THE DAILY EVENING TELEGRAPH-PHILADELPHIA, TUESDAY, AUGUST 17, 1869.

MAX MULLER'S "RIG-VEDA."

Max Muller's long-expected translation of the sacred hymns of the Brahmins has at length been published in London by Trubner & Co. The Saturday Review gives the following notice of the work .---

The popular expositor of the Science of Language here returns to his first field, that in which his earliest honors were gained, and in which also he laid the foundations of that general knowledge of the structure and connection of languages for which he is now famous.

The hymns of the "Rig-Veda," if not the oldest, are certainly among the oldest, writings known to mankind. The era of their production cannot be settled, and it is probable, nay, almost certain, that their composition was the work of long periods, perhaps even of many centuries. Thus much at least is known of their antiquity, that five or six centuries before the Christian era their language and their grammar had become so obsolute that critical treatises, known by the title of pratisakhyas. were required to explain and illustrate their construction and signification. They thus go back to, or may even precede, the very dawn of history, and so they present to us some of the earliest outpourings of the human mind. Since the period of the pratisakhyas their contents have been guarded with the most scrupulous care, and "the text of the Veda is better authenticated and supported by a more perfect apparatus criticus than the text of any Greek or Latin author." 'The importance, then, of these productions, as illustrating the early history of man, the development of thought, and the formation and addnity of languages, cannot be overrated.

But what are the Vedas, and the Rig-Veda in particular? The ordinary answer is, "The sacred books of the Brahmins," and this is true; but how much does it cover? The Vedas are four in number, but the Rig is the great original, the fountain from which the contents of the others have been drawn and moulded into different forms for litargical and sacrificial purposes. The Vedas, then, are the sacred books of the Brahmins: but it must not therefore be concluded they are the Scriptures of the Hindoos, their laws and authorities in matters of religion. So distant is the period when these hymns were composed, so manifold have been the changes which have come over Hindoo thought and feeling, that though some faint traces may be found in them of institutions which now exist, and of coremonies still observed, the Hindoo religion of the present time contains but very little that can be referred to those writings which are confessedly its basis. It is not difficult to trace the progress of this divergence, through a suecession of different schools of thought, and through various classes of writings. From age to age the differences have grown wider and wider, until at length it has come to this pass, that the great objects of Hindu worship are deities unknown to the Vedas; and although verses from these ancient books are still used at sacrifices and in ceremonies they are recited by priests who have learned them orally, or from ritualistic manuals, but who have no real understanding of their language and meaning, and no knowledge of the books from which they are derived. Some few learned Brahmins are to be found, here and there, who have made the Vedas their study, and have acquired a more or less extensive knowledge of their language and import; but they are few and far between, bearing perhaps a not much greater proportion to the whole than Sanskrit scholars do to the classes of England. educated These facts lead us up to the otherwise startling statement that the Vedas are now more generally and far better understood in Europe than they are in India. A brief consideration of the circumstances by which this result has been achieved will sufficiently account for it. When a knowledge of the Sanskrit language, and of the vast literary treasures which it contains, first broke upon the mind of Europe towards the close of the last century, great were the expectations excited and active were the efforts made to obtain copies of the Vedas-those books which inquiring philosophers hoped would unveil many of the mysteries of religion, and prove the futility of much that was commonly believed But they were not easily obtained the few Brahmins who had a knowledge of them had also a reverence for them, a reverence which was only exceeded by the awe of those who, being ignorant of their contents, looked upon them with superstitious fear, and dreaded the imprecations passed upon the man who should disclose them. Some time thus elapsed before copies were obtained, and such was the mystery attaching to them that one of the Jesuit missionarie in India endeavored to improve the opportunity, and pave the way for Chris by forging a Sanskrit work to tianity. which he gave the name of the second or Yajur-Veda; and which, being translated into French, under the title L'Ezour Vedam, deceived Voltaire. Colebrooke, a Company's civilian, one of the earliest but one of the most profound Sanskrit scholars that Europe has produced, first gave an insight into their nature by an essay which he published in the Asiatic Researches. In 1838 Rosen published the text, with a translation of the first of the eight books of the Rig-Veda, and a few years afterwards the Court of Directors undertool the publication of the whole text of the Rig, togetker with the commentary of Sayana, its greatest native exponent. The preparation of this work was entrusted to Dr. Max Muller. and in 1849 he brought out the first portion. a portly quarto volume; three others have fol lowed, and two more remain to be published Ample materials have thus been supplied for the study of this important work, and it may be fairly said that knowledge has advanced as rapidly as the materials for study has been supplied. Soon after the first volume of the text was published the late Professor Wilson undertook the work of translation, and in 1850 his first volume appeared. At the time of his death three volumes had been published, and a fourth has since been brought out, edited by Professor Cowell, of Cambridge. A translation of a large portion of the Rig is thus before the world, and besides the earlier translation of Rosen there is a French translation of a portion by Langlois, and a German one by Benfey, all independent of each other. It may, therefore, be asked, what need there is yet of another version ? The question is one which it is not difficult to answer. Professor Wilson's knowledge had been acquired in India by study with Pundits, and he had in consequence a greater respect for native commentators than is felt among the scholars of Europe. He took for his guide the Indian Eustathius, Sayana, and his translation gives the interpretation put upon the text by that commentator. Who, then, was this scholar, and what is his authority? Sayana was a scholar of great repute who lived in the south of India in the fourteenth century. He was thus quite a modern writer, very far removed from

