

THE LAWS OF MENU.

[In pursuance of the design intimated in our Number for July, to give a series of ethnical scriptures, we subjoin our extracts from the Laws of Menu. We learn, from the preface of the translator, that "Vyasa, the son of Parasara, has decided that the Veda, with its Angas, or the six compositions deduced from it, the revealed system of medicine, the Puranas, or sacred histories, and the code of Menu, were four works of supreme authority, which ought never to be shaken by arguments merely human." The last, which is in blank verse, and is one of the oldest compositions extant, has been translated by Sir William Jones. It is believed by the Hindoos "to have been promulged in the beginning of time, by Menu, son or grandson of Brahma," and "first of created beings." Brahma is said to have "taught his laws to Menu in a hundred thousand verses, which Menu explained to the primitive world in the very words of the book now translated." Others affirm that they have undergone successive abridgments for the convenience of mortals, "while the gods of the lower heaven, and the band of celestial musicians, are engaged in studying the primary code."

"A number of glosses or comments on Menu were composed by the Munis, or old philosophers, whose treatises, together with that before us, constitute the Dherma Sastra, in a collective sense, or "Body of Law." Culluca Bhatta* was one of the more modern of these.]

CUSTOM.

"Immemorial custom is transcendent law."

"The roots of the law are the whole Veda, the ordinances and moral practices of such as perfectly understand it, the immemorial customs of good men, and self-satisfaction."

"Immemorial custom is a tradition among the four pure classes, in a country frequented by gods,— and at length is not to be distinguished from revelation."

TEMPERANCE.

"The resignation of all pleasures is far better than the attainment of them."

"The organs, being strongly attached to sensual delights, cannot so effectually be restrained by avoiding incentives to pleasure, as by a constant pursuit of divine knowledge."

"But, when one among all his [the Brahmin's] organs fails, by that single failure his knowledge of God passes away, as water flows through one hole in a leathern bottle."

* In the following selections his gloss is for the most part omitted, but when retained is printed in italics.

“He must eat without distraction of mind.”

“Let him honor all his food, and eat it without contempt; when he sees it, let him rejoice and be calm, and pray, that he may always obtain it.”

“Food, eaten constantly with respect, gives muscular force and generative power; but, eaten irreverently, destroys them both.”

“It is delivered as a rule of the gods, that meat must be swallowed only for the purpose of sacrifice; but it is a rule of gigantic demons, that it may be swallowed for any other purpose.”

PURIFICATION AND SACRIFICE.

“By falsehood, the sacrifice becomes vain; by pride, the merit of devotion is lost; by insulting priests, life is diminished; and by proclaiming a largess, its fruit is destroyed.”

“To a king, on the throne of magnanimity, the law ascribes instant purification, because his throne was raised for the protection of his people, and the supply of their nourishment.”

“The hand of an artist employed in his art is always pure.”

“Bodies are cleansed by water; the mind is purified by truth; the vital spirit, by theology and devotion; the understanding, by clear knowledge.”

“If thou be not at variance by speaking falsely with Yama the Subduer of all, with Vaivaswata the Punisher, with that great divinity who dwells in the breast, go not on a pilgrimage to the river Ganga, nor to the plains of Curu, for thou hast no need of expiation.”

“Whoever cherishes not five orders of beings, — the deities, those who demand hospitality, those whom he ought by law to maintain, his departed forefathers, and himself, — that man lives not, even though he breathe.”

“To all the gods assembled let him throw up his oblation in open air; by day, to the spirits who walk in light; and by night, to those who walk in darkness.”

“Some, who well know the ordinances for those oblations, perform not always externally the five great sacraments, but continually make offerings in their own organs.”

“Some constantly sacrifice their breath in their speech, when they instruct others, or praise God aloud, and their speech in their breath, when they meditate in silence; perceiving in their speech and breath, thus employed, the imperishable fruit of a sacrificial offering.”

“The act of repeating his Holy Name is ten times better than the appointed sacrifice; a hundred times better, when it is heard by no man; and a thousand times better, when it is purely mental.”

“Equally perceiving the supreme soul in all beings, and all beings in the supreme soul, he sacrifices his own spirit by fixing it on the spirit of God, and approaches the nature of that sole divinity, who shines by his own effulgence.”

TEACHING.

