

ЕЛЕНА БЛАВАТСКАЯ

FROM THE CAVES AND
JUNGLES OF
HINDOSTAN

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Helena Pretrovna Blavatsky

From the Caves and Jungles of Hindostan

In Bombay

Late in the evening of the sixteenth of February, 1879, after a rough voyage which lasted thirty-two days, joyful exclamations were heard everywhere on deck. "Have you seen the lighthouse?" "There it is at last, the Bombay lighthouse."

Cards, books, music, everything was forgotten. Everyone rushed on deck. The moon had not risen as yet, and, in spite of the starry tropical sky, it was quite dark. The stars were so bright that, at first, it seemed hardly possible to distinguish, far away amongst them, a small fiery point lit by earthly hands. The stars winked at us like so many huge eyes in the black sky, on one side of which shone the Southern Cross. At last we distinguished the lighthouse on the distant horizon. It was nothing but a tiny fiery point diving in the phosphorescent waves. The tired travellers greeted it warmly. The rejoicing was general.

What a glorious daybreak followed this dark night! The sea no longer tossed our ship. Under the skilled guidance of the pilot, who had just arrived, and whose bronze form was so sharply

defined against the pale sky, our steamer, breathing heavily with its broken machinery, slipped over the quiet, transparent waters of the Indian Ocean straight to the harbour. We were only four miles from Bombay, and, to us, who had trembled with cold only a few weeks ago in the Bay of Biscay, which has been so glorified by many poets and so heartily cursed by all sailors, our surroundings simply seemed a magical dream.

After the tropical nights of the Red Sea and the scorching hot days that had tortured us since Aden, we, people of the distant North, now experienced something strange and unwonted, as if the very fresh soft air had cast its spell over us. There was not a cloud in the sky, thickly strewn with dying stars. Even the moonlight, which till then had covered the sky with its silvery garb, was gradually vanishing; and the brighter grew the rosiness of dawn over the small island that lay before us in the East, the paler in the West grew the scattered rays of the moon that sprinkled with bright flakes of light the dark wake our ship left behind her, as if the glory of the West was bidding good-bye to us, while the light of the East welcomed the newcomers from far-off lands. Brighter and bluer grew the sky, swiftly absorbing the remaining pale stars one after the other, and we felt something touching in the sweet dignity with which the Queen of Night resigned her rights to the powerful usurper. At last, descending lower and lower, she disappeared completely.

And suddenly, almost without interval between darkness and light, the red-hot globe, emerging on the opposite side from

under the cape, leant his golden chin on the lower rocks of the island and seemed to stop for a while, as if examining us. Then, with one powerful effort, the torch of day rose high over the sea and gloriously proceeded on its path, including in one mighty fiery embrace the blue waters of the bay, the shore and the islands with their rocks and cocoanut forests. His golden rays fell upon a crowd of Parsees, his rightful worshippers, who stood on shore raising their arms towards the mighty "Eye of Ormuzd." The sight was so impressive that everyone on deck became silent for a moment, even a red-nosed old sailor, who was busy quite close to us over the cable, stopped working, and, clearing his throat, nodded at the sun.

Moving slowly and cautiously along the charming but treacherous bay, we had plenty of time to admire the picture around us. On the right was a group of islands with Gharipuri or Elephanta, with its ancient temple, at their head. Gharipuri translated means "the town of caves" according to the Orientalists, and "the town of purification" according to the native Sanskrit scholars. This temple, cut out by an unknown hand in the very heart of a rock resembling porphyry, is a true apple of discord amongst the archaeologists, of whom none can as yet fix, even approximately, its antiquity. Elephanta raises high its rocky brow, all overgrown with secular cactus, and right under it, at the foot of the rock, are hollowed out the chief temple and the two lateral ones. Like the serpent of our Russian fairy tales, it seems to be opening its fierce black mouth to swallow the daring

mortal who comes to take possession of the secret mystery of Titan. Its two remaining teeth, dark with time, are formed by two huge pillars at the entrance, sustaining the palate of the monster.

How many generations of Hindus, how many races, have knelt in the dust before the Trimurti, your threefold deity, O Elephanta? How many centuries were spent by weak man in digging out in your stone bosom this town of temples and carving your gigantic idols? Who can say? Many years have elapsed since I saw you last, ancient, mysterious temple, and still the same restless thoughts, the same recurrent questions vex me now as they did then, and still remain unanswered. In a few days we shall see each other again. Once more I shall gaze upon your stern image, upon your three huge granite faces, and shall feel as hopeless as ever of piercing the mystery of your being. This secret fell into safe hands three centuries before ours. It is not in vain that the old Portuguese historian Don Diego de Cuta boasts that "the big square stone fastened over the arch of the pagoda with a distinct inscription, having been torn out and sent as a present to the King Dom Juan III, disappeared mysteriously in the course of time....," and adds, further, "Close to this big pagoda there stood another, and farther on even a third one, the most wonderful of all in beauty, incredible size, and richness of material. All those pagodas and caves have been built by the Kings of Kanara, (?) the most important of whom was Bonazur, and these buildings of Satan our (Portuguese) soldiers attacked with such vehemence that in a few years one stone was not left

upon another...." And, worst of all, they left no inscriptions that might have given a clue to so much. Thanks to the fanaticism of Portuguese soldiers, the chronology of the Indian cave temples must remain for ever an enigma to the archaeological world, beginning with the Brah-mans, who say Elephanta is 374,000 years old, and ending with Fergusson, who tries to prove that it was carved only in the twelfth century of our era. Whenever one turns one's eyes to history, there is nothing to be found but hypotheses and darkness. And yet Gharipuri is mentioned in the epic Mahabharata, which was written, according to Colebrooke and Wilson, a good while before the reign of Cyrus. In another ancient legend it is said that the temple of Trimurti was built on Elephanta by the sons of Pandu, who took part in the war between the dynasties of the Sun and the Moon, and, belonging to the latter, were expelled at the end of the war. The Rajputs, who are the descendants of the first, still sing of this victory; but even in their popular songs there is nothing positive. Centuries have passed and will pass, and the ancient secret will die in the rocky bosom of the cave still unrecorded.

On the left side of the bay, exactly opposite Elephanta, and as if in contrast with all its antiquity and greatness, spreads the Malabar Hill, the residence of the modern Europeans and rich natives. Their brightly painted bungalows are bathed in the greenery of banyan, Indian fig, and various other trees, and the tall and straight trunks of cocoanut palms cover with the fringe of their leaves the whole ridge of the hilly headland. There, on the

south-western end of the rock, you see the almost transparent, lace-like Government House surrounded on three sides by the ocean. This is the coolest and the most comfortable part of Bombay, fanned by three different sea breezes.

The island of Bombay, designated by the natives "Mambai," received its name from the goddess Mamba, in Mahrati Mahima, or Amba, Mama, and Amma, according to the dialect, a word meaning, literally, the Great Mother. Hardly one hundred years ago, on the site of the modern esplanade, there stood a temple consecrated to Mamba-Devi. With great difficulty and expense they carried it nearer to the shore, close to the fort, and erected it in front of Baleshwara the "Lord of the Innocent"—one of the names of the god Shiva. Bombay is part of a considerable group of islands, the most remarkable of which are Salsetta, joined to Bombay by a mole, Elephanta, so named by the Portuguese because of a huge rock cut in the shape of an elephant thirty-five feet long, and Trombay, whose lovely rock rises nine hundred feet above the surface of the sea. Bombay looks, on the maps, like an enormous crayfish, and is at the head of the rest of the islands. Spreading far out into the sea its two claws, Bombay island stands like a sleepless guardian watching over his younger brothers. Between it and the Continent there is a narrow arm of a river, which gets gradually broader and then again narrower, deeply indenting the sides of both shores, and so forming a haven that has no equal in the world. It was not without reason that the Portuguese, expelled in the course of time by the English, used

to call it "Buona Bahia."

In a fit of tourist exaltation some travellers have compared it to the Bay of Naples; but, as a matter of fact, the one is as much like the other as a lazzaroni is like a Kuli. The whole resemblance between the former consists in the fact that there is water in both. In Bombay, as well as in its harbour, everything is original and does not in the least remind one of Southern Europe. Look at those coasting vessels and native boats; both are built in the likeness of the sea bird "sat," a kind of kingfisher. When in motion these boats are the personi-fication of grace, with their long prows and rounded poops. They look as if they were gliding backwards, and one might mistake for wings the strangely shaped, long lateen sails, their narrow angles fastened upwards to a yard. Filling these two wings with the wind, and careening, so as almost to touch the surface of the water, these boats will fly along with astonishing swiftness. Unlike our European boats, they do not cut the waves, but glide over them like a sea-gull.

The surroundings of the bay transported us to some fairy land of the Arabian Nights. The ridge of the Western Ghats, cut through here and there by some separate hills almost as high as themselves, stretched all along the Eastern shore. From the base to their fantastic, rocky tops, they are all overgrown with impenetrable forests and jungles inhabited by wild animals. Every rock has been enriched by the popular imagination with an independent legend. All over the slope of the mountain are scattered the pagodas, mosques, and temples of numberless

sects. Here and there the hot rays of the sun strike upon an old fortress, once dreadful and inaccessible, now half ruined and covered with prickly cactus. At every step some memorial of sanctity. Here a deep vihara, a cave cell of a Buddhist bhikshu saint, there a rock protected by the symbol of Shiva, further on a Jaina temple, or a holy tank, all covered with sedge and filled with water, once blessed by a Brahman and able to purify every sin, all indispensable attribute of all pagodas. All the surroundings are covered with symbols of gods and goddesses. Each of the three hundred and thirty millions of deities of the Hindu Pantheon has its representative in something consecrated to it, a stone, a flower, a tree, or a bird. On the West side of the Malabar Hill peeps through the trees Valakeshvara, the temple of the "Lord of Sand." A long stream of Hindus moves towards this celebrated temple; men and women, shining with rings on their fingers and toes, with bracelets from their wrists up to their elbows, clad in bright turbans and snow white muslins, with foreheads freshly painted with red, yellow, and white, holy sectarian signs.

The legend says that Rama spent here a night on his way from Ayodhya (Oudh) to Lanka (Ceylon) to fetch his wife Sita who had been stolen by the wicked King Ravana. Rama's brother Lakshman, whose duty it was to send him daily a new lingam from Benares, was late in doing so one evening. Losing patience, Rama erected for himself a lingam of sand. When, at last, the symbol arrived from Benares, it was put in a temple, and the

lingam erected by Rama was left on the shore. There it stayed during long centuries, but, at the arrival of the Portuguese, the "Lord of Sand" felt so disgusted with the feringhi (foreigners) that he jumped into the sea never to return. A little farther on there is a charming tank, called Vanattirtha, or the "point of the arrow." Here Rama, the much worshipped hero of the Hindus, felt thirsty and, not finding any water, shot an arrow and immediately there was created a pond. Its crystal waters were surrounded by a high wall, steps were built leading down to it, and a circle of white marble dwellings was filled with dwija (twice born) Brahmans.

India is the land of legends and of mysterious nooks and corners. There is not a ruin, not a monument, not a thicket, that has no story attached to it. Yet, however they may be entangled in the cobweb of popular imagination, which becomes thicker with every generation, it is difficult to point out a single one that is not founded on fact. With patience and, still more, with the help of the learned Brahmans you can always get at the truth, when once you have secured their trust and friendship.

The same road leads to the temple of the Parsee fire-worshippers. At its altar burns an unquenchable fire, which daily consumes hundredweights of sandal wood and aromatic herbs. Lit three hundred years ago, the sacred fire has never been extinguished, notwithstanding many disorders, sectarian discords, and even wars. The Parsees are very proud of this temple of Zaratushta, as they call Zoroaster. Compared with

it the Hindu pagodas look like brightly painted Easter eggs. Generally they are consecrated to Hanuman, the monkey-god and the faithful ally of Rama, or to the elephant headed Ganesha, the god of the occult wisdom, or to one of the Devis. You meet with these temples in every street. Before each there is a row of pipals (*Ficus religiosa*) centuries old, which no temple can dispense with, because these trees are the abode of the elementals and the sinful souls.

All this is entangled, mixed, and scattered, appearing to one's eyes like a picture in a dream. Thirty centuries have left their traces here. The innate laziness and the strong conservative tendencies of the Hindus, even before the European invasion, preserved all kinds of monuments from the ruinous vengeance of the fanatics, whether those memorials were Buddhist, or belonged to some other unpopular sect. The Hindus are not naturally given to senseless vandalism, and a phrenologist would vainly look for a bump of destructiveness on their skulls. If you meet with antiquities that, having been spared by time, are, nowadays, either destroyed or disfigured, it is not they who are to blame, but either Mussulmans, or the Portuguese under the guidance of the Jesuits.

At last we were anchored and, in a moment, were besieged, ourselves as well as our luggage, by numbers of naked skeleton-like Hindus, Parsees, Moguls, and various other tribes. All this crowd emerged, as if from the bottom of the sea, and began to shout, to chatter, and to yell, as only the tribes of Asia can. To

get rid of this Babel confusion of tongues as soon as possible, we took refuge in the first bunder boat and made for the shore.