the age in which the Vedas were compiled, and thoroughly imbued with the principles and feelings of modern Hinduism. Professor Wilson held that Savana "undoubtedly had a knowledge of his text far beyond the pretensions of any European scholar, and must have been in possession, either through his own learning or that of his assistants, of all the interpretations which had been perpetuated by traditional teaching from the earliest times." Whatever may be the weight attached to these opinions—and that there is some weight in them will be readily admitted-still it was impossible that Sayana, or any other man, in his position, could have approached the study of these volumes free from all feeling and prejudice in respect of the religion in which he had been brod, and of which these writings were held to be the origin. That institutions of a later date did warp his judgment we shall presently have occasion to show. Professor Muller admits that "Sayana's commentary was a sinc quantum for a scholar-like study of the Rig-Veda," in which opinion he is far more favorable to the schollast than some other European critics: but he goes on to say that "Sayana in many cases teaches us how the Veda ought not to be, rather than how it ought to be, understood." The bias with which Sayana approached his text will be sufficiently indicated by one example. In the Vedus mention is made of five sorts or classes of mon, and the commentator unhesitatingly understands this as referring to the four great castes of Hindus, and a fifth comprising the barbarians. The germ of the great institution of caste may lurk in this allusion to the various "sorts of men," but nothing is to be found in the bymns which distinctly indicates the existence of a recognized division of eastes.

The author of the present volume sums up the merits of former translations very shortly in the following words:---

"That of Sayana (Wilson's) represents the tradi-"That of Sayana (Wilson's) represents the trans-tion of India; that of Langlois is the ingenious bui-thoroughly operifical guess-work of a man of taste; that of Beniey is the tendering of a scholar, who has carefully worked out the history of some words, but who assigns to other words either the traditional meaning recorded by Sayana, or a conjectural mean-ing which, however, would not always stand the test of the presentation of all meanings in which these of an intercomparison of all passages in which these words occur,"

He then goes on :---

"It may sound self-contradictory, if, after con-feasing the help which I have derived from these translations, I venture to call my own the first trans-lation of the Reg-Vedn. The word translation, how-ever, has many meanings. I mean by translation not a mere rendering of the hymns of the Rig-Veda into finglish, French, or German, but a full account of the translative much my translation in a self. the reasons which justify the translator in assign-such a power to such a word, and such a mean-to such a sentence. I mean by translation a readeciphering ' ' a *production* resiminant, if such an expression may be used. Without such a pro-cess, without a troubing commentary, a mere trans-lation of the bytons for the Brahmins will never lead o nus solid results.