“A Brahmin, who is the giver of spiritual birth, the teacher of prescribed duty, is by right the father of an old man, though himself be a child.”

“Cari, child of Angiras, taught his paternal uncles and cousins to read the Veda, and, excelling them in divine knowledge, said to them ‘Little sons.’

“They, moved with resentment, asked the gods the meaning of that *expression*; and the gods, being assembled, answered them, ‘The child has addressed you properly;’

“For an unlearned man is in truth a child; and he who teaches him the Veda is his father: holy sages have always said child to an ignorant man, and father to a teacher of scripture.”

“Greatness is not conferred by years, not by gray hairs, not by wealth, not by powerful kindred; the divine sages have established this rule: ‘Whoever has read the Vedas, and their Angas, he among us is great.’”

“The seniority of priests is from sacred learning; of warriors, from valor; of merchants, from abundance of grain; of the servile class, only from the priority of birth.”

“A man is not therefore aged, because his head is gray; him, surely, the gods considered as aged, who, though young in years, has read *and understands* the Veda.”

“Let not a sensible teacher tell what he is not asked, nor what he is asked improperly; but let him, however intelligent, act in the multitude as if he were dumb.”

“A teacher of the Veda should rather die with his learning, than sow it in sterile soil, even though he be in grievous distress for subsistence.”

REWARD AND PUNISHMENT.

“Justice, being destroyed, will destroy; being preserved, will preserve; it must therefore never be violated. Beware, O judge, lest Justice, being overturned, overturn both us and thyself.”

“The only firm friend, who follows men even after death, is Justice; all others are extinct with the body.”

“The soul is its own witness; the soul itself is its own refuge: offend not thy conscious soul, the supreme internal witness of men.”

“O friend to virtue, that supreme spirit, which thou believest one and the same with thyself, resides in thy bosom perpetually, and is an all-knowing inspector of thy goodness or of thy wickedness.”

“Action, either mental, verbal, or corporeal, bears good or evil fruit, *as itself is good or evil*; and from the actions of men proceed their various transmigrations in the highest, the mean, and the lowest degree.”

“Iniquity, committed in this world, produces not fruit immediately, *but*, like the earth, *in due season*; and, advancing by little and little, it eradicates the man who committed it.”

“Yes; iniquity, once committed, fails not of producing fruit to him who wrought it; if not in his own person, yet in his sons; or, if not in his sons, yet in his grandsons.”

“He grows rich for a while through unrighteousness; then he beholds good things; then it is, that he vanquishes his foes; but he perishes at length from his whole root upwards.”

“If the vital spirit had practised virtue for the most part, and vice in a small degree, it enjoys delight in celestial abodes, clothed with a body formed of pure elementary particles.”

“But, if it had generally been addicted to vice, and seldom attended to virtue, then shall it be deserted by those pure elements, and, *having a coarser body of sensible nerves*, it feels the pains to which Yama shall doom it.”

“Souls, endued with goodness, attain always the state of deities; those filled with ambitious passions, the condition of men; and those immersed in darkness, the nature of beasts: this is the triple order of transmigration.”

“Grass and earth to sit on, water to wash the feet, and affectionate speech, are at no time deficient in the mansions of the good.”

THE KING.

“He, sure, must be the perfect essence of majesty, by whose favor Abundance rises on her lotos; in whose favor dwells conquest; in whose anger, death.”

WOMEN AND MARRIAGE.

“The names of women should be agreeable, soft, clear, captivating the fancy, auspicious, ending in long vowels, resembling words of benediction.”

In the second quarter of the Brahmin's life, when he has left his instructor, to commence house-keeping, —

“Let him choose for his wife a girl, whose form has no defect; who has an agreeable name; who walks *gracefully*, like a phenicopteros, or like a young elephant; whose hair and teeth are moderate respectively in quantity and in size; whose body has exquisite softness.”

THE BRAHMIN.

“When a Brahmin springs to light, he is born above the world, the chief of all creatures, assigned to guard the treasury of duties religious and civil.”

“Whatever exists in the universe, is all in effect the wealth of the Brahmin, since the Brahmin is entitled to it all by his primogeniture and eminence of birth.”

“The Brahmin eats but his own food; wears but his own apparel; and bestows but his own in alms: through the benevolence of the Brahmin, indeed, other mortals enjoy life.”