Once settled in the bungalow awaiting us, the first thing we were struck with in Bombay was the millions of crows and vultures. The first are, so to speak, the County Council of the town, whose duty it is to clean the streets, and to kill one of them is not only forbidden by the police, but would be very dangerous. By killing one you would rouse the vengeance of every Hindu, who is always ready to offer his own life in exchange for a crow's. The souls of the sinful forefathers transmigrate into crows and to kill one is to interfere with the law of Karma and to expose the poor ancestor to something still worse. Such is the firm belief, not only of Hindus, but of Parsees, even the most enlightened amongst them. The strange behaviour of the Indian crows explains, to a certain extent, this superstition. The vultures are, in a way, the grave-diggers of the Parsees and are under the personal protection of the Farvardania, the angel of death, who soars over the Tower of Silence, watching the occupations of the feathered workmen.

The deafening caw of the crows strikes every new comer as uncanny, but, after a while, is explained very simply. Every tree of the numerous cocoa-nut forests round Bombay is provided with a hollow pumpkin. The sap of the tree drops into it and, after fermenting, becomes a most intoxicating beverage, known in Bombay under the name of toddy. The naked toddy wallahs, generally half-caste Portuguese, modestly adorned with a single

coral necklace, fetch this beverage twice a day, climbing the hundred and fifty feet high trunks like squirrels. The crows mostly build their nests on the tops of the cocoa-nut palms and drink incessantly out of the open pumpkins. The result of this is the chronic intoxication of the birds. As soon as we went out in the garden of our new habitation, flocks of crows came down heavily from every tree. The noise they make whilst jumping about everywhere is indescribable. There seemed to be something positively human in the positions of the slyly bent heads of the drunken birds, and a fiendish light shone in their eyes while they were examining us from foot to head.

We occupied three small bungalows, lost, like nests, in the garden, their roofs literally smothered in roses blossoming on bushes twenty feet high, and their windows covered only with muslin, instead of the usual panes of glass. The bungalows were situated in the native part of the town, so that we were transported, all at once, into the real India. We were living in India, unlike English people, who are only surrounded by India at a certain distance. We were enabled to study her character and customs, her religion, superstitions and rites, to learn her legends, in fact, to live among Hindus.

Everything in India, this land of the elephant and the poisonous cobra, of the tiger and the unsuccessful English missionary, is original and strange. Everything seems unusual, unexpected, and striking, even to one who has travelled in Turkey, Egypt, Damascus, and Palestine. In these tropical

regions the conditions of nature are so various that all the forms of the animal and vegetable kingdoms must radically differ from what we are used to in Europe. Look, for instance, at those women on their way to a well through a garden, which is private and at the same time open to anyone, because somebody's cows are grazing in it. To whom does it not happen to meet with women, to see cows, and admire a garden? Doubtless these are among the commonest of all things. But a single attentive glance will suffice to show you the difference that exists between the same objects in Europe and in India. Nowhere more than in India does a human being feel his weakness and insignificance. The majesty of the tropical growth is such that our highest trees would look dwarfed compared with banyans and especially with palms. A European cow, mistaking, at first sight, her Indian sister for a calf, would deny the existence of any kinship between them, as neither the mouse-coloured wool, nor the straight goat-like horns, nor the humped back of the latter would permit her to make such an error. As to the women, each of them would make any artist feel enthusiastic about the gracefulness of her movements and drapery, but still, no pink and white, stout Anna Ivanovna would condescend to greet her. "Such a shame, God forgive me, the woman is entirely naked!"

This opinion of the modern Russian woman is nothing but the echo of what was said in 1470 by a distinguished Russian traveler, "the sinful slave of God, Athanasius son of Nikita from Tver," as he styles himself. He describes India as follows: "This

is the land of India. Its people are naked, never cover their heads, and wear their hair braided. Women have babies every year. Men and women are black. Their prince wears a veil round his head and wraps another veil round his legs. The noblemen wear a veil on one shoulder, and the noblewomen on the shoulders and round the loins, but everyone is barefooted. The women walk about with their hair spread and their breasts naked. The children, boys and girls, never cover their shame until they are seven years old...." This description is quite correct, but Athanasius Nikita's son is right only concerning the lowest and poorest classes. These really do "walk about" covered only with a veil, which often is so poor that, in fact, it is nothing but a rag. But still, even the poorest woman is clad in a piece of muslin at least ten yards long. One end serves as a sort of short petticoat, and the other covers the head and shoulders when out in the street, though the faces are always uncovered. The hair is erected into a kind of Greek chignon. The legs up to the knees, the arms, and the waist are never covered. There is not a single respectable woman who would consent to put on a pair of shoes. Shoes are the attribute and the prerogative of disreputable women. When, some time ago, the wife of the Madras governor thought of passing a law that should induce native women to cover their breasts, the place was actually threatened with a revolution. A kind of jacket is worn only by dancing girls. The Government recognized that it would be unreasonable to irritate women, who, very often, are more dangerous than their husbands and brothers, and the custom,

based on the law of Manu, and sanctified by three thousand years' observance, remained unchanged.

For more than two years before we left America we were in constant correspondence with a certain learned Brahman, whose glory is great at present (1879) all over India. We came to India to study, under his guidance, the ancient country of Aryas, the Vedas, and their difficult language. His name is Dayanand Saraswati Swami. Swami is the name of the learned anchorites who are initiated into many mysteries unattainable by common mortals. They are monks who never marry, but are quite different from other mendicant brotherhoods, the so-called Sannyasi and Hossein. This Pandit is considered the greatest Sanskritist of modern India and is an absolute enigma to everyone. It is only five years since he appeared on the arena of great reforms, but till then, he lived, entirely secluded, in a jungle, like the ancient gymnosophists mentioned by the Greek and Latin authors. At this time he was studying the chief philosophical systems of the "Aryavartta" and the occult meaning of the Vedas with the help of mystics and anchorites. All Hindus believe that on the Bhadrinath Mountains (22,000 feet above the level of the sea) there exist spacious caves, inhabited, now for many thousand years, by these anchorites. Bhadrinath is situated in the north of Hindustan on the river Bishegunj, and is celebrated for its temple of Vishnu right in the heart of the town. Inside the temple there are hot mineral springs, visited yearly by about fifty thousand pilgrims, who come to be purified by them.

From the first day of his appearance Dayanand Saraswati produced an immense impression and got the surname of the "Luther of India." Wandering from one town to another, today in the South, tomorrow in the North, and transporting himself from one end of the country to another with incredible quickness, he has visited every part of India, from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas, and from Calcutta to Bombay. He preaches the One Deity and, "Vedas in hand," proves that in the ancient writings there was not a word that could justify polytheism. Thundering against idol worship, the great orator fights with all his might against caste, infant marriages, and superstitions. Chastising all the evils grafted on India by centuries of casuistry and false interpretation of the Vedas, he blames for them the Brahmans, who, as he openly says before masses of people, are alone guilty of the humiliation of their country, once great and independent, now fallen and enslaved. And yet Great Britain has in him not an enemy, but rather an ally. He says openly—"If you expel the English, then, no later than tomorrow, you and I and everyone who rises against idol worship will have our throats cut like mere sheep. The Mussulmans are stronger than the idol worshippers; but these last are stronger than we." The Pandit held many a warm dispute with the Brah-mans, those treacherous enemies of the people, and has almost always been victorious. In Benares secret assassins were hired to slay him, but the attempt did not succeed. In a small town of Bengal, where he treated fetishism with more than his usual severity, some fanatic threw on his

naked feet a huge cobra. There are two snakes deified by the Brahman mythology: the one which surrounds the neck of Shiva on his idols is called Vasuki; the other, Ananta, forms the couch of Vishnu. So the worshipper of Shiva, feeling sure that his cobra, trained purposely for the mysteries of a Shivaite pagoda, would at once make an end of the offender's life, triumphantly exclaimed, "Let the god Vasuki himself show which of us is right!"

Dayanand jerked off the cobra twirling round his leg, and with a single vigorous movement, crushed the reptile's head. "Let him do so," he quietly assented. "Your god has been too slow. It is I who have decided the dispute, Now go," added he, addressing the crowd, "and tell everyone how easily perish the false gods."

Thanks to his excellent knowledge of Sanskrit the Pandit does a great service, not only to the masses, clearing their ignorance about the monotheism of the Vedas, but to science too, showing who, exactly, are the Brahmans, the only caste in India which, during centuries, had the right to study Sanskrit literature and comment on the Vedas, and which used this right solely for its own advantage.

Long before the time of such Orientalists as Burnouf, Colebrooke and Max Muller, there have been in India many reformers who tried to prove the pure monotheism of the Vedic doctrines. There have even been founders of new religions who denied the revelations of these scriptures; for instance, the Raja Ram Mohun Roy, and, after him, Babu Keshub Chunder Sen, both Calcutta Bengalees. But neither of them had much

success. They did nothing but add new denominations to the numberless sects existing in India. Ram Mohun Roy died in England, having done next to nothing, and Keshub Chunder Sen, having founded the community of "Brahmo-Samaj," which professes a religion extracted from the depths of the Babu's own imagination, became a mystic of the most pronounced type, and now is only "a berry from the same field," as we say in Russia, as the Spiritualists, by whom he is considered to be a medium and a Calcutta Swedenborg. He spends his time in a dirty tank, singing praises to Chaitanya, Koran, Buddha, and his own person, proclaiming himself their prophet, and performs a mystical dance, dressed in woman's attire, which, on his part, is an attention to a "woman goddess" whom the Babu calls his "mother, father and eldest brother."

In short, all the attempts to re-establish the pure primitive monotheism of Aryan India have been a failure. They always got wrecked upon the double rock of Brahmanism and of prejudices centuries old. But lo! here appears unexpectedly the pandit Dayanand. None, even of the most beloved of his disciples, knows who he is and whence he comes. He openly confesses before the crowds that the name under which he is known is not his, but was given to him at the Yogi initiation.

The mystical school of Yogis was established by Patanjali, the founder of one of the six philosophical systems of ancient India. It is supposed that the Neo-platonists of the second and third Alexandrian Schools were the followers of Indian Yogis, more

especially was their theurgy brought from India by Pythagoras, according to the tradition. There still exist in India hundreds of Yogis who follow the system of Patanjali, and assert that they are in communion with Brahma. Nevertheless, most of them are do-nothings, mendicants by profession, and great frauds, thanks to the insatiable longing of the natives for miracles. The real Yogis avoid appearing in public, and spend their lives in secluded retirement and studies, except when, as in Dayanand's case, they come forth in time of need to aid their country. However, it is perfectly certain that India never saw a more learned Sanskrit scholar, a deeper metaphysician, a more wonderful orator, and a more fearless denunciator of every evil, than Dayanand, since the time of Sankharacharya, the celebrated founder of the Vedanta philosophy, the most metaphysical of Indian systems, in fact, the crown of pantheistic teaching. Then, Dayanand's personal appearance is striking. He is immensely tall, his complexion is pale, rather European than Indian, his eyes are large and bright, and his greyish hair is long. The Yogis and Dikshatas (initiated) never cut either their hair or beard. His voice is clear and loud, well calculated to give expression to every shade of deep feeling, ranging from a sweet childish caressing whisper to thundering wrath against the evil doings and falsehoods of the priests. All this taken together produces an indescribable effect on the impressionable Hindu. Wherever Dayanand appears crowds prostrate themselves in the dust over his footprints; but, unlike Babu Keshub Chunder Sen, he does not teach a new

religion, does not invent new dogmas. He only asks them to renew their half-forgotten Sanskrit studies, and, having compared the doctrines of their forefathers with what they have become in the hands of Brahmans, to return to the pure conceptions of Deity taught by the primitive Rishis—Agni, Vayu, Aditya, and Anghira—the patriarchs who first gave the Vedas to humanity. He does not even claim that the Vedas are a heavenly revelation, but simply teaches that "every word in these scriptures belongs to the highest inspiration possible to the earthly man, an inspiration that is repeated in the history of humanity, and, when necessary, may happen to any nation....."

During his five years of work Swami Dayanand made about two million proselytes, chiefly amongst the higher castes. Judging by appearances, they are all ready to sacrifice to him their lives and souls and even their earthly possessions, which are often more precious to them than their lives. But Dayanand is a real Yogi, he never touches money, and despises pecuniary affairs. He contents himself with a few handfuls of rice per day. One is inclined to think that this wonderful Hindu bears a charmed life, so careless is he of rousing the worst human passions, which are so dangerous in India. A marble statue could not be less moved by the raging wrath of the crowd. We saw him once at work. He sent away all his faithful followers and forbade them either to watch over him or to defend him, and stood alone before the infuriated crowd, facing calmly the monster ready to spring upon him and tear him to pieces.

Here a short explanation is necessary. A few years ago a society of well-informed, energetic people was formed in New York. A certain sharp-witted savant surnamed them "La Societe des Malcontents du Spiritisme." The founders of this club were people who, believing in the phenomena of spiritualism as much as in the possibility of every other phenomenon in Nature, still denied the theory of the "spirits." They considered that the modern psychology was a science still in the first stages of its development, in total ignorance of the nature of the psychic man, and denying, as do many other sciences, all that cannot be explained according to its own particular theories.

From the first days of its existence some of the most learned Americans joined the Society, which became known as the Theosophical Society. Its members differed on many points, much as do the members of any other Society, Geographical or Archeological, which fights for years over the sources of the Nile, or the Hieroglyphs of Egypt. But everyone is unanimously agreed that, as long as there is water in the Nile, its sources must exist somewhere. So much about the phenomena of spiritualism and mesmerism. These phenomena were still waiting their Champollion—but the Rosetta stone was to be searched for neither in Europe nor in America, but in the far-away countries where they still believe in magic, where wonders are performed daily by the native priesthood, and where the cold materialism of science has never yet reached—in one word, in the East.

