhan keep his kingdom, let the Pandavs have
their share !

Call to mind their noble suffering, for the tale is dark and
long,

Of the outrage they have suffered, of the insult and the
wrong !

Exiled into Varnavata, destined unto death by flame,

For the gods assist the righteous, they with added prowess
came !

Exiled unto Indra-prastha, by their toil and by their might,

They upreared a mighty empire and performed a glorious
rite !

Cheated of their realm and empire, and of all they called
their own,

In the jungle they have wandered, in concealment lived
unknown,

Once more quelling every evil, they are stout of heart and
hand,

Now redeem thy plighted promise, and restore their thrones
and land !

*Trust me, mighty Dhrita-rashtra ! trust me, lords who gaze
 this hall,
 Krishna pleads for peace and virtue, blessings unto one and
 all !
 Slaughter not the armed nations, slaughter not thy kith and kin,
 Mark not, king, they closing winters with the bloody stain of sin !
 Let thy sons and Pandu's children stand beside thy ancient
 throne,
 Cherish peace and cherish virtue, for thy days are almost done !"*

The ancient Bhishma, the warlike preceptor Drona, the wise Vidura, all advised peace. The father and mother of Duryodhan too pleaded for peace, but all in vain. Duryodhan was immoveable, and would not restore to his hated cousins their lost kingdom. His answer was plain and unmistakeable, and in keeping with his character.

DURYODHAN'S SPEECH.

"What great crime or darkening sorrow shadows o'er my
 bitter fate,
 That ye chiefs and Kuru's monarch mark Duryodhan for your
 hate ?
 Speak, what nameless guilt or folly, secret sin to me
 unknown,
 Turns from me your sweet affection, father's love that was
 my own ?
 If Yudhisthir, fond of gambling, played a heedless, reckless
 game,
 Lost his empire and his freedom, was it then Duryodhan's
 blame ?
 And if freed from shame and bondage in ~~his~~ folly played
 again,
 Lost again and went to exile, wherefore doth he now
 complain ?
 Weak are they in friends and forces, feeble is their fitful
 star,
 Wherefore then in pride and folly seek with us unequal
 war ?

Shall we, who to mighty INDRA scarce will do the homage
 due,
 Bow to homeless sons of Pandu and their comrades faint
 and few ?
 Bow to them while warlike Drona leads us as in days of old,
 Bhishma greater than the bright-gods, archer Karna true
 and bold ?
 If in dubious game of battle we should forfeit fame and
 life,
 Heaven will ope its golden portals for the warrior slain
 in strife !
 If unbending to our foemen we should press the gory
 plain,
 Stingless is the bed of arrows, death for us will have no
 pain !
 If in past in thoughtless folly once the realm was broke in
 twain,
 Kuru land is reunited, never shall be split again !
Take my message to my kinsmen, for Duryodhan's words are
plain,
Portion of the Kuru empire sons of Pandu seek in vain ;
Town nor village, mart nor hamlet, help us righteous gods in
heaven,
Spot that needle's point can cover shall not unto them be
given !"

War, fatal war was the consequence, and into the
 many stirring incidents of the war, or rather the eighteen
 battles on eighteen successive days, I have not the time
 to enter. The unconquerable Bhishma led the Kuru forces
 for ten days and was then slain by an artifice ; the
 warrior priest, Drona, then led the troops for five days
 and was slain, and at last the command of the Kuru
 army fell on Karna. He held his own for two days ; and
 the contest between the lifelong rivals Karna and Arjun
 is the crowning incident of the epic, like the contest
 between Hector and Achilles in the Iliad. Arjun and
 Karna were equal in prowess and skill, but Karna's

chariot-wheel sank in the earth ; he was thus taken at disadvantage, and killed on the seventeenth day of the war.

The last and eighteenth day dawned, and the preceptor Kripa still advised Duryodhan to render back the Jumna territory to Yudhishthir and to make peace with him. A melancholy interest attaches to this last appeal for peace, and to Duryodhan's last and almost sublime refusal to make peace on the eve of his death.

KRIPA'S LAST APPEAL AND DURYODHAN'S REPLY.