The hymns of which the Rig-Veda consist are generally short, and are addressed to the great powers of nature-to Indra, the god of the firmament, to Fire, the Sun, the Moon: and, as regards the latter, they are more especially devoted to the praise of the Some, moon-plant, the juice of which plays a prominent part in many of the Vedic hymns. This juice was probably fermented and formed into an exhillarating or intoxicating beverage which was held in very high esteem. The total number of hymns in the Rig-Veda is about 1020. Their composition was without doubt the work of many men, and of long periods of time. They bear evident marks of laving been handed down by tradition, and, although they were collected and arranged in their present form long before our era, some centuries must have passed before they were brought together by the sage who, from his performpiler. The language of the hymns, besidebeing archaic, is very involved and elliptical abounding with epithets of which it is difficult to see the force, and with metaphors and comparisons which are by no means obvious It "teems with words which require a justification." The hymns consequently demand as Mr. Muller observes, a similar treatment to that bestowed upon the interpretation of ancient inscriptions—a careful collection of all grammatical forms, and a thorough com parison of all passages in which the same word occurs. The metre of the hymns is a very important guide to the correct reading of the text, but this presents so many apparent anomalies, that several critics have en deavored to explain its rules, and Mr. Muller devotes many pages of his preface to set forth and illustrate his own opinions on the matter, After working for more than twenty years on the publication of the text, Mr. Mulle now endeavors to reap a little of the fruit of his labors, and presents the world with a translation of certain portions of the Vedic hymns. This, his first volume, consists of a part of the hymns addressed to the Maruts. A or Storm-gods. He brings to the work a full acquaintance with the traditional interpretation of Indian scholars, a mastery of comparative grammar, a mind alive to all points of resemblance in mythology, and an industry which has no doubt performed that laborious work of inter-comparison of which we have spoken above. But for all this he says, with the modest diffidence of a true scholar, "my work is a mere contribution towards a better understanding of the Vedic hymns, and though I may give in the main a right rendering of the sense of the Vedic poets, I feel convinced that on many points my translation is liable to correction, and will sooner or later be replaced by a more satisfactory one. It is time, however, that we took some notice of the hymns upon which this vast labor has been expended, and endeavored to give some idea of their character and style. First, then, the reader must not expect to find in them much poetry of an agreeable or elevated character, anything that for a moment can bear comparison with the Psalms. As mere 5.275(p) literary productions, apart from their archaic value, we doubt if any man could be found to read them. Snatches of poetry may here and there be found; a grand and elevated tone mixed with the most familiar and, to modern taste, most ignoble and unsuitable allusions. The mere reading of some of them conveys the impression that they are not fully understood, and sets the mind inquiring as to the meaning which may lie concealed in them. The following hymn, addressed to Agni, the God of Fire, and the Marutus, or the Stormgods, is one of the most readable in the present volume:--

•Verse 7. That parents (mountain) is used in the sense of sloud, without any further explanation, is clear from many passages, as "Thou, indra, hust cut this great broad cloud to pieces with the lightning. We actually find two similes mixed up together, such as the udder of the cloud.' In the Edda too the locks, said to have been fashioned out of Ymirs bones, are supposed to be intended for clouds. In the Edda Norse kacker means both cloud and rock; nay, the English word cloud itself has been identified with the Angle-Saxon clug, rock." the Anglo-Saxon chun, rock."

To this it may be added that the mountains in the sky is an image familiar to most people. On the same verse there is another and