The Council of the Society knew that the Lama-Buddhists, for

instance, though not believing in God, and denying the personal immortality of the soul, are yet celebrated for their "phenomena," and that mesmerism was known and daily practised in China from time immemorial under the name of "gina." In India they fear and hate the very name of the spirits whom the Spiritualists venerate so deeply, yet many an ignorant fakir can perform "miracles" calculated to turn upside-down all the notions of a scientist and to be the despair of the most celebrated of European prestidigitateurs. Many members of the Society have visited India—many were born there and have themselves witnessed the "sorceries" of the Brahmans. The founders of the Club, well aware of the depth of modern ignorance in regard to the spiritual man, were most anxious that Cuvier's method of comparative anatomy should acquire rights of citizenship among metaphysicians, and, so, progress from regions physical to regions psychological on its own inductive and deductive foundation. "Otherwise," they thought, "psychology will be unable to move forward a single step, and may even obstruct every other branch of Natural History." Instances have not been wanting of physiology poaching on the preserves of purely metaphysical and abstract knowledge, all the time feigning to ignore the latter absolutely, and seeking to class psychology with the positive sciences, having first bound it to a Bed of Procrustes, where it refuses to yield its secret to its clumsy tormentors.

In a short time the Theosophical Society counted its members, not by hundreds, but by thousands. All the "malcontents" of

American Spiritualism—and there were at that time twelve million Spiritualists in America—joined the Society. Collateral branches were formed in London, Corfu, Australia, Spain, Cuba, California, etc. Everywhere experiments were being performed, and the conviction that it is not spirits alone who are the causes of the phenomena was becoming general.

In course of time branches of the Society were in India and in Ceylon. The Buddhist and Brahmanical members became more numerous than the Europeans. A league was formed, and to the name of the Society was added the subtitle, "The Brotherhood of Humanity." After an active correspondence between the Arya-Samaj, founded by Swami Dayanand, and the Theosophical Society, an amalgamation was arranged between the two bodies. Then the Chief Council of the New York branch decided upon sending a special delegation to India, for the purpose of studying, on the spot, the ancient language of the Vedas and the manuscripts and the wonders of Yogism. On the 17th of December, 1878, the delegation, composed of two secretaries and two members of the council of the Theosophical Society, started from New York, to pause for a while in London, and then to proceed to Bombay, where it landed in February, 1879.

It may easily be conceived that, under these circumstances, the members of the delegation were better able to study the country and to make fruitful researches than might, otherwise, have been the case. Today they are looked upon as brothers and aided by the most influential natives of India. They count among

the members of their society pandits of Benares and Calcutta, and Buddhist priests of the Ceylon Viharas—amongst others the learned Sumangala, mentioned by Minayeff in the description of his visit to Adam's Peak—and Lamas of Thibet, Burmah, Travancore and elsewhere. The members of the delegation are admitted to sanctuaries where, as yet, no European has set his foot. Consequently they may hope to render many services to Humanity and Science, in spite of the illwill which the representatives of positive science bear to them.

As soon as the delegation landed, a telegram was despatched to Dayanand, as everyone was anxious to make his personal acquaintance. In reply, he said that he was obliged to go immediately to Hardwar, where hundreds of thousands of pilgrims were expected to assemble, but he insisted on our remaining behind, since cholera was certain to break out among the devotees. He appointed a certain spot, at the foot of the Himalayas, in the jab, where we were to meet in a month's time.

Alas! all this was written some time ago. Since then Swami Dayanand's countenance has changed completely toward us. He is, now, an enemy of the Theosophical Society and its two founders—Colonel Olcott and the author of these letters. It appeared that, on entering into an offensive and defensive alliance with the Society, Dayanand nourished the hope that all its members, Christians, Brahmans and Buddhists, would acknowledge His supremacy, and become members of the Arya Samaj.

Needless to say, this was impossible. The Theosophical Society rests on the principle of complete non-interference with the religious beliefs of its members. Toleration is its basis and its aims are purely philosophical. This did not suit Dayanand. He wanted all the members, either to become his disciples, or to be expelled from the Society. It was quite clear that neither the President, nor the Council could assent to such a claim. Englishmen and Americans, whether they were Christians or Freethinkers, Buddhists, and especially Brahmans, revolted against Dayanand, and unanimously demanded that the league should be broken.

However, all this happened later. At the time of which I speak we were friends and allies of the Swami, and we learned with deep interest that the Hardwar "mela," which he was to visit, takes place every twelve years, and is a kind of religious fair, which attracts representatives from all the numerous sects of India.

Learned dissertations are read by the disputants in defence of their peculiar doctrines, and the debates are held in public. This year the Hardwar gathering was exceptionally numerous. The Sannyasis—the mendicant monks of India—alone numbered 35,000 and the cholera, foreseen by the Swami, actually broke out.

As we were not yet to start for the appointed meeting, we had plenty of spare time before us; so we proceeded to examine Bombay.

The Tower of Silence, on the heights of the Malabar Hill, is the last abode of all the sons of Zoroaster. It is, in fact, a Parsee cemetery. Here their dead, rich and poor, men, women and children, are all laid in a row, and in a few minutes nothing remains of them but bare skeletons. A dismal impression is made upon a foreigner by these towers, where absolute silence has reigned for centuries. This kind of building is very common in every place where Parsees live and die. In Bombay, of six towers, the largest was built 250 years ago, and the least but a short time since. With few exceptions, they are round or square in shape, from twenty to forty feet high, without roof, window, or door, but with a single iron gate opening towards the East, and so small that it is quite covered by a few bushes. The first corpse brought to a new tower—"dakhma"—must be the body of the innocent child of a mobed or priest. No one, not even the chief watcher, is allowed to approach within a distance of thirty paces of these towers. Of all living human beings "nassesalars"—corpse-carriers—alone enter and leave the "Tower of Silence." The life these men lead is simply wretched. No European executioner's position is worse. They live quite apart from the rest of the world, in whose eyes they are the most abject of beings. Being forbidden to enter the markets, they must get their food as they can. They are born, marry, and die, perfect strangers to all except their own class, passing through the streets only to fetch the dead and carry them to the tower. Even to be near one of them is a degradation. Entering the tower with a corpse, covered, whatever may have

been its rank or position, with old white rags, they undress it and place it, in silence, on one of the three rows presently to be described. Then, still preserving the same silence, they come out, shut the gate, and burn the rags.

Amongst the fire-worshippers, Death is divested of all his majesty and is a mere object of disgust. As soon as the last hour of a sick person seems to approach, everyone leaves the chamber of death, as much to avoid impeding the departure of the soul from the body, as to shun the risk of polluting the living by contact with the dead. The mobed alone stays with the dying man for a while, and having whispered into his ear the Zend-Avesta precepts, "ashem-vohu" and "Yato-Ahuvarie," leaves the room while the patient is still alive. Then a dog is brought and made to look straight into his face. This ceremony is called "sas-did," the "dog's-stare." A dog is the only living creature that the "Drux-nassu"—the evil one—fears, and that is able to prevent him from taking possession of the body. It must be strictly observed that no one's shadow lies between the dying man and the dog, otherwise the whole strength of the dog's gaze will be lost, and the demon will profit by the occasion. The body remains on the spot where life left it, until the nassesalars appear, their arms hidden to the shoulders under old bags, to take it away. Having deposited it in an iron coffin—the same for everyone—they carry it to the dakhma. If any one, who has once been carried thither, should happen to regain consciousness, the nassesalars are bound to kill him; for such a person, who has been polluted by one touch

of the dead bodies in the dakhma, has thereby lost all right to return to the living, by doing so he would contaminate the whole community. As some such cases have occurred, the Parsees are trying to get a new law passed, that would allow the miserable ex-corpses to live again amongst their friends, and that would compel the nassesalars to leave the only gate of the dakhma unlocked, so that they might find a way of retreat open to them. It is very curious, but it is said that the vultures, which devour without hesitation the corpses, will never touch those who are only apparently dead, but fly away uttering loud shrieks. After a last prayer at the gate of the dakhma, pronounced from afar by the mobed, and re-peated in chorus by the nassesalars, the dog ceremony is repeated. In Bombay there is a dog, trained for this purpose, at the entrance to the tower. Finally, the body is taken inside and placed on one or other of the rows, according to its sex and age.

We have twice been present at the ceremonies of dying, and once of burial, if I may be permitted to use such an incongruous term. In this respect the Parsees are much more tolerant than the Hindus, who are offended by the mere presence at their religious rites of an European. N. Bayranji, a chief official of the tower, invited us to his house to be present at the burial of some rich woman. So we witnessed all that was going on at a distance of about forty paces, sitting quietly on our obliging host's verandah. While the dog was staring into the dead woman's face, we were gazing, as intently, but with much more disgust, at the huge

flock of vultures above the dakhma, that kept entering the tower, and flying out again with pieces of human flesh in their beaks. These birds, that build their nests in thousands round the Tower of Silence, have been purposely imported from Persia. Indian vultures proved to be too weak, and not sufficiently bloodthirsty, to perform the process of stripping the bones with the despatch prescribed by Zoroaster. We were told that the entire operation of denuding the bones occupies no more than a few minutes. As soon as the ceremony was over, we were led into another building, where a model of the dakhma was to be seen. We could now very easily imagine what was to take place presently inside the tower. In the centre there is a deep waterless well, covered with a grating like the opening into a drain. Around it are three broad circles, gradually sloping downwards. In each of them are coffin-like receptacles for the bodies. There are three hundred and sixty-five such places. The first and smallest row is destined for children, the second for women, and the third for men. This threefold circle is symbolical of three cardinal Zoroastrian virtues—pure thoughts, kind words, and good actions. Thanks to the vultures, the bones are laid bare in less than an hour, and, in two or three weeks, the tropical sun scorches them into such a state of fragility, that the slightest breath of wind is enough to reduce them to powder and to carry them down into the pit. No smell is left behind, no source of plagues and epidemics. I do not know that this way may not be preferable to cremation, which leaves in the air about the Ghat a faint but disagreeable odour.

The Ghat is a place by the sea, or river shore, where Hindus burn their dead. Instead of feeding the old Slavonic deity "Mother Wet Earth" with carrion, Parsees give to Armasti pure dust. Armasti means, literally, "fostering cow," and Zoroaster teaches that the cultivation of land is the noblest of all occupations in the eyes of God. Accordingly, the worship of Earth is so sacred among the Parsees, that they take all possible precautions against polluting the "fostering cow" that gives them "a hundred golden grains for every single grain." In the season of the Monsoon, when, during four months, the rain pours incessantly down and washes into the well everything that is left by the vultures, the water absorbed by the earth is filtered, for the bottom of the well, the walls of which are built of granite, is, to this end, covered with sand and charcoal.

The sight of the Pinjarapala is less lugubrious and much more amusing. The Pinjarapala is the Bombay Hospital for decrepit animals, but a similar institution exists in every town where Jainas dwell. Being one of the most ancient, this is also one of the most interesting, of the sects of India. It is much older than Buddhism, which took its rise about 543 to 477 B.C. Jainas boast that Buddhism is nothing more than a mere heresy of Jainism, Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, having been a disciple and follower of one of the Jaina Gurus. The customs, rites, and philosophical conceptions of Jainas place them midway between the Brahmanists and the Buddhists. In view of their social arrangements, they more closely resemble the

former, but in their religion they incline towards the latter. Their caste divisions, their total abstinence from flesh, and their non-worship of the relics of the saints, are as strictly observed as the similar tenets of the Brahmans, but, like Buddhists, they deny the Hindu gods and the authority of the Vedas, and adore their own twenty-four Tirthankaras, or Jinas, who belong to the Host of the Blissful. Their priests, like the Buddhists', never marry, they live in isolated viharas and choose their successors from amongst the members of any social class. According to them, Prakrit is the only sacred language, and is used in their sacred literature, as well as in Ceylon. Jainas and Buddhists have the same traditional chronology. They do not eat after sunset, and carefully dust any place before sitting down upon it, that they may not crush even the tiniest of insects. Both systems, or rather both schools of philosophy, teach the theory of eternal indestructible atoms, following the ancient atomistic school of Kanada. They assert that the universe never had a beginning and never will have an end. "The world and everything in it is but an illusion, a Maya," say the Vedantists, the Buddhists, and the Jainas; but, whereas the followers of Sankaracharya preach Parabrahm (a deity devoid of will, understanding, and action, because "It is absolute understanding, mind and will"), and Ishwara emanating from It, the Jainas and the Buddhists believe in no Creator of the Universe, but teach only the existence of Swabhawati, a plastic, infinite, self-created principle in Nature. Still they firmly believe, as do all Indian sects, in the transmigration of souls.

Their fear, lest, by killing an animal or an insect, they may, perchance, destroy the life of an ancestor, develops their love and care for every living creature to an almost incredible extent. Not only is there a hospital for invalid animals in every town and village, but their priests always wear a muslin muzzle, (I trust they will pardon the disrespectful expression!) in order to avoid destroying even the smallest animalcule, by inadvertence in the act of breathing. The same fear impels them to drink only filtered water. There are a few millions of Jainas in Gujerat, Bombay, Konkan, and some other places.