"Bid this battle cease, Duryodhan, pale and fitful is thy star,

Blood enough of friendly nations soaks this crimson field of war !

Bid them live, the few survivors of a vast and countless host,

Let thy few remaining brothers live, for many are the lost !

Kindly heart hath good Yudhishthir, still he seeks for right-ful peace,

Render back his ancient kingdom, bid this war of kinsmen cease !"

"Kripa," so Duryodhan answered, "in this sad and fatal strife,

Ever foremost of our warriors, ever careless of thy life,

Ever in the council chamber thou hast words of wisdom : said,

Needless war and dire destruction by thy peaceful council stayed,

Every word thou speakest, Kripa, is a word of truth and weight,

Nathless thy advice for concord, wise preceptor, comes too late !

Hope not that the good Yudhishthir will again our friendship own,

Cheated once by deep Sakuni of his kingdom and his throne,

Rugged Bhima will not palter, fatal is the vow he made,

Vengeful Arjun will not pardon gallant Abhimanyu dead !

Fair Draupadi doth her penance, so our ancient matrons say,
 In our blood to wash her insult and her proud insulters
 slay,
 Fair Subhadra morn and evening weeps her dear departed
 son,
 Feeds Draupadi's deathless anger for the hero dead and
 gone.
 Deeply in their bosoms rankle wrongs and insults we have
 given,
 Blood alone can wash it, Kripa, such the cruel will of
 Heaven !
 And the hour for peace is over, for our best sleep on the
 plain,
 Brothers, kinsmen, friends, and elders slumber with the
 countless slain.
 Shall Duryodhan like a recreant now avoid the deathful
 strife.
 After all his bravest warriors have in war surrendered life ?
 Shall he, sending them to slaughter, now survive and learn
 to flee,
 Shall he, ruler over monarchs, learn to bend the servile
 knee ?
 Proud Duryodhan sues no favour even with his dying
 breath,
 Unsubdued and still unconquered, changeless even unto
 death !
 Salva, valiant king of Madra, leads our armed hosts to-day,
 Or to perish or to conquer, gallant Kripa, lead the way ! "

I confess that passages like this, of which the great
 Indian epic is full, disclose to me that deep insight into
 human feelings, and that true portraiture of human
 character, which mark the greatest poets of all ages and
 and among all nations. For, let it be remembered that
 Duryodhan is not a favourite of the Indian poet ; he
 has been depicted as cruel, vindictive, and faithless.
 But nevertheless a true poet does not pile on colour on
 his canvas like an unskillful painter ; there is a certain
 consistency and true delineation of human impulses in

all his characters. And Duryodhan, the wrong-doer and the faithless, almost commands our admiration on the eve of his death for the deep determination of his character—the unfaltering resolution of a great man, if not a good man.

The result of the day was fatal; the Kuru army was slaughtered, and Duryodhan at last ran from the field of battle and hid himself beside a lake, which is still pointed out to thousands of pilgrims in India who annually visit the scene of the battle.

DURYODHAN'S DEATH.

Far from battle's toil and slaughter, by a dark and limpid lake,

Sad and slow and faint Duryodhan did his humble shelter take;

But the valiant sons of Pandu, with the hunter's watchful care

Thither tracked their fallen foeman like a wild beast in its lair!

"Gods be witness," said Duryodhan, flaming in his shame and wrath,

"Boy to manhood ever hating we have crossed each other's path.

Now we meet to part no longer, proud Duryodhan fights you all;

Perish he, or sons of Pandu, may this evening see your fall!"

Bhima answered: "For the insults long endured not forgiven,

Me alone you fight, Duryodhan, witness righteous Gods in heaven!

Call to mind the dark destruction planned of old in fiendish ire,

In the halls of Varnavata to consume us in the fire!

Call to mind the scheme, deceitful; deep Sakuni's dark device,

Cheating us of fame and empire by the trick of loaded dice!