“Although Brahmins employ themselves in all sorts of mean occupation, they must invariably be honored; for they are something transcendently divine.”

“He must avoid service for hire.”

“He may either store up grain for three years, or garner

up enough for one year, or collect what may last three days, or make no provision for the morrow."

"Let him never, for the sake of a subsistence, have recourse to popular conversation; let him live by the conduct of a priest, neither crooked, nor artful, nor blended with the manners of the mercantile class."

"Let him not have nimble hands, restless feet, or volatile eyes; let him not be crooked in his ways; let him not be flippant in his speech, nor intelligent in doing mischief."

"He must not gain wealth by any art that pleases the sense; nor by any prohibited art; nor, whether he be rich or poor, indiscriminately."

"Though permitted to receive presents, let him avoid a habit of taking them; since, by taking many gifts, his divine light soon fades."

"A twice-born man, void of true devotion, and not having read the Veda, yet eager to take a gift, sinks down together with it, as with a boat of stone in deep water."

"A Brahmin should constantly shun worldly honor, as he would shun poison; and rather constantly seek disrespect, as he would seek nectar."

"For, though scorned, he may sleep with pleasure; with pleasure may he awake; with pleasure may he pass through this life: but the scorner utterly perishes."

"All that depends on another gives pain; all that depends on himself gives pleasure; let him know this to be in few words the definition of pleasure and of pain."

As for the Brahmin who keeps house, —

"Let him say what is true, but let him say what is pleasing; let him speak no disagreeable truth, nor let him speak agreeable falsehood: this is a primeval rule."

"Let him say 'well and good,' or let him say 'well' only; but let him not maintain fruitless enmity and altercation with any man."

"Giving no pain to any creature, let him collect virtue by degrees, for the sake of acquiring a companion to the next world, as the white ant by degrees builds his nest."

"For, in his passage to the next world, neither his father, nor his mother, nor his wife, nor his son, nor his kinsmen, will remain in his company: his virtue alone will adhere to him."

“Single is each man born; single he dies; single he receives the reward of his good, and single the punishment of his evil, deeds.”

“When he leaves his corpse, like a log or a lump of clay, on the ground, his kindred retire with averted faces; but his virtue accompanies his soul.”

“Continually, therefore, by degrees, let him collect virtue, for the sake of securing an inseparable companion; since, with virtue for his guide, he will traverse a gloom — how hard to be traversed!”

“Alone, in some solitary place, let him constantly meditate on the divine nature of the soul; for, by such meditation, he will obtain happiness.”

“When the father of a family perceives his muscles become flaccid, and his hair gray, and sees the child of his child, let him then seek refuge in a forest:”

“Then, having reposed his holy fires, as the law directs, in his mind, let him live without external fire, without a mansion, wholly silent, feeding on roots and fruit;”

“Not solicitous for the means of gratification, chaste as a student, sleeping on the bare earth, in the haunts of pious hermits, without one selfish affection, dwelling at the roots of trees;”

“—— for the purpose of uniting his soul with the divine spirit.”

“Or, if he has any incurable disease, let him advance in a straight path, towards the invincible *north-eastern* point, feeding on water and air, till his mortal frame totally decay, and his soul become united with the Supreme.”

“A Brahmin having shuffled off his body by any of those modes, which great sages practised; and becoming void of sorrow and fear, rises to exaltation in the divine essence.”

“Departing from his house, taking with him pure implements, *his water pot and staff*, keeping silence, unallured by desire of the objects near him, let him enter into the fourth order.”

“Alone let him constantly dwell, for the sake of his own felicity; observing the happiness of a solitary man, who neither forsakes nor is forsaken, let him live without a companion.”

“Let him have no culinary fire, no domicile: let him,

when very hungry, go to the town for food ; let him patiently bear disease ; let his mind be firm : let him study to know God, and fix his attention on God alone."

"An earthen water-pot, the roots of large trees, coarse vesture, total solitude, equanimity toward all creatures, these are the characteristics of a Brahmin set free."

"Let him not wish for death ; let him not wish for life ; let him expect his appointed time, as a hired servant expects his wages."

Entirely withdrawn from the world, — "without any companion but his own soul, let him live in this world, seeking the bliss of the next."