The Bombay Pinjarapala occupies a whole quarter of the town, and is separated into yards, meadows and gardens, with ponds, cages for beasts of prey, and enclosures for tame animals. This institution would have served very well for a model of Noah's Ark. In the first yard, however, we saw no animals, but, instead, a few hundred human skeletons—old men, women and children. They were the remaining natives of the, so-called, famine districts, who had crowded into Bombay to beg their bread. Thus, while, a few yards off, the official "Vets." were busily bandaging the broken legs of jackals, pouring ointments on the backs of mangy dogs, and fitting crutches to lame storks, human beings were dying, at their very elbows, of starvation. Happily for the famine-stricken, there were at that time fewer hungry animals than usual, and so they were fed on what remained from the meals of the brute pensioners. No doubt many of these wretched sufferers would have consented to transmigrate

instantly into the bodies of any of the animals who were ending so snugly their earthly careers.

But even the Pinjarajala roses are not without thorns. The graminivorous "subjects," of course, could not wish for anything better; but I doubt very much whether the beasts of prey, such as tigers, hyenas, and wolves, are content with the rules and the forcibly prescribed diet. Jains themselves turn with disgust even from eggs and fish, and, in consequence, all the animals of which they have the care must turn vegetarians. We were present when an old tiger, wounded by an English bullet, was fed. Having sniffed at a kind of rice soup which was offered to him, he lashed his tail, snarled, showing his yellow teeth, and with a weak roar turned away from the food. What a look he cast askance upon his keeper, who was meekly trying to persuade him to taste his nice dinner! Only the strong bars of the cage saved the Jaina from a vigorous protest on the part of this veteran of the forest. A hyena, with a bleeding head and an ear half torn off, began by sitting in the trough filled with this Spartan sauce, and then, without any further ceremony, upset it, as if to show its utter contempt for the mess. The wolves and the dogs raised such disconsolate howls that they attracted the attention of two inseparable friends, an old elephant with a wooden leg and a sore-eyed ox, the veritable Castor and Pollux of this institution. In accordance with his noble nature, the first thought of the elephant concerned his friend. He wound his trunk round the neck of the ox, in token of protection, and both moaned dismally.

Parrots, storks, pigeons, flamingoes—the whole feathered tribe—revelled in their breakfast. Monkeys were the first to answer the keeper's invitation and greatly enjoyed themselves. Further on we were shown a holy man, who was feeding insects with his own blood. He lay with his eyes shut, and the scorching rays of the sun striking full upon his naked body. He was literally covered with flies, mosquitoes, ants and bugs.

"All these are our brothers," mildly observed the keeper, pointing to the hundreds of animals and insects. "How can you Europeans kill and even devour them?"

"What would you do," I asked, "if this snake were about to bite you? Is it possible you would not kill it, if you had time?"

"Not for all the world. I should cautiously catch it, and then I should carry it to some deserted place outside the town, and there set it free."

"Nevertheless; suppose it bit you?"

"Then I should recite a mantram, and, if that produced no good result, I should be fair to consider it as the finger of Fate, and quietly leave this body for another."

These were the words of a man who was educated to a certain extent, and very well read. When we pointed out that no gift of Nature is aimless, and that the human teeth are all devouring, he answered by quoting whole chapters of Darwin's Theory of Natural Selection and Origin of Species. "It is not true," argued he, "that the first men were born with canine teeth. It was only in course of time, with the degradation of humanity,—only

when the appetite for flesh food began to develop—that the jaws changed their first shape under the influence of new necessities."

I could not help asking myself, "Ou la science va-t-elle se fourrer?"

The same evening, in Elphinstone's Theatre, there was given a special performance in honour of "the American Mission," as we are styled here. Native actors represented in Gujerati the ancient fairy drama Sita-Rama, that has been adapted from the Ramayana, the celebrated epic by Vilmiki. This drama is composed of fourteen acts and no end of tableaux, in addition to transformation scenes. All the female parts, as usual, were acted by young boys, and the actors, according to the historical and national customs, were bare-footed and half-naked. Still, the richness of the costumes, the stage adornments and transformations, were truly wonderful. For instance, even on the stages of large metropolitan theatres, it would have been difficult to give a better representation of the army of Rama's allies, who are nothing more than troops of monkeys under the leadership of Hanuman—the soldier, statesman, dramatist, poet, god, who is so celebrated in history (that of India s.v.p.). The oldest and best of all Sanskrit dramas, Hanuman-Natak, is ascribed to this talented forefather of ours.

Alas! gone is the glorious time when, proud of our white skin (which after all may be nothing more than the result of a fading, under the influences of our northern sky), we looked down upon Hindus and other "niggers" with a feeling of contempt well suited

to our own magnificence. No doubt Sir William Jones's soft heart ached, when translating from the Sanskrit such humiliating sentences as the following: "Hanuman is said to be the forefather of the Europeans." Rama, being a hero and a demi-god, was well entitled to unite all the bachelors of his useful monkey army to the daughters of the Lanka (Ceylon) giants, the Rakshasas, and to present these Dravidian beauties with the dowry of all Western lands. After the most pompous marriage ceremonies, the monkey soldiers made a bridge, with the help of their own tails, and safely landed with their spouses in Europe, where they lived very happily and had a numerous progeny. This progeny are we, Europeans. Dravidian words found in some European languages, in Basque for instance, greatly rejoice the hearts of the Brahmans, who would gladly promote the philologists to the rank of demi-gods for this important discovery, which confirms so gloriously their ancient legend. But it was Darwin who crowned the edifice of proof with the authority of Western education and Western scientific literature. The Indians became still more convinced that we are the veritable descendants of Hanuman, and that, if one only took the trouble to examine carefully, our tails might easily be discovered. Our narrow breeches and long skirts only add to the evidence, however uncomplimentary the idea may be to us.

Still, if you consider seriously, what are we to say when Science, in the person of Darwin, concedes this hypothesis to the wisdom of ancient Aryas. We must perforce submit. And,

really, it is better to have for a forefather Hanu-man, the poet, the hero, the god, than any other monkey, even though it be a tailless one. Sita-Rama belongs to the category of mythological dramas, something like the tragedies of Aeschylus. Listening to this production of the remotest antiquity, the spectators are carried back to the times when the gods, descending upon earth, took an active part in the everyday life of mortals. Nothing reminds one of a modern drama, though the exterior arrangement is the same. "From the sublime to the ridiculous there is but a step," and vice versa. The goat, chosen for a sacrifice to Bacchus, presented the world tragedy (greek script here). The death bleatings and buttings of the quadrupedal offering of antiquity have been polished by the hands of time and of civilization, and, as a result of this process, we get the dying whisper of Rachel in the part of Adrienne Lecouvreur, and the fearfully realistic "kicking" of the modern Croisette in the poisoning scene of *The Sphinx*. But, whereas the descendants of Themistocles gladly receive, whether captive or free, all the changes and improvements considered as such by modern taste, thinking them to be a corrected and enlarged edition of the genius of Aeschylus; Hindus, happily for archaeologists and lovers of antiquity, have never moved a step since the times of our much honoured forefather Hanuman.

We awaited the performance of Sita-Rama with the liveliest curiosity. Except ourselves and the building of the theatre, everything was strictly indigenous and nothing reminded us of the West. There was not the trace of an orchestra. Music was only

to be heard from the stage, or from behind it. At last the curtain rose. The silence, which had been very remarkable before the performance, considering the huge crowd of spectators of both sexes, now became absolute. Rama is one of the incarnations of Vishnu and, as most of the audience were worshippers of Vishnu, for them the spectacle was not a mere theatrical performance, but a religious mystery, representing the life and achievements of their favourite and most venerated gods.

The prologue was laid in the epoch before creation began (it may safely be said that no dramatist would dare to choose an earlier one)—or, rather, before the last manifestation of the universe. All the philosophical sects of India, except Mussulmans, agree that the universe has always existed. But the Hindus divide the periodical appearances and vanishings into days and nights of Brahma. The nights, or withdrawals of the objective universe, are called Pralayas, and the days, or epochs of new awakening into life and light, are called Manvantaras, Yugas, or "centuries of the gods." These periods are also called, respectively, the inbreathings and outbreathings of Brahma. When Pralaya comes to an end Brahma awakens, and, with this awakening, the universe that rested in deity, in other words, that was reabsorbed in its subjective essence, emanates from the divine principle and becomes visible. The gods, who died at the same time as the universe, begin slowly to return to life. The "Invisible" alone, the "Infinite," the "Lifeless," the One who is the unconditioned original "Life" itself, soars, surrounded by

shoreless chaos. Its holy presence is not visible. It shows itself only in the periodical pulsation of chaos, represented by a dark mass of waters filling the stage. These waters are not, as yet, separated from the dry land, because Brahma, the creative spirit of Narayana, has not yet separated from the "Ever Unchanging." Then comes a heavy shock of the whole mass and the waters begin to acquire transparency. Rays, proceeding from a golden egg at the bottom, spread through the chaotic waters. Receiving life from the spirit of Narayana, the egg bursts and the awakened Brahma rises to the surface of the water in the shape of a huge lotus. Light clouds appear, at first transparent and web-like. They gradually become condensed, and transform themselves into Prajapatis, the ten personified creative powers of Brahma, the god of everything living, and sing a hymn of praise to the creator. Something naively poetical, to our unaccustomed ears, breathed in this uniform melody unaccompanied by any orchestra.

The hour of general revival has struck. Pralaya comes to an end. Everything rejoices, returning to life. The sky is separated from the waters and on it appear the Asuras and Gandharvas, the heavenly singers and musicians. Then Indra, Yama, Varuna, and Kuvera, the spirits presiding over the four cardinal points, or the four elements, water, fire, earth, and air, pour forth atoms, whence springs the serpent "Ananta." The monster swims to the surface of the waves and, bending its swanlike neck, forms a couch on which Vishnu reclines with the Goddess of Beauty, his wife Lakshmi, at his feet. "Swatha! Swatha! Swatha!" cries

the choir of heavenly musicians, hailing the deity. In the Russian church service this is pronounced Swiat! Swiat! Swiat! and means holy! holy! holy!

In one of his future avatars Vishnu will incarnate in Rama, the son of a great king, and Lakshmi will become Sita. The motive of the whole poem of Ramayana is sung in a few words by the celestial musicians. Kama, the God of Love, shelters the divine couple and, that very moment, a flame is lit in their hearts and the whole world is created.

Later there are performed the fourteen acts of the drama, which is well known to everybody, and in which several hundred personages take part. At the end of the prologue the whole assembly of gods come forward, one after another, and acquaint the audience with the contents and the epilogue of their performance, asking the public not to be too exacting. It is as though all these familiar deities, made of painted granite and marble, left the temples and came down to remind mortals of events long past and forgotten.

The hall was full of natives. We four alone were representatives of Europe. Like a huge flower bed, the women displayed the bright colors of their garments. Here and there, among handsome, bronze-like heads, were the pretty, dull white faces of Parsee women, whose beauty reminded me of the Georgians. The front rows were occupied by women only. In India it is quite easy to learn a person's religion, sect, and caste, and even whether a woman is married or single, from the marks

painted in bright colors on everyone's forehead.

Since the time when Alexander the Great destroyed the sacred books of the Gebars, they have constantly been oppressed by the idol worshippers. King Ardeshir-Babechan restored fire worship in the years 229-243 A.C. Since then they have again been persecuted during the reign of one of the Shakpurs, either II., IX., or XI., of the Sassanids, but which of them is not known. It is, however, reported that one of them was a great protector of the Zartushta doctrines. After the fall of Yesdejird, the fire-worshippers emigrated to the island of Ormasd, and, some time later, having found a book of Zoroastrian prophecies, in obedience to one of them they set out for Hindustan. After many wanderings, they appeared, about 1,000 or 1,200 years ago, in the territory of Maharana-Jayadeva, a vassal of the Rajput King Champanir, who allowed them to colonize his land, but only on condition that they laid down their weapons, that they abandoned the Persian language for Hindi, and that their women put off their national dress and clothed themselves after the manner of Hindu women. He, however, allowed them to wear shoes, since this is strictly prescribed by Zoroaster. Since then very few changes have been made. It follows that the Parsee women could only be distinguished from their Hindu sisters by very slight differences. The almost white faces of the former were separated by a strip of smooth black hair from a sort of white cap, and the whole was covered with a bright veil. The latter wore no covering on their rich, shining hair, twisted into a kind of Greek chignon. Their

foreheads were brightly painted, and their nostrils adorned with golden rings. Both are fond of bright, but uniform, colors, both cover their arms up to the elbow with bangles, and both wear saris.

Behind the women a whole sea of most wonderful turbans was waving in the pit. There were long-haired Rajputs with regular Grecian features and long beards parted in the middle, their heads covered with "pagris" consisting of, at least, twenty yards of finest white muslin, and their persons adorned with earrings and necklaces; there were Mahrata Brahmans, who shave their heads, leaving only one long central lock, and wear turbans of blinding red, decorated in front with a sort of golden horn of plenty; Bangas, wearing three-cornered helmets with a kind of cockscomb on the top; Kachhis, with Roman helmets; Bhillis, from the borders of Rajastan, whose chins are wrapped three times in the ends of their pyramidal turbans, so that the innocent tourist never fails to think that they constantly suffer from toothache; Bengalis and Calcutta Babus, bare-headed all the year round, their hair cut after an Athenian fashion, and their bodies clothed in the proud folds of a white toga-virilis, in no way different from those once worn by Roman senators; Parsees, in their black, oilcloth mitres; Sikhs, the followers of Nanaka, strictly monotheist and mystic, whose turbans are very like the Bhillis', but who wear long hair down to their waists; and hundreds of other tribes.