Call to mind that coward insult, and the outrage foul and
 keen,
 Flung on Drupad's saintly daughter and our noble spotless
 queen !
 Call to mind the stainless Bhishma, for thy sins and folly
 slain,
 Priest and proud preceptor Drona, Karna lifeless on the
 plain !
 Perish in thy sins, Duryodhan, perish, too, thy hated
 name,
 And thy dark life crime-polluted ends, Duryodhan, in thy
 shame ! "

Bhima and Duryodhan fought, and Bhima kept the
 terrible vow he had taken and broke Duryodhan's knee
 by his mace. A midnight slaughter in the camp of the
 Pandavs ended the war, and Duryodhan died in the
 early morning.

The real epic ends with the war, and with the
 funerals of the deceased warriors piously ordered by the
 victor Yudhisthir for friends and foes alike. Yudhisthir
 then ascended the throne of the Kuru kingdom, and
 performed the ancient and august ceremony of the
 Sacrifice of the Horse. Afterwards, placing a grandson
 of Arjun on the throne, the five brothers and Draupadi
 retired to the Himalayas.

This is what is known as the Great Journey.
 Draupadi drops down dead, then Yudhisthir's brothers
 one by one. Yudhisthir proceeds to heaven in person.

There he meets Krishna, now in his radiant heavenly
 form and he meets his brothers now Immortals in the
 sky. The god Indra then introduces him to his wife
 Draupadi, to the old monarch Dhritarashtra, to Karna,
 and to Arjun's son. Indra also introduces him to his

'father, and to the venerable Bhishma and Drona, in these verses which are the last that I shall quote

IMMORTAL LIFE.

"This, Yudhisthir, is thy father by thy mother joined in heaven,
Oft he comes into my mansions in his flowery chariot driven,
This is Bhishma, stainless warrior, by the Vasus is his place,
By the God of heavenly wisdom teacher Drona sits in grace !
*These, and other mighty warriors in the earthly battle slain,
By their valour and their virtue walk the bright ethereal plain !
They have cast their mortal bodies, crossed the radiant gate of heaven,
For to win celestial mansions unto mortals it is given ?
Let them strive by kindly action, gentle speech, endurance long,
Brighter life and holier future unto sons of men belong !*"

This is the briefest outline of the leading story of the great epic of India, venerated in ancient times, venerated to the present day. The Hindu scarcely lives, as I have said elsewhere, man or woman, high or low, educated or ignorant, whose earliest recollections do not cling round the story of this ancient epic. The humble manufacturer and artisan of Bengal still spells out some modern translation of this undying tale. The tall peasantry of the North-West and the Punjab know of the five Pandav brothers and the righteous Krishna. The people of Bombay and of Madras cherish with equal ardour this sacred tale. Mothers in India know no better theme for imparting instruction to their daughters than this deathless tale. Elderly men know

no richer work for narrating stories to children than this great epic with its endless episodes. The *Maha-Bharata*, together with the other epic, the *Ramayana*, is more truly the national property of the Hindus than is Homer in Greece, Dante in Italy, or Shakespeare in England. No work except the Bible has such influence in forming the character of men in Christian lands as the ancient epics in India. They have been our cherished heritage for three thousand years, they are the intellectual food of a nation of two hundred millions to this day. And unless I am very much mistaken in my estimate, the Indian epics, when they are better known in Europe, shall take their rank, along with Homer and Dante and Shakespeare, as undying works of art, left for all times, for all countries, and for all mankind.

XIII. RAMAYANA, THE ODYSSEY OF INDIA.

[*Paper read before the Royal Society of Literature,
London, on October 24, 1900, Lord Halsbury,
Lord Chancellor, presiding*]

It is little over a year ago that I had the privilege of reading in these rooms a paper on the *Mahabharata*, the *Iliad* of Ancient India. It gives me great pleasure to appear before you again to-night, and to read a short paper on the *Ramayana*, which may not be inappropriately described as the *Odyssey* of Ancient India. These two great epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, comprise the whole of the epic literature of ancient India, and therefore stand apart from all the other literary productions of that country, rich and fertile as that country has always been in the highest results in every department of literature, poetry, and science.