"Late in the day let the Sannyasi beg food : for missing it, let him not be sorrowful ; nor for gaining it let him be glad ; let him care only for a sufficiency to support life, but let him not be anxious about his utensils."

"Let him reflect also, with exclusive application of mind, on the subtil, indivisible essence of the supreme spirit, and its complete existence in all beings, whether extremely high, or extremely low."

"Thus, having gradually abandoned all earthly attachments, and indifference to all pains of opposite things, *as honor, and dishonor, and the like*, he remains absorbed in the divine essence."

"A mansion with bones for its rafters and beams ; with nerves and tendons for cords ; with muscles and blood for mortar ; with skin for its outward covering, filled with no sweet perfume, but loaded with *fæces and urine* ;"

"A mansion infested by age and by sorrow ; the seat of malady, harassed with pains, haunted with the quality of darkness, and incapable of standing long ; such a mansion of the vital soul, let its occupier always cheerfully quit."

"As a tree leaves the bank of a river, when it falls in, or as a bird leaves the branch of a tree at his pleasure, thus he, who leaves his body by necessity, or by legal choice, is delivered from the ravening shark, or crocodile, of the world."

GOD.

"Let every Brahmin with fixed attention consider all nature, both visible and invisible, as existing in the divine spirit ; for, when he contemplates the boundless universe

existing in the divine spirit, he cannot give his heart to iniquity."

"The divine spirit is the whole assemblage of gods; all worlds are seated in the divine spirit; and the divine spirit, no doubt, produces the connected series of acts performed by embodied souls."

"He may contemplate the subtil ether in the cavities of his body; the air in his muscular motion and sensitive nerves; the supreme *solar and igneous* light, in his digestive heat and his visual organs; in his corporeal fluids, water; in the terrene parts of his fabric, earth;"

"In his heart, the moon; in his auditory nerves, the guardians of eight regions; in his progressive motion, Vishnu; in his muscular force, Hara; in his organs of speech, Agni; in excretion, Mitra; in procreation, Brahma:"

"But he must consider the supreme omnipresent intelligence as the sovereign lord of them all; a spirit which can only be conceived by a mind slumbering; but which he may imagine more subtil than the finest conceivable essence, and more bright than the purest gold."

"Him some adore as transcendently present in elementary fire; others in Menu, lord of creatures; some, as more distinctly present in Indra, *regent of the clouds and the atmosphere*; others, in pure air; others, as the most High Eternal Spirit."

"Thus the man, who perceives in his own soul the supreme soul present in all creatures, acquires equanimity towards them all, and shall be absorbed at last in the highest essence, even that of the Almighty himself."

DEVOTION.

"All the bliss of deities and of men is declared by sages who discern the sense of the Veda to have in devotion its cause, in devotion its continuance, in devotion its fullness."

"Devotion is equal to the performance of all duties; it is divine knowledge in a Brahmin; it is defence of the people in a Cshatriya; devotion is the business of trade and agriculture in a Vaisya; devotion is dutiful service in a Sudra."

"Perfect health, or unfailing medicine, divine learning,

and the various mansions of deities are acquired by devotion alone; their efficient cause is devotion."

"Whatever is hard to be traversed, whatever is hard to be acquired, whatever is hard to be visited, whatever is hard to be performed, all this may be accomplished by true devotion; for the difficulty of devotion is the greatest of all."

DEATH.

BENEATH the endless surges of the deep,
Whose green content o'erlaps them evermore,
A host of mariners perpetual sleep,
Too hushed to heed the wild commotion's roar;
The emerald weeds glide softly o'er their bones,
And wash them gently mid the rounded stones.
No epitaph have they to tell their tale,
Their birthplace, age, and story, all are lost,
Yet rest they deeply, as within the vale
Those sheltered bodies by the smooth slates crossed,
And countless tribes of men lie on the hills,
And human blood runs in the crystal rills.

The air is full of men, who once enjoyed
The healthy element, nor looked beyond,—
Many, who all their mortal strength employed
In human kindness, of their brothers fond,—
And many more, who counteracted fate,
And battled in the strife of common hate.
Profoundest sleep enwraps them all around,
Sages and sire, the child and manhood strong,
Shed not one tear, expend no sorrowing sound,
Tune thy clear voice to no funereal song,
For, oh! Death stands to welcome thee and me,
And life hath in its breath a steeper mystery.