Proposing to count how many different headgears are to

be seen in Bombay alone, we had to abandon the task as impracticable after a fortnight. Every caste, every trade, guild, and sect, every one of the thousand sub-divisions of the social hierarchy, has its own bright turban, often sparkling with gold lace and precious stones, which is laid aside only in case of mourning. But, as if to compensate for this luxury, even the mem-bers of the municipality, rich merchants, and Rai-Bahadurs, who have been created baronets by the Government, never wear any stockings, and leave their legs bare up to the knees. As for their dress, it chiefly consists of a kind of shapeless white shirt.

In Baroda some Gaikwars (a title of all the Baroda princes) still keep in their stables elephants and the less common giraffes, though the former are strictly forbidden in the streets of Bombay. We had an opportunity of seeing ministers, and even Rajas, mounted on these noble animals, their mouths full of pansupari (betel leaves), their heads drooping under the weight of the precious stones on their turbans, and each of their fingers and toes adorned with rich golden rings. While the evening I am describing lasted, however, we saw no elephants, no giraffes, though we enjoyed the company of Rajas and ministers. We had in our box the hand-some ambassador and late tutor of the Mahararana of Oodeypore. Our companion was a Raja and a pandit. His name was a Mohunlal-Vishnulal-Pandia. He wore a small pink turban sparkling with diamonds, a pair of pink barege trousers, and a white gauze coat. His raven black hair

half covered his amber-colored neck, which was surrounded by a necklace that might have driven any Parisian belle frantic with envy. The poor Raiput was awfully sleepy, but he stuck heroically to his duties, and, thoughtfully pulling his beard, led us all through the endless labyrinth of metaphysical entanglements of the Ramayana. During the entr'actes we were offered coffee, sherbets, and cigarettes, which we smoked even during the performance, sitting in front of the stage in the first row. We were covered, like idols, with garlands of flowers, and the manager, a stout Hindu clad in transparent muslins, sprinkled us several times with rose-water.

The performance began at eight p.m. and, at half-past two, had only reached the ninth act. In spite of each of us having a punkah-wallah at our backs, the heat was unbearable. We had reached the limits of our endurance, and tried to excuse ourselves. This led to general disturbance, on the stage as well as in the auditorium. The airy chariot, on which the wicked king Ravana was carrying Sita away, paused in the air. The king of the Nagas (serpents) ceased breathing flames, the monkey soldiers hung motionless on the trees, and Rama himself, clad in light blue and crowned with a diminutive pagoda, came to the front of the stage and pronounced in pure English speech, in which he thanked us for the honour of our presence. Then new bouquets, pansu-paris, and rose-water, and, finally, we reached home about four a.m. Next morning we learned that the performance had ended at half-past six.

On The Way To Karli

It is an early morning near the end of March. A light breeze caresses with its velvety hand the sleepy faces of the pilgrims; and the intoxicating perfume of tuberose mingles with the pungent odors of the bazaar. Crowds of barefooted Brahman women, stately and well-formed, direct their steps, like the biblical Rachel, to the well, with brass water pots bright as gold upon their heads. On our way lie numerous sacred tanks, filled with stagnant water, in which Hindus of both sexes perform their prescribed morning ablutions. Under the hedge of a garden somebody's tame mongoose is devouring the head of a cobra. The headless body of the snake convulsively, but harmlessly, beats against the thin flanks of the little animal, which regards these vain efforts with an evident delight. Side by side with this group of animals is a human figure; a naked mali (gardener), offering betel and salt to a monstrous stone idol of Shiva, with the view of pacifying the wrath of the "Destroyer," excited by the death of the cobra, which is one of his favourite servants. A few steps before reaching the railway station, we meet a modest Catholic procession, consisting of a few newly converted pariahs and some of the native Portuguese. Under a baldachin is a litter, on which swings to and fro a dusky Madonna dressed after the fashion of the native goddesses, with a ring in her nose. In her arms she carries the holy Babe, clad in yellow pyjamas

and a red Brah-manical turban. "Hari, hari, devaki!" ("Glory to the holy Virgin!") exclaim the converts, unconscious of any difference between the Devaki, mother of Krishna, and the Catholic Madonna. All they know is that, excluded from the temples by the Brahmans on account of their not belonging to any of the Hindu castes, they are admitted sometimes into the Christian pagodas, thanks to the "padris," a name adopted from the Portuguese padre, and applied indiscriminately to the missionaries of every European sect.

At last, our gharis—native two-wheeled vehicles drawn by a pair of strong bullocks—arrived at the station. English employes open wide their eyes at the sight of white-faced people travelling about the town in gilded Hindu chariots. But we are true Americans, and we have come hither to study, not Europe, but India and her products on the spot.

If the tourist casts a glance on the shore opposite to the port of Bombay, he will see a dark blue mass rising like a wall between himself and the horizon. This is Parbul, a flat-topped mountain 2,250 feet high. Its right slope leans on two sharp rocks covered with woods. The highest of them, Mataran, is the object of our trip. From Bombay to Narel, a station situated at the foot of this mountain, we are to travel four hours by railway, though, as the crow flies, the distance is not more than twelve miles. The railroad wanders round the foot of the most charming little hills, skirts hundreds of pretty lakes, and pierces with more than twenty tunnels the very heart of the rocky ghats.

We were accompanied by three Hindu friends. Two of them once belonged to a high caste, but were excommunicated from their pagoda for association and friendship with us, unworthy foreigners. At the station our party was joined by two more natives, with whom we had been in correspondence for many a year. All were members of our Society, reformers of the Young India school, enemies of Brahmans, castes, and prejudices, and were to be our fellow-travelers and visit with us the annual fair at the temple festivities of Karli, stopping on the way at Mataran and Khanduli. One was a Brahman from Poona, the second a moodeliar (landowner) from Madras, the third a Singalese from Kegalla, the fourth a Bengali Zemindar, and the fifth a gigantic Rajput, whom we had known for a long time by the name of Gulab-Lal-Sing, and had called simply Gulab-Sing. I shall dwell upon his personality more than on any of the others, because the most wonderful and diverse stories were in circulation about this strange man. It was asserted that he belonged to the sect of Raj-Yogis, and was an initiate of the mysteries of magic, alchemy, and various other occult sciences of India. He was rich and independent, and rumour did not dare to suspect him of deception, the more so because, though quite full of these sciences, he never uttered a word about them in public, and carefully concealed his knowledge from all except a few friends.

He was an independent Takur from Rajistan, a province the name of which means the land of kings. Takurs are, almost without exception, descended from the Surya (sun), and are

accordingly called Suryavansa. They are prouder than any other nation in the world. They have a proverb, "The dirt of the earth cannot stick to the rays of the sun." They do not despise any sect, except the Brahmans, and honor only the bards who sing their military achievements. Of the latter Colonel Tod writes somewhat as follows,¹ "The magnificence and luxury of the Rajput courts in the early periods of history were truly wonderful, even when due allowance is made for the poetical license of the bards. From the earliest times Northern India was a wealthy country, and it was precisely here that was situated the richest satrapy of Darius. At all events, this country abounded in those most striking events which furnish history with her richest materials. In Rajistan every small kingdom had its Thermopylae, and every little town has produced its Leonidas. But the veil of the centuries hides from posterity events that the pen of the historian might have bequeathed to the everlasting admiration of the nations. Somnath might have appeared as a rival of Delphi, the treasures of Hind might outweigh the riches of the King of Lydia, while compared with the army of the brothers Pandu, that of Xerxes would seem an inconsiderable handful of men, worthy only to rank in the second place."

England did not disarm the Rajputs, as she did the rest of the Indian nations, so Gulab-Sing came accompanied by vassals and

¹ In nearly every instance the passages quoted from various authorities have been retranslated from the Russian. As the time and labor needful for verification would be too great, the sense only of these passages is given here. They do not pretend to be textual.—Translator

shield-bearers.

Possessing an inexhaustible knowledge of legends, and being evidently well acquainted with the antiquities of his country, Gulab-Sing proved to be the most interesting of our companions.

"There, against the blue sky," said Gulab-Lal-Sing, "you behold the majestic Bhao Mallin. That deserted spot was once the abode of a holy hermit; now it is visited yearly by crowds of pilgrims. According to popular belief the most wonderful things happen there—miracles. At the top of the mountain, two thousand feet above the level of the sea, is the platform of a fortress. Behind it rises another rock two hundred and seventy feet in height, and at the very summit of this peak are to be found the ruins of a still more ancient fortress, which for seventy-five years served as a shelter for this hermit. Whence he obtained his food will for ever remain a mystery. Some think he ate the roots of wild plants, but upon this barren rock there is no vegetation. The only mode of ascent of this perpendicular mountain consists of a rope, and holes, just big enough to receive the toes of a man, cut out of the living rock. One would think such a pathway accessible only to acrobats and monkeys. Surely fanaticism must provide wings for the Hindus, for no accident has ever happened to any of them. Unfortunately, about forty years ago, a party of Englishmen conceived the unhappy thought of exploring the ruins, but a strong gust of wind arose and carried them over the precipice. After this, General Dickinson gave orders for the destruction of all means of communication with the upper

fortress, and the lower one, once the cause of so many losses and so much bloodshed, is now entirely deserted, and serves only as a shelter for eagles and tigers."

Listening to these tales of olden times, I could not help comparing the past with the present. What a difference!

"Kali-Yug!" cry old Hindus with grim despair. "Who can strive against the Age of Darkness?"

This fatalism, the certainty that nothing good can be expected now, the conviction that even the powerful god Shiva himself can neither appear nor help them are all deeply rooted in the minds of the old generation. As for the younger men, they receive their education in high schools and universities, learn by heart Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill, Darwin and the German philosophers, and entirely lose all respect, not only for their own religion, but for every other in the world.

The young "educated" Hindus are materialists almost without exception, and often achieve the last limits of Atheism. They seldom hope to attain to anything better than a situation as "chief mate of the junior clerk," as we say in Russia, and either become sycophants, disgusting flatterers of their present lords, or, which is still worse, or at any rate sillier, begin to edit a newspaper full of cheap liberalism, which gradually develops into a revolutionary organ.

But all this is only *en passant*. Compared with the mysterious and grandiose past of India, the ancient Aryavarta, her present is a natural Indian ink background, the black shadow of a

bright picture, the inevitable evil in the cycle of every nation. India has become decrepit and has fallen down, like a huge memorial of antiquity, prostrate and broken to pieces. But the most insignificant of these fragments will for ever remain a treasure for the archeologist and the artist, and, in the course of time, may even afford a clue to the philosopher and the psychologist. "Ancient Hindus built like giants and finished their work like goldsmiths," says Archbishop Heber, describing his travel in India. In his description of the Taj-Mahal of Agra, that veritable eighth wonder of the world, he calls it "a poem in marble." He might have added that it is difficult to find in India a ruin, in the least state of preservation, that cannot speak, more eloquently than whole volumes, of the past of India, her religious aspirations, her beliefs and hopes.

There is not a country of antiquity, not even excluding the Egypt of the Pharaohs, where the development of the subjective ideal into its demonstration by an objective symbol has been expressed more graphically, more skillfully, and artistically, than in India. The whole pantheism of the Vedanta is contained in the symbol of the bisexual deity Ardhanari. It is surrounded by the double triangle, known in India under the name of the sign of Vishnu. By his side lie a lion, a bull, and an eagle. In his hands there rests a full moon, which is reflected in the waters at his feet. The Vedanta has taught for thousands of years what some of the German philosophers began to preach at the end of last century and the beginning of this one, namely, that everything

objective in the world, as well as the world itself, is no more than an illusion, a Maya, a phantom created by our imagination, and as unreal as the reflection of the moon upon the surface of the waters. The phenomenal world, as well as the subjectivity of our conception concerning our Egos, are nothing but, as it were, a mirage. The true sage will never submit to the temptations of illusion. He is well aware that man will attain to self-knowledge, and become a real Ego, only after the entire union of the personal fragment with the All, thus becoming an immutable, infinite, universal Brahma. Accordingly, he considers the whole cycle of birth, life, old age, and death as the sole product of imagination.

Generally speaking, Indian philosophy, split up as it is into numerous metaphysical teachings, possesses, when united to Indian ontological doctrines, such a well developed logic, such a wonderfully refined psychology, that it might well take the first rank when contrasted with the schools, ancient and modern, idealist or positivist, and eclipse them all in turn. That positivism expounded by Lewis, that makes each particular hair on the heads of Oxford theologians stand on end, is ridiculous child's play compared with the atomistic school of Vaisheshika, with its world divided, like a chessboard, into six categories of everlasting atoms, nine substances, twenty-four qualities, and five motions. And, however difficult, and even impossible may seem the exact representation of all these abstract ideas, idealistic, pantheistic, and, sometimes, purely material, in the condensed shape of allegorical symbols, India, nevertheless,

has known how to express all these teachings more or less successfully. She has immortalized them in her ugly, four-headed idols, in the geometrical, complicated forms of her temples, and even in the entangled lines and spots on the foreheads of her sectaries.

We were discussing this and other topics with our Hindu fellow-travellers when a Catholic padre, a teacher in the Jesuit College of St. Xavier in Bombay, entered our carriage at one of the stations. Soon he could contain himself no longer, and joined in our conversation. Smiling and rubbing his hands, he said that he was curious to know on the strength of what sophistry our companions could find anything resembling a philosophical explanation "in the fundamental idea of the four faces of this ugly Shiva, crowned with snakes," pointing with his finger to the idol at the entrance to a pagoda.

"It is very simple," answered the Bengali Babu. "You see that its four faces are turned towards the four cardinal points, South, North, West, and East—but all these faces are on one body and belong to one god."