This learned Society, while it very properly devotes the greater portion of its time to the literature and thought of England, has nevertheless encouraged researches into the literatures of other lands and of other times and has from time to time endeavoured to interest Englishmen in all that is best and truest in the world's literary achievements. All that interests the cultured mind in the productions of various ages and various nations has occasionally been the subject of papers which have been read within these rooms. The works of Dante and of Moliere and of Goethe are as familiar to many members

of this Society as the works of Chaucer and of Shakespeare ; and the works of the ancients have not unfrequently formed the subjects of discussion in this hall. I rejoice, therefore, that this Society occasionally turns its attention to the rich literature of India ; and as a Fellow of this Society I consider it a proud privilege to have placed before this Society, and before English readers generally, a condensed metrical translation of the two vast Indian epics.

There are special reasons why Englishmen should feel a living interest in India's ancient literature. The beauty of ancient thought, and graphic pictures of ancient life, must always appeal to modern nations of all countries. But more than this, Great Britain and her colonies and India form to-day one great empire—the greatest that the world has yet seen. It is necessary that there should be not only community of interests, but community of thought and feeling within this great empire. And it is necessary that Englishmen should appreciate Indian thought and culture as we in India appreciate English thought. For, believe me, your greatest authors, your noblest poets, your boldest philosophers, are not more closely studied in Oxford and in Cambridge, in Edinburgh, and in London, than they are studied and appreciated in Calcutta and in Bombay. Shakespeare's matchless creations are a living world to thousands of Indian students ; Milton and Wordsworth and Tennyson are studied with reverent admiration in India ; the great Walter Scott fascinates, and the inimitable Charles Dickens amuses, ten thousands of Hindu and Musalman

boys ! Young India appreciates English thought and literature ; it is necessary that Englishmen and Englishwomen should understand ancient Indian thought, which permeates modern Indian life and institutions to a far greater extent than we generally imagine. The great past is not dead and buried in India ; past traditions, past institutions, even ancient poetry and romance, are a living reality in India of the present day, in India not of the educated and cultured few, but of the millions of agriculturists and labourers who till her grateful soil, people her shady villages, and know more of Kṛishna and Rama than they know of all the heroes of the modern world. To be in touch with the people of modern India you must know her ancient traditions ; to ignore her ancient thoughts is to isolate yourselves from modern India.

There are learned translations of oriental literature prepared by generations of devoted scholars, and which appeal mainly to scholars. It is necessary that the average reader and the busy man of work should have before him more handy and readable and attractive works, reproducing, as far as possible, the spirit, and the beauty, and the true significance of Indian poetry and Indian thought. This work has not yet been done. There is an undiscovered world for Englishmen still to explore, an undiscovered mine for literary miners to work upon ; and I can assure you that the labour will not be thrown away, and Englishmen, even with a splendid literature of their own, will be all the richer when they possess themselves of Indian thought and

literature. And the world will be richer in its wealth of ideas, when all that is beautiful and true in eastern culture is added to all that is fresh and vigorous in modern European thought.

India has a long, and a not inglorious, ancient history. It may be two thousand years before Christ that the ancestors of the present Aryan Hindu nation were settled on the banks of the Indus, conquering the Punjab from the aboriginal inhabitants of the soil, extending cultivation and the arts of peace, and invoking the "bright gods" of Nature in beautiful hymns which have been still left to us in that collection known as the *Rig Veda*, which is the oldest literary work now extant among the Aryan nations of the earth. For several centuries the Aryan conquerors were confined to the Punjab; their numerous petty states and kingdoms, their wars against aborigines, and their arts of peace, were all confined to that land of five rivers, or rather the land of seven rivers as it was then called; and the rest of India which lay beyond was almost unknown to them. This long period of the Aryan settlements in the Punjab is generally known as the Vedic Age; so called from the Veda to which allusion has been already made. But I do not propose to-night to speak of this first and earliest period of Indian history.

It was in the subsequent age that the Aryan Hindus, issuing from the Punjab, spread over the whole of Northern India, and founded powerful kingdoms on the banks of the Ganges and the Jumna. It is this second period of ancient Indian history which is known as the

Epic Age, because the two epics of India described the kingdoms and the nations which flourished in Northern India during this age. It is of this second age of Indian history, this Epic Age as it is generally called, extending from the fifteenth to the tenth century B.C., that I propose to speak to-night.

