

A

AVESTA:

THE RELIGIOUS BOOKS OF THE PARSEES;

FROM
PROFESSOR SPIEGEL'S GERMAN TRANSLATION
OF THE
ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS.

BY
ARTHUR HENRY BLEECK,
AUTHOR OF A PERSIAN GRAMMAR, ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

HERTFORD:
PRINTED FOR MUNCHERJEE HORMUSJEE CAMA,
BY STEPHEN AUSTIN.

1864.

A

AVESTA.

STEPHEN AUSTIN,



PRINTER, HERTFORD.

PREFACE.

IN presenting to the public this the first English version of the Avesta, the Translator deems it necessary to state in few words the circumstances connected with its appearance.

The translation itself was commenced more than three years ago, at the request of Mr. Muncherjee Hormusjee Cama, who was anxious to have it published for the use of his countrymen. The manuscript of the first volume, the Vendidad, was then sent to Professor Spiegel, of Erlangen, who had kindly offered to revise it, and make such alterations as several years of additional study (Vol. I. of the German Translation was published in 1852), might have suggested to him. These corrections are pointed out in the Notes, except in a few instances where the difference between the English and the original German renderings is merely nominal.

After the MS. had been returned with Professor Spiegel's corrections, Mr. Cama and the Translator

carefully compared it with a Gujarati manuscript translation—perhaps the best which the Parsees possess—and the principal variations between this translation and that of Professor Spiegel are added in the footnotes to each page. On the whole, there is less difference between Professor Spiegel's version and the Gujarati translation than might have been expected. They agree in most essential points; and although the number of verbal discrepancies might have been considerably enlarged, it did not appear necessary to swell the number of the notes with these trifling variations.

With regard to the second and third volumes, containing the Vispered and Yaçna, and the Khordah-Avesta, Professor Spiegel did not think it worth while to have the MS. submitted to him, the rather that it was but a short time since the appearance of the German edition, and all doubtful points could be more fully discussed in the "Commentary."* The Translator has, however, so far as his knowledge would permit, compared the more difficult passages with the original Zend, not for the purpose of criticising Professor Spiegel, but to guide him a little in his choice of words; for it need hardly be said that the translation of a work which is itself a translation, does not allow of so much freedom as may be admissible when translating from a

* Mr. Cama has procured from Professor Spiegel the right of translating this Commentary, and it will shortly appear.

native writer. Hence the present translation is much more literal than elegant; and the Translator fears that many of his English readers will pronounce a considerable portion of the Gâthâs and some part of the Yashts to be almost as unintelligible in their present form as in the Zend itself. On this point the Translator ventures to bespeak the indulgence of critics; and to prove that the obscurity is not of his creating, he begs to refer in particular to the German version of two passages, viz., Yasht 10, 51, and Yasht 13, 26, as a specimen of the difficulties he has had to encounter.*

The Parsee reader will observe that in the Khordah-Avesta Professor Spiegel has frequently omitted passages which had occurred elsewhere, in order to avoid repetition, whereas in the Gujarati translation these passages are given entire.

It should be mentioned that the Introductions to Professor Spiegel's three volumes are not included in this Translation, and the Notes, especially those of Vols. II. and III., have been considerably abridged, because many of the subjects treated of can be discussed more advantageously in the forthcoming Commentary.

In conclusion, the Translator wishes to state that this

* In his note to this verse the Translator omitted to state that he had ventured to render the word *fravazēmnānām* actively. Professor Spiegel has [*die schnellsten*] *der Beförderten*. The participle *vazēmnō* (Middle Voice) signifies "drawn" or "carried" (by horses in a chariot, etc.), and *perhaps* this may be the real meaning here. The only question is how far the prefix *frā* changes the signification of the original verb.

edition has been printed by Mr. Cama for the purpose of distributing it gratuitously to his Parsee brethren in India; but the Translator having expressed a wish that a few copies might be sold in this country, to introduce the ancient religion of Zarathustra to the English public, Mr. Cama has kindly acceded to the Translator's request.

INTRODUCTION.

THE history of the Zend writings, of the many vicissitudes through which they have passed, and the perils they have escaped, would form one of the most interesting chapters in the annals of the human race. Little as we know respecting the more ancient period of the Old Iranians, we know enough to be aware of its importance in the annals of the world, and to be desirous of recovering, as far as possible, the records of a race whose influence was once felt throughout the greater part of Asia, who ruled over Egypt, and who were of kindred blood with the races which peopled Europe. The first great struggle for empire of which detailed and authentic accounts have reached us, is the contest between the Greeks and Persians A.C. 490,* more than twenty-three centuries ago; and even at this early date the religion of Zarathustra was already so old that the language in which it was originally composed differed essentially from the language spoken by Darius.† Thus much we have learned from the Cuneiform Inscriptions; but when we attempt to go farther, and fix the date of the Iranian Prophet, we are met by difficulties at present insuperable, and we can neither deny nor confirm the statement of Aristotle, who places Zoroaster six thousand years before his own time, or rather that of Plato (about A.C. 360).

Comparative philology teaches us that the Zend and Sanskrit

* Of course I do not mean to ignore the Chaldean, Assyrian, and Babylonian monarchies, but there was no Herodotus to chronicle their story: "*Vixero fortes ante Agamemnona.*"

† This difference may be partly due to dialect; but there is no doubt that the language of the Avesta is centuries older than the language of the Cuneiform Inscriptions.