"Would you mind explaining first the philosophical idea of the four faces and eight hands of your Shiva," interrupted the padre.

"With great pleasure. Thinking that our great Rudra (the Vedic name for this god) is omnipresent, we represent him with his face turned simultaneously in all directions. Eight hands indicate his omnipotence, and his single body serves to remind us that he is One, though he is everywhere, and nobody can avoid

his all-seeing eye, or his chastising hand."

The padre was going to say something when the train stopped; we had arrived at Narel.

It is hardly twenty-five years since, for the first time, a white man ascended Mataran, a huge mass of various kinds of trap rock, for the most part crystalline in form. Though quite near to Bombay, and only a few miles from Khandala, the summer residence of the Europeans, the threatening heights of this giant were long considered inaccessible. On the north, its smooth, almost vertical face rises 2,450 feet over the valley of the river Pen, and, further on, numberless separate rocks and hillocks, covered with thick vegetation, and divided by valleys and precipices, rise up to the clouds. In 1854, the railway pierced one of the sides of Mataran, and now has reached the foot of the last mountain, stopping at Narel, where, not long ago, there was nothing but a precipice. From Narel to the upper plateau is but eight miles, which you may travel on a pony, or in an open or closed palanquin, as you choose.

Considering that we arrived at Narel about six in the evening, this course was not very tempting. Civilization has done much with inanimate nature, but, in spite of all its despotism, it has not yet been able to conquer tigers and snakes. Tigers, no doubt, are banished to the more remote jungles, but all kinds of snakes, especially cobras and coralillos, which last by preference inhabit trees, still abound in the forests of Mataran as in days of old, and wage a regular guerilla warfare against the invaders. Woe betide

the belated pedestrian, or even horseman, if he happens to pass under a tree which forms the ambushade of a coralillo snake! Cobras and other reptiles seldom attack men, and will generally try to avoid them, unless accidentally trodden upon, but these guerilleros of the forest, the tree serpents, lie in wait for their victims. As soon as the head of a man comes under the branch which shelters the coralillo, this enemy of man, coiling its tail round the branch, dives down into space with all the length of its body, and strikes with its fangs at the man's forehead. This curious fact was long considered to be a mere fable, but it has now been verified, and belongs to the natural history of India. In these cases the natives see in the snake the envoy of Death, the fulfiller of the will of the bloodthirsty Kali, the spouse of Shiva.

But evening, after the scorchingly hot day, was so tempting, and held out to us from the distance such promise of delicious coolness, that we decided upon risking our fate. In the heart of this wondrous nature one longs to shake off earthly chains, and unite oneself with the boundless life, so that death itself has its attractions in India.

Besides, the full moon was about to rise at eight p.m. Three hours' ascent of the mountain, on such a moonlit, tropical night as would tax the descriptive powers of the greatest artists, was worth any sacrifice. Apropos, among the few artists who can fix upon canvas the subtle charm of a moonlit night in India public opinion begins to name our own V.V. Vereshtchagin.

Having dined hurriedly in the dak bungalow we asked for

our sedan chairs, and, drawing our roof-like topees over our eyes, we started. Eight coolies, clad, as usual, in vine-leaves, took possession of each chair and hurried up the mountain, uttering the shrieks and yells no true Hindu can dispense with. Each chair was accompanied besides by a relay of eight more porters. So we were sixty-four, without counting the Hindus and their servants—an army sufficient to frighten any stray leopard or jungle tiger, in fact any animal, except our fearless cousins on the side of our great-grandfather Hanuman. As soon as we turned into a thicket at the foot of the Mountain, several dozens of these kinsmen joined our procession. Thanks to the achievements of Rama's ally, monkeys are sacred in India. The Government, emulating the earlier wisdom of the East India Company, forbids everyone to molest them, not only when met with in the forests, which in all justice belong to them, but even when they invade the city gardens. Leaping from one branch to another, chattering like magpies, and making the most formidable grimaces, they followed us all the way, like so many midnight spooks. Sometimes they hung on the trees in full moonlight, like forest nymphs of Russian mythology; sometimes they preceded us, awaiting our arrival at the turns of the road as if showing us the way. They never left us. One monkey babe alighted on my knees. In a moment the authoress of his being, jumping without any ceremony over the coolies' shoulders, came to his rescue, picked him up, and, after making the most ungodly grimace at me, ran away with him.

"Bandras (monkeys) bring luck with their presence," remarked one of the Hindus, as if to console me for the loss of my crumpled topee. "Besides," he added, "seeing them here we may be sure that there is not a single tiger for ten miles round."

Higher and higher we ascended by the steep winding path, and the forest grew perceptibly thicker, darker, and more impenetrable. Some of the thickets were as dark as graves. Passing under hundred-year-old banyans it was impossible to distinguish one's own finger at the distance of two inches. It seemed to me that in certain places it would not be possible to advance without feeling our way, but our coolies never made a false step, but hastened onwards. Not one of us uttered a word. It was as if we had agreed to be silent at these moments. We felt as though wrapped in the heavy veil of dark-ness, and no sound was heard but the short, irregular breathing of the porters, and the cadence of their quick, nervous footsteps upon the stony soil of the path. One felt sick at heart and ashamed of belonging to that human race, one part of which makes of the other mere beasts of burden. These poor wretches are paid for their work four annas a day all the year round. Four annas for going eight miles upwards and eight miles downwards not less than twice a day; altogether thirty-two miles up and down a mountain 1,500 feet high, carrying a burden of two hundredweight! However, India is a country where everything is adjusted to never changing customs, and four annas a day is the pay for unskilled labor of any kind.

Gradually open spaces and glades became more frequent and the light grew as intense as by day. Millions of grasshoppers were shrilling in the forest, filling the air with a metallic throbbing, and flocks of frightened parrots rushed from tree to tree. Sometimes the thundering, prolonged roars of tigers rose from the bottom of the precipices thickly covered with all kinds of vegetation. Shikaris assure us that, on a quiet night, the roaring of these beasts can be heard for many miles around. The panorama, lit up, as if by Bengal fires, changed at every turn. Rivers, fields, forests, and rocks, spread out at our feet over an enormous distance, moved and trembled, iridescent, in the silvery moonlight, like the tides of a mirage. The fantastic character of the pictures made us hold our breath. Our heads grew giddy if, by chance, we glanced down into the depths by the flickering moonlight. We felt that the precipice, 2,000 feet deep, was fascinating us. One of our American fellow travelers, who had begun the voyage on horseback, had to dismount, afraid of being unable to resist the temptation to dive head foremost into the abyss.

Several times we met with lonely pedestrians, men and young women, coming down Mataran on their way home after a day's work. It often happens that some of them never reach home. The police unconcernedly report that the missing man has been carried off by a tiger, or killed by a snake. All is said, and he is soon entirely forgotten. One person, more or less, out of the two hundred and forty millions who inhabit India does not matter much! But there exists a very strange superstition in the Deccan

about this mysterious, and only partially explored, mountain. The natives assert that, in spite of the considerable number of victims, there has never been found a single skeleton. The corpse, whether intact or mangled by tigers, is immediately carried away by the monkeys, who, in the latter case, gather the scattered bones, and bury them skillfully in deep holes, that no traces ever remain. Englishmen laugh at this superstition, but the police do not deny the fact of the entire disappearance of the bodies. When the sides of the mountain were excavated, in the course of the construction of the railway, separate bones, with the marks of tigers' teeth upon them, broken bracelets, and other adornments, were found at an incredible depth from the surface. The fact of these things being broken showed clearly that they were not buried by men, because, neither the religion of the Hindus, nor their greed, would allow them to break and bury silver and gold. Is it possible, then, that, as amongst men one hand washes the other, so in the animal kingdom one species conceals the crimes of another?

Having spent the night in a Portuguese inn, woven like an eagle's nest out of bamboos, and clinging to the almost vertical side of a rock, we rose at daybreak, and, having visited all the points de vue famed for their beauty, made our preparations to return to Narel. By daylight the panorama was still more splendid than by night; volumes would not suffice to describe it. Had it not been that on three sides the horizon was shut out by rugged ridges of mountain, the whole of the Deccan plateau would have

appeared before our eyes. Bombay was so distinct that it seemed quite near to us, and the channel that separates the town from Salsetta shone like a tiny silvery streak. It winds like a snake on its way to the port, surrounding Kanari and other islets, which look the very image of green peas scattered on the white cloth of its bright waters, and, finally, joins the blinding line of the Indian Ocean in the extreme distance. On the outer side is the northern Konkan, terminated by the Tal-Ghats, the needle-like summits of the Jano-Maoli rocks, and, lastly, the battlemented ridge of Funell, whose bold silhouette stands out in strong relief against the distant blue of the dim sky, like a giant's castle in some fairy tale. Further on looms Parbul, whose flat summit, in the days of old, was the seat of the gods, whence, according to the legends, Vishnu spoke to mortals. And there below, where the defile widens into a valley, all covered with huge separate rocks, each of which is crowded with historical and mythological legends, you may perceive the dim blue ridge of mountains, still loftier and still more strangely shaped. That is Khandala, which is overhung by a huge stone block, known by the name of the Duke's Nose. On the opposite side, under the very summit of the mountain, is situated Karli, which, according to the unanimous opinion or archeologists, is the most ancient and best preserved of Indian cave temples.

One who has traversed the passes of the Caucasus again and again; one who, from the top of the Cross Mountain, has beheld beneath her feet thunderstorms and lightnings; who has visited

the Alps and the Rigi; who is well acquainted with the Andes and Cordilleras, and knows every corner of the Catskills in America, may be allowed, I hope, the expression of a humble opinion. The Caucasian Mountains, I do not deny, are more majestic than Ghats of India, and their splendour cannot be dimmed by comparison with these; but their beauty is of a type, if I may use this expression. At their sight one experiences true delight, but at the same time a sensation of awe. One feels like a pigmy before these Titans of nature. But in India, the Himalayas excepted, mountains produce quite a different impression. The highest summits of the Deccan, as well as of the triangular ridge that fringes Northern Hindostan, and of the Eastern Ghats, do not exceed 3,000 feet. Only in the Ghats of the Malabar coast, from Cape Comorin to the river Surat, are there heights of 7,000 feet above the surface of the sea. So that no comparison can be drawn between these and the hoary headed patriarch Elbruz, or Kasbek, which exceeds 18,000 feet. The chief and original charm of Indian mountains wonderfully consists in their capricious shapes. Sometimes these mountains, or, rather, separate volcanic peaks standing in a row, form chains; but it is more common to find them scattered, to the great perplexity of geologists, without visible cause, in places where the formation seems quite unsuitable. Spacious valleys, surrounded by high walls of rock, over the very ridge of which passes the railway, are common. Look below, and it will seem to you that you are gazing upon the studio of some whimsical Titanic sculptor, filled with half

finished groups, statues, and monuments. Here is a dream-land bird, seated upon the head of a monster six hundred feet high, spreading its wings and widely gaping its dragon's mouth; by its side the bust of a man, surmounted by a helmet, battlemented like the walls of a feudal castle; there, again, new monsters devouring each other, statues with broken limbs, disorderly heaps of huge balls, lonely fortresses with loopholes, ruined towers and bridges. All this scattered and intermixed with shapes changing incessantly like the dreams of delirium. And the chief attraction is that nothing here is the result of art, everything is the pure sport of Nature, which, however, has occasionally been turned to account by ancient builders. The art of man in India is to be sought in the interior of the earth, not on its surface. Ancient Hindus seldom built their temples otherwise than in the bosom of the earth, as though they were ashamed of their efforts, or did not dare to rival the sculpture of nature. Having chosen, for instance, a pyramidal rock, or a cupola shaped hillock like Elephanta, Or Karli, they scraped away inside, according to the Puranas, for centuries, planning on so grand a style that no modern architecture has been able to conceive anything to equal it. Fables (?) about the Cyclops seem truer in India than in Egypt.

The marvellous railroad from Narel to Khandala reminds one of a similar line from Genoa up the Apenines. One may be said to travel in the air, not on land. The railway traverses a region 1,400 feet above Konkan, and, in some places, while one rail is laid on the sharp edge of the rock, the other is supported on vaults

and arches. The Mali Khindi viaduct is 163 feet high. For two hours we hastened on between sky and earth, with abysses on both sides thickly covered with mango trees and bananas. Truly English engineers are wonderful builders.

The pass of Bhor-Ghat is safely accomplished and we are in Khandala. Our bungalow here is built on the very edge of a ravine, which nature herself has carefully concealed under a cover of the most luxuriant vegetation. Everything is in blossom, and, in this unfathomed recess, a botanist might find sufficient material to occupy him for a lifetime. Palms have disappeared; for the most part they grow only near the sea. Here they are replaced by bananas, mango trees, pipals (*ficus religiosa*), fig trees, and thousands of other trees and shrubs, unknown to such outsiders as ourselves. The Indian flora is too often slandered and misrepresented as being full of beautiful, but scentless, flowers. At some seasons this may be true enough, but, as long as jasmines, the various balsams, white tuberose, and golden champa (*champak* or *frangipani*) are in blossom, this statement is far from being true. The aroma of champa alone is so powerful as to make one almost giddy. For size, it is the king of flowering trees, and hundreds of them were in full bloom, just at this time of year, on Mataran and Khandala.

We sat on the verandah, talking and enjoying the surrounding views, until well-nigh midnight. Everything slept around us.