Among the many powerful nations which flourished in Northern India in this age, the Bharatas and the Panchalas were the most celebrated in the west, and the Kosalas and the Videhas were the most celebrated in the east. The Bharatas and the Panchalas lived along the upper course of the Ganges, *i. e.* in the country between modern Delhi and Kanouj: and the Kosalas and the Videhas lived further to the east, *i. e.* in those provinces which we now know as Oudh and North Behar. The deeds or legends of the western tribes, the Bharatas and the Panchalas, are described in the great epic known as the *Mahabharata*; while the deeds or legends of the eastern tribes, the Kosalas and the Videhas, are described in the other great epic known as the *Ramayana*. The *Mahabharata* may, therefore, be described as the epic of the Western Aryans; the *Ramayana* as the epic of the Eastern Aryans.

But this is not the only distinction between the two epics. The nations of North-western India have generally been known for their sturdy and warlike virtues; while those of North-eastern India have been known for their peacefulness and their culture; and this distinction pervades the two epics. The characters of the *Mahabharata* are men of flesh and blood, with the

virtues and crimes of great actors in the historic world ; the characters of the *Ramayana* are more often ideals of manly devotion to truth and of womanly faithfulness and love. The poet of the *Mahabharata* describes the supposed incidents of a real and sanguinary war with all its lofty heroism and chivalry ; the poet of the *Ramayana* hands down the memories of a golden age with all its ideals of piety and faith and domestic love. As a heroic poem the *Mahabharata* stands on a higher level ; as a religious poem, delineating the softer emotions of our everyday life, the *Ramayana* sends its roots deeper into the Hindu mind.

These remarks will be best illustrated if I narrate to you briefly the story of the *Ramayana*, as I narrated to you the story of the *Mahabharata* last year. I may remark, in passing, that the *Mahabharata* in Sanscrit consists of more than 90,000 verses, and that the *Ramayana* consists of more than 24,000 verses. In condensing these vast epics I have not attempted to tell the story in my own language ; but I have selected those portions of the original which tell the leading incidents, and have translated them in full ; and I have connected these selected passages by short notes so as to place the complete story before the reader. The plan has this advantage, that the main story of the epics is told, not by the translator in his own way, but by the poet himself ; the passages placed before the reader are not the translator's abridgements of long poems, but are passages from the original poems. It is the ancient poets of India, and not the translator, who narrate the

ancient story ; but they narrate only the leading incidents of the story, so as to limit the poems within a reasonable compass. I may add that the *Ramayana*, like the *Mahabharata*, is a growth of ages ; generations of later Indian poets adding their quota of verses through long centuries to the poem as it originally stood. It is possible, therefore, that in limiting my translation to those passages which describe the leading incidents, I have presented the great poem somewhat in the form in which it originally stood, and in which it was first recited in the Courts of Northern India. And I have generally translated each Sanscrit verse into a corresponding English verse, following the Sanscrit metre in English as far as was possible. I may be pardoned for making these few remarks about my own work ; it was necessary to do so, as I shall have to quote pretty often from my own translation. And here I should also make some mention of my great predecessors in this work—of Gorresio, who completed an Italian translation of the *Ramayana* in 1867 ; of Hippolyte Fauche, who completed a French translation of the epic shortly after ; and of Ralph Griffith, who has given us an almost complete rendering of it in six octavo volumes of English verse.*

With these preliminary remarks, I will now turn to the story of the epic itself. The *Ramayana* virtually commences with a description of the kingdom of Ayodhya or Oudh, then ruled by the ancient monarch Dasa-ratha. In this description we have at once the ideal of an ancient Hindu king and of an ancient Hindu

people ; and the passage is important as depicting the Hindu conception of a golden age. I will therefore read a few verses.