more interesting note:-

On the same verse there is another and more interesting note: — "Whether the surging of the sen is to be taken for the sea or for the air depends on the view which we take of the earliest cosmography of the Vedic Rishis, saying explains, "They who make the clouds go and stir the watery sea. Wilson remarks that the infin-ence of the winds upon the sea, aluded to in this and the following verse, indicates more familiarity with the ocean than we should have expected from the traditional infinite position of the early Hindus, and it has therefore been supposed that, even in presages like our own, semantics was meant for the sky, the waters above the firmathent. But although there are passages in the Rig-Veda where say, this word shows, in by far the larger number of passages, the clear meaning of eccan. There is one famous passage which proves that the Vedic poets who were supposed to inve-known the upper courses only of the fivers of the Punjab, bart followed the greatest and most succed of their rivers, the Soromati, as far as the Indus-normal. It is word that, as early as the com-position of the laws of the *Munange*, as possibly as early as the composition of the stores on which these metrical laws are based, the river soromati-tion disappeared underground was called Fassages that changed its course, and the pince where that river disappeared underground was called Fassages of the relation of the laws of the stores on which these metrical laws are based, the river soromati-tion disappeared underground was called Fassages while in the laws of its should be pince where that river disappeared underground was called Fassage where its in the desert is a fact familiar to every writer, no mention of it should occar during the soromati in the desert is a fact familiar to every writer, no mention of it is hould occur during the whole of the Vedic period, and it is still more curious list in one of the hymns of the Rig-Veda we should have a distinct statement that the Seraseri fell into he sea:—Alone prioring all fivers Surgeral Isstened. The sear-Alone famous all fivers Suraneati field into the sear-Alone famous all fivers Suraneati histened, observe pure from the monitories as far as the search lifere we see Sumation used clearly in the some of the sea, the indian search and we have at the same line a new indication of the distance which separates the Vedic age from that of the later Sanskrit litera-ture. Though it may not be possible to determine by geological evidence the time of the changes which modified the southern area of the Punjab, and caused include the southern area of the Punjab, and caused include the southern area of the Suraneati is later than the Vedic age, and that at that time the waters of the Sanawati to disappear in the desert, still the fact remains that the loss of the Suraneati is later than the Vedic age, and that at that time the waters of the Sanawati reached the search of the far search was a river as large as the Suraneati is later than the vedic age, or the real fronther against the rest of hubin. At present the Suraneati is as small a river that the epithetis applied to the Suraneati in the Vedic have become quite inapplicable to it. The Vedic have become quite inapplicable to it. The Vedic have become quite inapplicable to it. Suraneati the cluding the Indus and Ganges, call the Suraneati the have become quite inapplicable to it. have, as far as I can judge, conclusive evidence that the old Strustati reached in its course the Indian Sca, either by itself, or united with the indus." It would be premature at present to pronounce any opinion on the success of this

translation. That honest, sagacious, and persevering labor has been bestowed upon the interpretation of these ancient hymns every andid reader will cheerfully acknowledges that many obstacles have been swept away, many difficulties overcome, is plainly apparent. No one, however, can be more fully impressed with the belief that much yet remains to be done than the author appears to be. His closing words deserve to be quoted. DC. This closing words deserve to be quoted: "I know I shall seem to some to have been too timilo in retaining whatever can possibly be retained in the traditional text of firese ancient hymns, while others will look upon the emerity. Let everything be weighed in the just scales of argument. Those who argue for victory and not for truth can have no hearing in our court. There is too much serious work to be done to allow time for wranging or abuse. Any dictionary will surply strong works to hose who Any dictionary will supply strong words to those who condescend to such warfare, but strong arguments require honest labor, sound judgment, and, above all, a genuine love of truth."

The system of spelling Sanskrit words which the author has followed in this volume s one that has been agreed upon by some carned Orientalists; but it is much to be loubted whether the poverty of the German phohat institutes the substitution of a and / italic) for j and ch in an English work, or whether Englishmen will ever be reconciled to writing Raga for Raja, and Panka for Pancha.

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6 18 18

"I. Thou art called forth to this fair sacrifice for a draught of milk; with the maruts come hither, O

11 2

Agnil No god indeed, no mortal, is beyond the might

¹⁴² No goal indeed, no inormal, is beyond the might of thee, the might one; with the Maruts, etc. etc. ¹⁴². They who know of the great sky, the Visve Devas without guile; with the Maruts, etc. ¹⁴³. The wild ones who sing their song, uncon-querable by force; with the Maruts, etc. ¹⁴⁵. They who are brilliant, of awful shape.

powerful, and devourers of foes; with the Maruts, They who in heaven are enthroned as gods, in

the light of the firmament; with the Maruts, etc. "7. They who toss the clouds across the surging sea; with the Maruts come hither, etc.

seat: with the manual with their darts across the sea with might; with the Maruts, etc. "9, I pour out to thee for the early draught sweet julce of Soma; with the Moruts, etc."

Among the notes appended to this hymn are

the following:-