Khandala is nothing but a big village, situated on the flat top of one of the mountains of the Sahiadra range, about 2,200 feet

above the sea level. It is surrounded by isolated peaks, as strange in shape as any we have seen.

One of them, straight before us, on the opposite side of the abyss, looked exactly like a long, one-storied building, with a flat roof and a battlemented parapet. The Hindus assert that, somewhere about this hillock, there exists a secret entrance, leading into vast interior halls, in fact to a whole subterranean palace, and that there still exist people who possess the secret of this abode. A holy hermit, Yogi, and Magus, who had inhabited these caves for "many centuries," imparted this secret to Sivaji, the celebrated leader of the Mahratta armies. Like Tanhauser, in Wagner's opera, the unconquerable Sivaji spent seven years of his youth in this mysterious abode, and therein acquired his extraordinary strength and valour.

Sivaji is a kind of Indian Ilia Moorometz, though his epoch is much nearer to our times. He was the hero and the king of the Mahrattas in the seventeenth century, and the founder of their short-lived empire. It is to him that India owes the weakening, if not the entire destruction, of the Mussulman yoke. No taller than an ordinary woman, and with the hand of a child, he was, nevertheless, possessed of wonderful strength, which, of course, his compatriots ascribed to sorcery. His sword is still preserved in a museum, and one cannot help wondering at its size and weight, and at the hilt, through which only a ten-year-old child could put his hand. The basis of this hero's fame is the fact that he, the son of a poor officer in the service of a Mogul emperor, like another

David, slew the Mussulman Goliath, the formidable Afzul Khan. It was not, however, with a sling that he killed him, he used in this combat the formidable Mahratti weapon, vaghnakh, consisting of five long steel nails, as sharp as needles, and very strong. This weapon is worn on the fingers, and wrestlers use it to tear each other's flesh like wild animals. The Deccan is full of legends about Sivaji, and even the English historians mention him with respect. Just as in the fable respecting Charles V, one of the local Indian traditions asserts that Sivaji is not dead, but lives secreted in one of the Sahiadra caves. When the fateful hour strikes (and according to the calculations of the astrologers the time is not far off) he will reappear, and will bring freedom to his beloved country.

The learned and artful Brahmans, those Jesuits of India, profit by the profound superstition of the masses to extort wealth from them, sometimes to the last cow, the only food giver of a large family.

In the following passage I give a curious example of this. At the end of July, 1879, this mysterious document appeared in Bombay. I translate literally, from the Mahratti, the original having been translated into all the dialects of India, of which there are 273.

"Shri!" (an untranslatable greeting). "Let it be known unto every one that this epistle, traced in the original in golden letters, came down from Indra-loka (the heaven of Indra), in the presence of holy Brahmans, on the altar of the Vishveshvara

temple, which is in the sacred town of Benares.

"Listen and remember, O tribes of Hindustan, Rajis-tan, Punjab, etc., etc. On Saturday, the second day of the first half of the month Magha, 1809, of Shalivahan's era" (1887 A.D.), "the eleventh month of the Hindus, during the Ashwini Nakshatra" (the first of the twenty-seven constellations on the moon's path), "when the sun enters the sign Capricorn, and the time of the day will be near the constellation Pisces, that is to say, exactly one hour and thirty-six minutes after sunrise, the hour of the end of the Kali-Yug will strike, and the much desired Satya-Yug will commence" (that is to say, the end of the Maha-Yug, the great cycle that embraces the four minor Yugas). "This time Satya-Yug will last 1,100 years. During all this time a man's lifetime will be 128 years. The days will become longer and will consist of twenty hours and forty-eight minutes, and the nights of thirteen hours and twelve minutes, that is to say, instead of twenty-four hours we shall have exactly thirty-four hours and one minute. The first day of Satya-Yug will be very important for us, because it is then that will appear to us our new King with white face and golden hair, who will come from the far North. He will become the autonomous Lord of India. The Maya of human unbelief, with all the heresies over which it presides, will be thrown down to Patala" (signifying at once hell and the antipodes), "and the Maya of the righteous and pious will abide with them, and will help them to enjoy life in Mretinloka" (our earth).

"Let it also be known to everyone that, for the dissemination of this divine document, every separate copy of it will be rewarded by the forgiveness of as many sins as are generally forgiven when a pious man sacrifices to a Brahman one hundred cows. As for the disbelievers and the indifferent, they will be sent to Naraka" (hell). "Copied out and given, by the slave of Vishnu, Malau Shriram, on Saturday, the 7th day of the first half of Shravan" (the fifth month of the Hindu year), "1801, of Shalivalian's era" (that is, 26th July, 1879).

The further career of this ignorant and cunning epistle is not known to me. Probably the police put a stop to its distribution; this only concerns the wise administrators. But it splendidly illustrates, from one side, the credulity of the populace, drowned in superstition, and from the other the unscrupulousness of the Brahmans.

Concerning the word Patala, which literally means the opposite side, a recent discovery of Swami Dayanand Saraswati, whom I have already mentioned in the preceding letters, is interesting, especially if this discovery can be accepted by philologists, as the facts seem to promise. Dayanand tries to show that the ancient Aryans knew, and even visited, America, which in ancient MSS. is called Patala, and out of which popular fancy constructed, in the course of time, something like the Greek Hades. He supports his theory by many quotations from the oldest MSS., especially from the legends about Krishna and his favourite disciple Arjuna. In the history of the latter it is

mentioned that Arjuna, one of the five Pandavas, descendants of the moon dynasty, visited Patala on his travels, and there married the widowed daughter of King Nagual, called Illupl. Comparing the names of father and daughter we reach the following considerations, which speak strongly in favour of Dayanand's supposition.

(1) Nagual is the name by which the sorcerers of Mexico, Indians and aborigines of America, are still designated. Like the Assyrian and Chaldean Nargals, chiefs of the Magi, the Mexican Nagual unites in his person the functions of priest and of sorcerer, being served in the latter capacity by a demon in the shape of some animal, generally a snake or a crocodile. These Naguals are thought to be the descendants of Nagua, the king of the snakes. Abbe Brasseur de Bourbourg devotes a considerable amount of space to them in his book about Mexico, and says that the Naguals are servants of the evil one, who, in his turn, renders them but a temporary service. In Sanskrit, likewise, snake is Naga, and the "King of the Nagas" plays an important part in the history of Buddha; and in the Puranas there exists a tradition that it was Arjuna who introduced snake worship into Patala. The coincidence, and the identity of the names are so striking that our scientists really ought to pay some attention to them.

(2) The Name of Arjuna's wife Illupl is purely old Mexican, and if we reject the hypothesis of Swami Daya-nand it will be perfectly impossible to explain the actual existence of this name in Sanskrit manuscripts long before the Christian era. Of all

ancient dialects and languages it is only in those of the American aborigines that you constantly meet with such combinations of consonants as pl, tl, etc. They are abundant especially in the language of the Toltecs, or Nahuatl, whereas, neither in Sanskrit nor in ancient Greek are they ever found at the end of a word. Even the words Atlas and Atlantis seem to be foreign to the etymology of the European languages. Wherever Plato may have found them, it was not he who invented them. In the Toltec language we find the root atl, which means water and war, and directly after America was discovered Columbus found a town called Atlan, at the entrance of the Bay of Uruga. It is now a poor fishing village called Aclo. Only in America does one find such names as Itzcoatl, Zempoaltecatl, and Popocatepetl. To attempt to explain such coincidences by the theory of blind chance would be too much, consequently, as long as science does not seek to deny Dayanand's hypothesis, which, as yet, it is unable to do, we think it reasonable to adopt it, be it only in order to follow out the axiom "one hypothesis is equal to another." Amongst other things Dayanand points out that the route that led Arjuna to America five thousand years ago was by Siberia and Behring's Straits.

It was long past midnight, but we still sat listening to this legend and others of a similar kind. At length the innkeeper sent a servant to warn us of the dangers that threatened us if we lingered too long on the verandah on a moonlit night. The programme of these dangers was divided into three sections—

snakes, beasts of prey, and dacoits. Besides the cobra and the "rock-snake," the surrounding mountains are full of a kind of very small mountain snake, called furzen, the most dangerous of all. Their poison kills with the swiftness of lightning. The moonlight attracts them, and whole parties of these uninvited guests crawl up to the verandahs of houses, in order to warm themselves. Here they are more snug than on the wet ground. The verdant and perfumed abyss below our verandah happened, too, to be the favorite resort of tigers and leopards, who come thither to quench their thirst at the broad brook which runs along the bottom, and then wander until daybreak under the windows of the bungalow. Lastly, there were the mad dacoits, whose dens are scattered in mountains inaccessible to the police, who often shoot Europeans simply to afford themselves the pleasure of sending ad patres one of the hateful bellatis (foreigners). Three days before our arrival the wife of a Brahman disappeared, carried off by a tiger, and two favorite dogs of the commandant were killed by snakes. We declined to wait for further explanations, but hurried to our rooms. At daybreak we were to start for Karli, six miles from this place.

In The Karli Caves

At five o'clock in the morning we had already arrived at the limit, not only of driveable, but, even, of rideable roads. Our bullock-cart could go no further. The last half mile was nothing but a rough sea of stones. We had either to give up our enterprise, or to climb on all-fours up an almost perpendicular slope two hundred feet high. We were utterly at our wits' end, and meekly gazed at the historical mass before us, not knowing what to do next. Almost at the summit of the mountain, under the overhanging rocks, were a dozen black openings. Hundreds of pilgrims were crawling upwards, looking, in their holiday dresses, like so many green, pink, and blue ants. Here, however, our faithful Hindu friends came to our rescue. One of them, putting the palm of his hand to his mouth, produced a strident sound something between a shriek and a whistle. This signal was answered from above by an echo, and the next moment several half naked Brahmans, hereditary watchmen of the temple, began to descend the rocks as swiftly and skillfully as wild cats. Five minutes later they were with us, fastening round our bodies strong leathern straps, and rather dragging than leading us upwards. Half an hour later, exhausted but perfectly safe, we stood before the porch of the chief temple, which until then had been hidden from us by giant trees and cactuses.

This majestic entrance, resting on four massive pillars which

form a quadrangle, is fifty-two feet wide and is covered with ancient moss and carvings. Before it stands the "lion column," so-called from the four lions carved as large as nature, and seated back to back, at its base. Over the principal entrance, its sides covered with colossal male and female figures, is a huge arch, in front of which three gigantic elephants are sculptured in relief, with heads and trunks that project from the wall. The shape of the temple is oval. It is 128 feet long and forty-six feet wide. The central space is separated on each side from the aisles by forty-two pillars, which sustain the cupola-shaped ceiling. Further on is an altar, which divides the first dome from a second one which rises over a small chamber, formerly used by the ancient Aryan priests for an inner, secret altar. Two side passages leading towards it come to a sudden end, which suggests that, once upon a time, either doors or wall were there which exist no longer. Each of the forty-two pillars has a pedestal, an octagonal shaft, and a capital, described by Fergusson as "of the most exquisite workmanship, representing two kneeling elephants surmounted by a god and a goddess." Fergusson further says that this temple, or chaitya, is older and better preserved than any other in India, and may be assigned to a period about 200 years B.C., because Prinsep, who has read the inscription on the Silastamba pillar, asserts that the lion pillar was the gift of Ajmitra Ukasa, son of Saha Ravisobhoti, and another inscription shows that the temple was visited by Dathama Hara, otherwise Dathahamini, King of Ceylon, in the twentieth year of his reign, that is to

say, 163 years before our era. For some reason or other, Dr. Stevenson points to seventy years B.C. as the date, asserting that Karlen, or Karli, was built by the Emperor Devobhuti, under the supervision of Dhanu-Kakata. But how can this be maintained in view of the above-mentioned perfectly authentic inscriptions? Even Fergusson, the celebrated defender of the Egyptian antiquities and hostile critic of those of India, insists that Karli belongs to the erections of the third century B.C., adding that "the disposition of the various parts of its architecture is identical with the architecture of the choirs of the Gothic period, and the polygonal apses of cathedrals."

Above the chief entrance is found a gallery, which reminds one of the choirs, where, in Catholic churches, the organ is placed. Besides the chief entrance there are two lateral entrances, leading to the aisles of the temple, and over the gallery there is a single spacious window in the shape of a horseshoe, so that the light falls on the daghopa (altar) entirely from above, leaving the aisles, sheltered by the pillars, in obscurity, which increases as you approach the further end of the building. To the eyes of a spectator standing at the entrance, the whole daghopa shines with light, and behind it is nothing but impenetrable darkness, where no profane footsteps were permitted to tread. A figure on the dag-hopā, from the summit of which "Raja priests" used to pronounce verdicts to the people, is called Dharma-Raja, from Dharma, the Hindu Minos. Above the temple are two stories of caves, in each of which are wide open galleries formed by

huge carved pillars, and from these galleries an opening leads to roomy cells and corridors, sometimes very long, but quite useless, as they invariably come to an abrupt termination at solid walls, without the trace of an issue of any kind. The guardians of the temple have either lost the secret of further caves, or conceal them jealously from Europeans.