Like the ancient monarch Manu, father of the human race,
 Dasa-ratha ruled his people with a father's loving grace,
 Truth and justice swayed each action and each baser motive
 quelled,
 People's Love and Monarch's Duty every thought and deed
 impelled,
 And his town like INDRA's city—tower and dome and turret
 brave—
 Rose in proud and peerless beauty on Sarayu's limpid wave !
 Peaceful lived the righteous people, rich in wealth, in merit
 high,
 Envy dwelt not in their bosoms, and their accents shaped
 no lie.
 Fathers, with their happy households, owned their cattle,
 corn, and gold ;
 Galling penury and famine in Ayodhya had no hold.
 Neighbours lived in mutual kindness, helpful with their
 ample wealth ;
 None who begged the wasted refuse, none who lived by
 fraud and stealth !
 And they wore the gem and earring, wreath and fragrant
 sandal paste,
 And their arms were decked with bracelets, and their necks
 with *nishkas* graced ;
 Cheat and braggart and deceiver lived not in the ancient
 town ;
 Proud despiser of the lowly wore no insults in their frown ;
 Poorer fed not on the richer, hireling friend upon the great,
 None with law and lying accents did upon the proud man
 wait !
 Men to plighted vows were faithful, faithful was each loving
 wife ;
 Impure thought and wandering fancy stained not holy wedded
 life.
 Robed in gold and graceful garments, fair in form and fair
 in face,
 Winsome were Ayodhya's daughters, rich in wit and woman's
 grace !

Like other monarchs of the East, Dasa-ratha rejoiced in a large household, and in the company^a of many queens, and three of these queens were the foremost in rank, and shared among them the affections of their lord. Kausalya, the eldest queen, was the mother of Rama, the hero of the epic. Kaikeyi, a young and beautiful and imperious queen, was the mother of Bharat. Sumitra, the third queen, gave birth to twins, one of whom, Lakshman, became the faithful and devoted follower of his elder brother Rama. The names of these two loving brothers, Rama and Lakshman, are to this day household words in every Hindu home.

So far we have confined ourselves to the story of the royal family of Oudh ; let us now turn to the adjoining kingdom of Videha or North Behar. That ancient kingdom was ruled by a pious and learned king, Janaka ; and Janaka had a lovely daughter, Sita, the heroine of the epic. Suitors from distant lands came for the hand of Sita, for Janaka, like the warriors of olden times, had declared—

“He shall win my peerless Sita who shall bend my bow of war !”

That bow was a god-given weapon, tremendous in its size and weight ; and many princes who came to seek the hand of Sita failed to bend the bow and went back humbled and disappointed. Rama and his faithful brother Lakshman came wandering from their own kingdom to the kingdom of Janaka, and the mighty weapon was produced before Rama, so that he, too, might try his strength and skill.

Wond'ring gazed the kings assembled as the son of Raghu's
 race,
 Proudly raised the mighty weapon with a warrior's stately
 grace,
 Proudly strung the bow of Rudra which the kings had tried
 in vain,
 Drew the cord with force resistless till the weapon snapped
 in twain !

The astonished and gratified monarch of Videha kept his promise ; the lovely Sita was wedded to Rama ; and the proud and victorious prince returned with his bride to his own land amidst the blessings of Brahmins and the acclamations of the people.

Years passed away and Rama grew in grace and learning and valour ; and, according to an ancient Indian custom, his old father desired to place on him the burden of the kingdom, and to pass his few remaining years in religious rites and pious meditation. The old king's increasing feebleness, and Rama's growing worth and abilities, alike pointed to this course as the most expedient and in the poet's description of Rama's virtues we see once more a Hindu's ideal of a model prince, bold in war, rich in learning, loving and bounteous towards his people.

For his Rama strong and stately was his eldest and his best,
 Void of every baser passion and with every virtue blest.
 Soft in speech, sedate and peaceful, seeking still the holy path,
 Calm in conscious worth and valour, naught nor cavil waked
 his wrath,
 In the field of war excelling, boldest warrior 'midst the bold,
 In the palace chambers listening to the tales by elders told,
 Faithful to the wise and learned, truthful in his deed and
 word,
 Rama dearly loved his people and his people loved their lord !

