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॥ श्रीकालिदासविरचितं
अभिज्ञानशकुन्तलं नाम नाटकं ॥

ŚAKUNTALĀ :

OR,

ŚAKUNTALĀ RECOGNIZED BY THE RING,

A SANSKRIT DRAMA,

IN SEVEN ACTS,

BY KĀLIDĀSA :

THE DEVANĀGARĪ RECENSION OF THE TEXT,

NOW FOR THE FIRST TIME EDITED IN ENGLAND, WITH LITERAL ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF
ALL THE METRICAL PASSAGES, SCHEMES OF THE METRES, AND

NOTES, CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY.

BY

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TO

HORACE HAYMAN WILSON, Esq., M.A., F.R.S.,

BODEN PROFESSOR OF SANSKRIT IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

ETC., ETC., ETC.,

WHOSE GENIUS, LEARNING, AND EXAMPLE, HAVE GUIDED AND PROMOTED

THE STUDY OF SANSKRIT LITERATURE

IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD,

THIS VOLUME,

IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED

BY

AN OLD OXFORD PUPIL.

P R E F A C E.

IN the following pages I have endeavoured to furnish the Oriental Student with a correct edition of the most celebrated drama of India's greatest dramatist. Strange to say, no edition of the text of the "Śakuntalá" has ever before been published in England. Yet no composition of Kálidása displays more the richness of his poetical genius, the exuberance of his imagination, the warmth and play of his fancy, his profound knowledge of the human heart, his delicate appreciation of its most refined and tender emotions, his familiarity with the workings and counterworkings of its conflicting feelings,—in short, more entitles him to rank as "the Shakespeare of India." Nor, in comparing him with our own great Dramatist, should we fail to remark the command of language exhibited by the present play. In this respect the singular flexibility and copiousness of Sanskrit may have even given him the advantage. On the Continent, the "Śakuntalá" has been studied and admired, not only by oriental scholars who possess a correct edition of the text, but by the general public, who enjoy the advantage of good translations; insomuch that Goethe, Schlegel, and Humboldt have all expressed their admiration of this masterpiece of the Hindú Poet. Goethe's four beautiful lines, which appeared in 1792, are—

"Willst du die Blüthe des frühen, die Früchte des späteren Jahres,
Willst du was reizt und entzückt, willst du was sättigt und nährt,
Willst du den Himmel, die Erde, mit einem Namen begreifen :
Nenn' ich Sakuntalá, Dich, und so ist Alles gesagt."*

* Thus translated for me by Professor Eastwick:—

"Wouldst thou the young year's blossoms and the fruits of its decline,
And all by which the soul is charmed, enraptured, feasted, fed,
Wouldst thou the earth and heaven itself in one sole name combine?
I name thee, O Sakuntalá! and all at once is said."

Augustus William von Schlegel, in his first Lecture on Dramatic Literature

In England, on the contrary, we have depended for our knowledge of the "Śakuntalā" solely on Sir William Jones' translation, which does not truly represent the original. The other great dramatic work of the same Poet, the "Urvaśī" or "Vikramorvaśī," is indeed known to the public by the admirable translation of Professor H. H. Wilson; but, with the exception of my own edition of this play, published at Hertford, and intended merely to meet the wants of the lecture-room until I should have leisure to perfect it on the same plan as the present volume, no edition of the text of either play has ever been printed in this country. Nor have other Sanskrit dramas, in spite of the interest excited by Professor Wilson's translations, received more attention at the hands of English editors of Oriental works. Only one other play, the "Vīra-charitra," edited by Dr. Trithen, can be reckoned among the many important publications that have issued from the presses of our Oriental printers. Possibly our backwardness in editing the text of these compositions, may be attributed to our accidental preference for other productions in a language, which has surprized the world by the variety of its literary treasures, and by the new direction it has given to philological study; or, perhaps, to our acquiescence in the Calcutta

(translated by Black), says:—"Among the Indians, the people from whom perhaps all the cultivation of the human race has been derived, plays were known long before they could have experienced any foreign influence. It has lately been made known to Europe, that they have a rich dramatic literature, which ascends back for more than two thousand years. The only specimen of their plays (nataks) hitherto known to us is the delightful Sakuntala, which, notwithstanding the colouring of a foreign climate, bears in its general structure such a striking resemblance to our romantic drama, that we might be inclined to suspect we owe this resemblance to the predilection for Shakspeare entertained by Jones, the English translator, if his fidelity were not confirmed by other learned orientalist. In the golden times of India, the representation of this natak served to delight the splendid imperial court of Delhi."

Alexander von Humboldt, in treating of Indian poetry (Kosmos, translated by Prichard, vol. ii., p. 38), observes: "The name of Kalidasa has been frequently and early celebrated among the western nations. This great poet flourished at the splendid court of Vikramaditya, and was, therefore, cotemporary with Virgil and Horace. The English and German translations of the Sakuntala have excited the feeling of admiration which has been so amply bestowed upon Kalidasa. Tenderness in the expression of feelings, and richness of creative fancy, have assigned to him his lofty place amongst the poets of all nations." In a note (p. 114), he says: "Kalidasa, the celebrated Author of the Sakuntala, is a masterly describer of the influence which Nature exercises upon the minds of lovers. The scene in the forest, which he introduced in the drama of Vikrama and Urvasi, is one of the most beautiful and poetical productions which have appeared in any time."

editions (now out of print), published under the authority of the Committee of Public Instruction, and printed at the Education press.

So far as I can collect, the actual extent of our knowledge of the Hindú Theatre—whether acquired through English translations, or the printed editions of foreign countries—may be thus stated. Seventy years have elapsed since Sir W. Jones discovered that there existed in India a number of Nátakas, or Sanskrit dramas, many of them of great antiquity; some abounding in poetry of such undoubted merit, and in pictures of Hindú life and manners so charming and faithful, as to render them prizes of the greatest value to all classes of literary men. Eager to apply the means thus gained of filling what was before an empty niche in the Temple of Sanskrit Literature, Sir W. Jones addressed himself at once to translate into English the “Śakuntalá,” which he was told was the most popular among the natives. Unfortunately the Paṇḍits omitted to inform him that the multiplication of manuscripts of this play, consequent upon its popularity, had led to a curious and perplexing result,—not, however, unexampled, as has since been proved by the two-fold version of the “Rámáyana,”—namely, that the various manuscripts separated themselves into two groups or classes: the one class embracing all those in Devanágari writing, which, without perfect uniformity, had still a community of character; the other, all those in Bengálí.

German scholars distinguish these two classes of manuscripts by the names “Devanágari recension” and “Bengálí recension,” which terms may conveniently be adopted. The Devanágari recension is the older and purer: the Bengálí, however, must have existed at least 400 years, since it is followed by the “Sáhitya-darpana,” one MS. of which bears the date 1504 of our era. The MSS. of the Devanágari class are chiefly found in the Upper Provinces of India, where the great demand has produced copyists without scholarship, who have faithfully transcribed what they did not understand, and, therefore, would not designedly alter. On the other hand, the copyists in Bengal have been Paṇḍits, whose *cacoëthes* for emending, amplifying, and interpolating, has led to the most mischievous results. The bold and nervous phraseology of Kálidása has been either emasculated or weakened, his delicate expressions of refined love clothed in a meretricious dress, and his