Besides the Viharas already described, there are many others, scattered over the slope of the mountain. These temple-monasteries are all smaller than the first, but, according to the opinion of some archeologists, they are much older. To what century or epoch they belong is not known except to a few Brahmans, who keep silence. Generally speaking, the position of a European archaeologist in India is very sad. The masses, drowned in superstition, are utterly unable to be of any use to him, and the learned Brahmans, initiated into the mysteries of secret libraries in pagodas, do all they can to prevent archeological research. However, after all that has happened, it would be unjust to blame the conduct of the Brahmans in these matters. The bitter experience of many centuries has taught them that their only weapons are distrust and circumspection, without these their national history and the most sacred of their treasures would be irrevocably lost. Political coups d'etat which have shaken their country to its foundation, Mussulman invasions that proved so fatal to its welfare, the all-destructive fanaticism of Mussulman vandals and of Catholic padres, who are ready for anything in order to secure manuscripts and destroy them

—all these form a good excuse for the action of the Brahmans. However in spite of these manifold destructive tendencies, there exist in many places in India vast libraries capable of pouring a bright and new light, not only on the history of India itself, but also on the darkest problems of universal history. Some of these libraries, filled with the most precious manuscripts, are in the possession of native princes and of pagodas attached to their territories, but the greater part is in the hands of the Jainas (the oldest of Hindu sects) and of the Rajputana Takurs, whose ancient hereditary castles are scattered all over Rajistan, like so many eagles' nests on high rocks. The existence of the celebrated collections in Jassulmer and Patana is not unknown to the Government, but they remain wholly beyond its reach. The manuscripts are written in an ancient and now completely forgotten language, intelligible only to the high priests and their initiated librarians. One thick folio is so sacred and inviolable that it rests on a heavy golden chain in the centre of the temple of Chintamani in Jassulmer, and taken down only to be dusted and rebound at the advent of each new pontiff. This is the work of Somaditya Suru Acharya, a great priest of the pre-Mussulman time, well-known in history. His mantle is still preserved in the temple, and forms the robe of initiation of every new high priest. Colonel James Tod, who spent so many years in India and gained the love of the people as well as of the Brahmans—a most uncommon trait in the biography of any Anglo-Indian—has written the only true history of India, but even he was

never allowed to touch this folio. Natives commonly believe that he was offered initiation into the mysteries at the price of the adoption of their religion. Being a devoted archaeologist he almost resolved to do so, but, having to return to England on account of his health, he left this world before he could return to his adopted country, and thus the enigma of this new book of the sibyl remains unsolved.

The Takurs of Rajputana, who are said to possess some of the underground libraries, occupy in India position similar to the position of European feudal barons of the Middle Ages. Nominally they are dependent on some of the native princes or on the British Government; but de facto they are perfectly independent. Their castles are built on high rocks, and besides the natural difficulty of entering them, their possessors are made doubly unreachable by the fact that long secret passages exist in every such castle, known only to the present owner and confided to his heir only at his death. We have visited two such underground halls, one of them big enough to contain a whole village. No torture would ever induce the owners to disclose the secret of their entrances, but the Yogis and the initiated Adepts come and go freely, entirely trusted by the Takurs.

A similar story is told concerning the libraries and subterranean passages of Karli. As for the archaeologists, they are unable even to determine whether this temple was built by Buddhists or Brahmans. The huge daghopa that hides the holy of holies from the eyes of the worshippers is sheltered by a

mushroom-shaped roof, and resembles a low minaret with a cupola. Roofs of this description are called "umbrellas," and usually shelter the statues of Buddha and of the Chinese sages. But, on the other hand, the worshippers of Shiva, who possess the temple nowadays, assert that this low building is nothing but a lingam of Shiva. Besides, the carvings of gods and goddesses cut out of the rock forbid one to think that the temple is the production of the Buddhists. Fergusson writes, "What is this monument of antiquity? Does it belong to the Hindus, or to the Buddhists? Has it been built upon plans drawn since the death of Sakya Sing, or does it belong to a more ancient religion?"

That is the question. If Fergusson, being bound by facts existing in inscriptions to acknowledge the antiquity of Karli, will still persist in asserting that Elephanta is of much later date, he will scarcely be able to solve this dilemma, because the two styles are exactly the same, and the carvings of the latter are still more magnificent. To ascribe the temples of Elephanta and Kanari to the Buddhists, and to say that their respective periods correspond to the fourth and fifth centuries in the first case, and the tenth in the second, is to introduce into history a very strange and unfounded anachronism. After the first century A.D. there was not left a single influential Buddhist in India. Conquered and persecuted by the Brahmans, they emigrated by thousands to Ceylon and the trans-Himalayan districts. After the death of King Asoka, Buddhism speedily broke down, and in a short time was entirely displaced by the theocratic Brahmanism.

Fergusson's hypothesis that the followers of Sakya Sing, driven out by intolerance from the continent, probably sought shelter on the islands that surround Bombay, would hardly sustain critical analysis. Elephanta and Salsetta are quite near to Bombay, two and five miles distant respectively, and they are full of ancient Hindu temples. Is it credible, then, that the Brahmans, at the culminating point of their power, just before the Mussulman invasions, fanatical as they were, and mortal enemies of the Buddhists, would allow these hated heretics to build temples within their possessions in general and on Gharipuri in particular, this latter being an island consecrated to their Hindu pagodas? It is not necessary to be either a specialist, an architect, or an eminent archeologist, in order to be convinced at the first glance that such temples as Elephanta are the work of Cyclopes, requiring centuries and not years for their construction. Whereas in Karli everything is built and carved after a perfect plan, in Elephanta it seems as if thousands of different hands had wrought at different times, each following its own ideas and fashioning after its own device. All three caves are dug out of a hard porphyry rock. The first temple is practically a square, 130 feet 6 inches long and 130 feet wide. It contains twenty-six thick pillars and sixteen pilasters.

Between some of them there is a distance of 12 or 16 feet, between others 15 feet 5 inches, 13 feet 3 1/2 inches, and so on. The same lack of uniformity is found in the pedestals of the columns, the finish and style of which is constantly varying.

Why, then, should we not pay some attention to the explanations of the Brahmans? They say that this temple was begun by the sons of Pandu, after "the great war," Mahabharata, and that after their death every true believer was bidden to continue the work according to his own notions. Thus the temple was gradually built during three centuries. Every one who wished to redeem his sins would bring his chisel and set to work. Many were the members of royal families, and even kings, who personally took part in these labors.

On the right hand side of the temple there is a corner stone, a lingam of Shiva in his character of Fructifying Force, which is sheltered by a small square chapel with four doors. Round this chapel are many colossal human figures. According to the Brahmans, these are statues representing the royal sculptors themselves, they being doorkeepers of the holy of holies, Hindus of the highest caste. Each of the larger figures leans upon a dwarf representative of the lower castes, which have been promoted by the popular fancy to the rank of demons (Pisachas). Moreover, the temple is full of unskillful work. The Brahmans hold that such a holy place could not be deserted if men of the preceding and present generations had not become unworthy of visiting it. As to Kanari or Kanhari, and some other cave temples, there is not the slightest doubt that they were all erected by Buddhists. In some of them were found inscriptions in a perfect state of preservation, and their style does not remind one in the least of the symbolical buildings of the Brahmans. Archbishop

Heber thinks the Kanari caves were built in the first or second centuries B.C. But Elephanta is much older and must be classed among prehistoric monuments, that is to say, its date must be assigned to the epoch that immediately followed the "great war," Mahabharata. Unfortunately the date of this war is a point of disagreement between European scientists; the celebrated and learned Dr. Martin Haug thinks it is almost antediluvian, while the no less celebrated and learned Professor Max Muller places it as near the first century of our era as possible.

The fair was at its culmination when, having finished visiting the cells, climbing over all the stories, and examining the celebrated "hall of wrestlers," we descended, not by way of the stairs, of which there is no trace to be found, but after the fashion of pails bringing water out of a deep well, that is to say, by the aid of ropes. A crowd of about three thousand persons had assembled from the surrounding villages and towns. Women were there adorned from the waist down in brilliant-hued saris, with rings in their noses, their ears, their lips, and on all parts of their limbs that could hold a ring. Their raven-black hair which was smoothly combed back, shone with cocoanut oil, and was adorned with crimson flowers, which are sacred to Shiva and to Bhavani, the feminine aspect of this god.

Before the temple there were rows of small shops and of tents, where could be bought all the requisites for the usual sacrifices—aromatic herbs, incense, sandal wood, rice, gulab, and the red powder with which the pilgrim sprinkles first the idol and

then his own face. Fakirs, bairagis, hosseins, the whole body of the mendicant brotherhood, was present among the crowd. Wreathed in chaplets, with long uncombed hair twisted at the top of the head into a regular chignon, and with bearded faces, they presented a very funny likeness to naked apes. Some of them were covered with wounds and bruises due to mortification of the flesh. We also saw some bunis, snake-charmers, with dozens of various snakes round their waists, necks, arms, and legs—models well worthy of the brush of a painter who intended to depict the image of a male Fury. One jadugar was especially remarkable. His head was crowned with a turban of cobras. Expanding their hoods and raising their leaf-like dark green heads, these cobras hissed furiously and so loudly that the sound was audible a hundred paces off. Their "stings" quivered like lightning, and their small eyes glittered with anger at the approach of every passer-by. The expression, "the sting of a snake," is universal, but it does not describe accurately the process of inflicting a wound. The "sting" of a snake is perfectly harmless. To introduce the poison into the blood of a man, or of an animal, the snake must pierce the flesh with its fangs, not prick with its sting. The needle-like eye teeth of a cobra communicate with the poison gland, and if this gland is cut out the cobra will not live more than two days. Accordingly, the supposition of some sceptics, that the bunis cut out this gland, is quite unfounded. The term "hissing" is also inaccurate when applied to cobras. They do not hiss. The noise they make is exactly like the death-rattle of a dying man. The

whole body of a cobra is shaken by this loud and heavy growl.

Here we happened to be the witnesses of a fact which I relate exactly as it occurred, without indulging in explanations or hypotheses of any kind. I leave to naturalists the solution of the enigma.

Expecting to be well paid, the cobra-turbaned buni sent us word by a messenger boy that he would like very much to exhibit his powers of snake-charming. Of course we were perfectly willing, but on condition that between us and his pupils there should be what Mr. Disraeli would call a "scientific frontier."² We selected a spot about fifteen paces from the magic circle. I will not describe minutely the tricks and wonders that we saw, but will proceed at once to the main fact. With the aid of a vaguda, a kind of musical pipe of bamboo, the buni caused all the snakes to fall into a sort of cataleptic sleep. The melody that he played, monotonous, low, and original to the last degree, nearly sent us to sleep ourselves. At all events we all grew extremely sleepy without any apparent cause. We were aroused from this half lethargy by our friend Gulab-Sing, who gathered a handful of a grass, perfectly unknown to us, and advised us to rub our temples and eyelids with it. Then the buni produced from a dirty bag a kind of round stone, something like a fish's eye, or an onyx with a white spot in the centre, not bigger than a ten-kopek bit. He declared that anyone who bought that stone would be able to charm any cobra (it would produce no effect on snakes of

² Written in 1879.

other kinds) paralyzing the creature and then causing it to fall asleep. Moreover, by his account, this stone is the only remedy for the bite of a cobra. You have only to place this talisman on the wound, where it will stick so firmly that it cannot be torn off until all the poison is absorbed into it, when it will fall off of itself, and all danger will be past.

Being aware that the Government gladly offers any premium for the invention of a remedy for the bite of the cobra, we did not show any unreasonable interest on the appearance of this stone. In the meanwhile, the buni began to irritate his cobras. Choosing a cobra eight feet long, he literally enraged it. Twisting its tail round a tree, the cobra arose and hissed. The buni quietly let it bite his finger, on which we all saw drops of blood. A unanimous cry of horror arose in the crowd. But master buni stuck the stone on his finger and proceeded with his performance.

"The poison gland of the snake has been cut out," remarked our New York colonel. "This is a mere farce."

As if in answer to this remark, the buni seized the neck of the cobra, and, after a short struggle, fixed a match into its mouth, so that it remained open. Then he brought the snake over and showed it to each of us separately, so that we all saw the death-giving gland in its mouth. But our colonel would not give up his first impression so easily. "The gland is in its place right enough," said he, "but how are we to know that it really does contain poison?"

Then a live hen was brought forward and, tying its legs

together, the buni placed it beside the snake. But the latter would pay no attention at first to this new victim, but went on hissing at the buni, who teased and irritated it until at last it actually struck at the wretched bird. The hen made a weak attempt to cackle, then shuddered once or twice and became still. The death was instantaneous. Facts will remain facts, the most exacting critic and disbeliever notwithstanding. This thought gives me courage to write what happened further. Little by little the cobra grew so infuriated that it became evident the jadugar himself did not dare to approach it. As if glued to the trunk of the tree by its tail, the snake never ceased diving into space with its upper part and trying to bite everything. A few steps from us was somebody's dog. It seemed to attract the whole of the buni's attention for some time. Sitting on his haunches, as far as possible from his raging pupil, he stared at the dog with motionless glassy eyes, and then began a scarcely audible song. The dog grew restless. Putting his tail between his legs, he tried to escape, but remained, as if fastened to the ground. After a few seconds he crawled nearer and nearer to the buni, whining, but unable to tear his gaze from the charmer. I understood his object, and felt awfully sorry for the dog. But, to my horror, I suddenly felt that my tongue would not move, I was perfectly unable either to get up or even to raise my finger. Happily this fiendish scene was not prolonged. As soon as the dog was near enough, the cobra bit him. The poor animal fell on his back, made a few convulsive movements with his legs, and shortly died. We could no longer doubt that there

was poison in the gland. In the meanwhile the stone had dropped from the buni's finger and he approached to show us the healed member. We all saw the trace of the prick, a red spot not bigger than the head of an ordinary pin.

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