To the Brahmans pure and holy Rama due obeisance made,
 To the poor and to the helpless deeper love and nonour
 paid,
 Spirit of his race and nation was to high souled Rama given,
 Thoughts that widen human glory, deeds that ope the gates
 of heaven !
 Taught by sages and by elders in the manner of his race,
 Rama grew in social virtues and each soft endearing grace.
 Taught by inborn pride and wisdom patient purpose to
 conceal,
 Deep determined was his effort, dauntless was his silent will !
 Peerless in his skill and valour steed and elephant to tame,
 Dauntless leader of his forces, matchless in his warlike fame,
 Higher thought and nobler duty did the righteous Rama
 move,
 By his toil and by his virtues still he sought his people's love !

Dasa-ratha convened a great council, one of those
 great assemblages which were summoned by the Hindu
 kings of ancient India when great questions of State were
 under consideration. I will not give that council the
 modern name of a Parliament ; but it is a fact that not
 only the chiefs and peers of the realm, but also repre-
 sentative burghers were invited from the towns and
 villages of Oudh to advise their king. And Dasa-ratha
 spake to them :

"Known to all, the race of Raghu rules this empire broad
 and fair,
 And hath ever loved and cherished subjects with a father's
 care,
 In my father's footsteps treading I have sought the ancient
 path,
 Nursed my people as my children, free from passion, pride
 and wrath,
 Underneath this white umbrella, seated on this royal throne,
 I have toiled to win their welfare and my task is almost done !

Years have passed of fruitful labour, years of work by fortune
 blest,
 And the evening of my life-time needs, my friends, the even-
 ing's rest.
 Years have passed in watchful effort, Law and Duty to
 uphold,
 Effort needing strength and prowess—and my feeble limbs
 are old !
 Peers and burghers, let your monarch, now his lifelong
 labour done,
 For the weal of loving subjects on his empire seat his son,
 Speak your thought and from this bosom lift a load of toil
 and care,
 On the proud throne of my fathers let me place a peerless
 heir ;
 Speak your thought, my chiefs and people, if this purpose
 please you well,
 Or if wiser, better counsel in your wisdom ye can tell,
 Speak your thought without compulsion, though this plan
 to me be dear,
 If some middle course were wiser, if some other way were
 clear !”

It is needless to state that the people, by whom their
 prince was dearly loved, approved of their old king's
 suggestion, and gave their consent by acclamation ; and
 preparations were made to decorate the city of Ayodhya
 or Oudh in a manner suitable to the occasion. As we
 read the account of these decorations we realise how
 much of the life and manners of ancient India survives to
 the present day in modern India ; and every Englishman
 who has passed a year of his life in India will realise in the
 following verses, written thousands of years ago, a not
 unfaithful description of the way in which towns and
 marts are decorated in India in these days, to evince
 the loyalty of a grateful people to those rulers whom
 they love to honour.

Rama shall be Heir and Regent, Rama shall be crowned
 to-day—
 Rapid flew the gladdening message with the morning's
 gladsome ray,
 And the people of the city, maid and matron, man and
 boy,
 Decorated fair Avodhya in their wild tumultuous joy !
 On the temple's lofty steeple high as cloud above the air.
 On the crossing of the pathways, in the garden green
 and fair,
 On the merchant's ample warehouse, on the shop with
 stores displayed,
 On the mansion of the noble by the cunning artist made,
 On the gay and bright pavilion, on the high and shady
 terrace,
 Banners rose and glittering streamers, flags that fluttered
 in the breeze !
 Actors gay and nimble dancers, singers skilled in lightsome
 song,
 With their antics and their music pleased the gay and
 gathered throng,
 And the people met in conclaves, spake of Rama, Regent
 Heir,
 And the children by the roadside lisped of Sita, sweet and
 fair !
 Women wove the scented garland, merry maids the
 censer lit,
 Men with broom and sprinkled water swept the spacious
 mart and street,
 Rows of trees and posts they planted hung with lamps for
 coming night,
 That the midnight dark might rival splendour of the noon-
 day light !
 Troops of men and merry children laboured with a loving
 care,
 Woman's skill and woman's fancy made the city passing
 fair,
 So that good and kindly Rama might his people's toil
 approve,
 So that sweet and soft-eyed Sita might accept her people's
 love !

But while these preparations were made for Rama's
 coronation as Prince Regent, dark scheme was on foot