

VEESHNOO SARMA

We commence in the present number the printing of a series of selections from the oldest ethical and religious writings of men, exclusive of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. Each nation has its bible more or less pure; none has yet been willing or able in a wise and devout spirit to collate its own with those of other nations, and sinking the civil-historical and the ritual portions to bring together the grand expressions of the moral sentiment in different ages and races, the rules for the guidance of life, the bursts of piety and of abandonment to the Invisible and Eternal;—a work inevitable sooner or later, and which we hope is to be done by religion and not by literature.

The following sentences are taken from Charles Wilkins' translation of the Heetopades or Amicable Instructions of Veeshnoo Sarma, according to Sir William Jones, the most beautiful, if not the most ancient collection of apologues in the world, and the original source of the book, which passes in the modern languages of Europe and America, under the false name of Pilpay.

EXTRACTS FROM THE HEETOPADES OF VEESHNOO SARMA.

WHATSOEVER cometh to pass, either good or evil, is the consequence of a man's own actions, and descendeth from the power of the Supreme Ruler.

Our lives are for the purposes of religion, labor, love, and salvation. If these are destroyed, what is not lost? If these are preserved, what is not preserved?

A wise man should relinquish both his wealth and his life for another. All is to be surrendered for a just man when he is reduced to the brink of destruction.

Why dost thou hesitate over this perishable body composed of flesh, bones, and excrements? O my friend, [*my body,*] support my reputation!

If constancy is to be obtained by inconstancy, purity by impurity, reputation by the body, then what is there which may not be obtained?

The difference between the body and the qualities is

infinite; the body is a thing to be destroyed in a moment, whilst the qualities endure to the end of the creation.

Is this one of us, or is he a stranger? is the enumeration of the ungenerous; but to those by whom liberality is practised, the whole world is but as one family.

Fortune attendeth that lion amongst men who exerteth himself. They are weak men who declare Fate the sole cause.

It is said, Fate is nothing but the deeds committed in a former state of existence; wherefore it behoveth a man vigilantly to exert the powers he is possessed of.

The stranger, who turneth away from a house with disappointed hopes, leaveth there his own offences and departeth, taking with him all the good actions of the owner.

Hospitality is to be exercised even towards an enemy when he cometh to thine house. The tree does not withdraw its shade even from the wood-cutter.

Of all men thy guest is the superior.

The mind of a good man does not alter when he is in distress; the waters of the ocean are not to be heated by a torch of straw.

Nor bathing with cool water, nor a necklace of pearls, nor anointing with sanders, yieldeth such comfort to the body oppressed with heat, as the language of a good man cheerfully uttered doth to the mind.

Good men extend their pity even unto the most despicable animals. The moon doth not withhold the light, even from the cottage of a Chandala.

Those who have forsaken the killing of all; those who are helpmates to all; those who are a sanctuary to all; those-men are in the way to heaven.

Behold the difference between the one who eateth flesh, and him to whom it belonged. The first hath a momentary enjoyment, whilst the latter is deprived of existence.

Who would commit so great a crime against a poor animal, who is fed only by the herbs which grow wild in the woods, and whose belly is burnt up with hunger?

Every book of knowledge, which is known to Oosana or to Vreehaspatee, is by nature planted in the understanding of women.

The beauty of the Kokeela is his voice; the beauty of a wife is constancy to her husband; the beauty of the ill-favored is science; the beauty of the penitent is patience.

What is too great a load for those who have strength? What is distance to the indefatigable? What is a foreign country to those who have science? Who is a stranger to those who have the habit of speaking kindly?

Time drinketh up the essence of every great and noble action, which ought to be performed and is delayed in the execution.

When Nature is forsaken by her lord, be she ever so great, she doth not survive.

Suppose thyself a river, and a holy pilgrimage in the land of Bharata, of which truth is the water, good actions the banks, and compassion the current; and then, O son of Pandoo, wash thyself therein, for the inward soul is not to be purified by common water.

As frogs to the pool, as birds to a lake full of water, so doth every species of wealth flow to the hands of him who exerteth himself.

If we are rich with the riches which we neither give nor enjoy, we are rich with the riches which are buried in the caverns of the earth.

He whose mind is at ease is possessed of all riches. Is it not the same to one whose foot is enclosed in a shoe, as if the whole surface of the earth were covered with leather?

Where have they, who are running here and there in search of riches, such happiness as those placid spirits enjoy who are gratified at the immortal fountain of happiness?

All hath been read, all hath been heard, and all hath been followed by him who, having put hope behind him, dependeth not upon expectation.

What is religion? Compassion for all things which have life. What is happiness? To animals in this world, health. What is kindness? A principle in the good. What is philosophy? An entire separation from the world.

To a hero of sound mind, what is his own, and what a foreign country? Wherever he halteth, that place is acquired by the splendor of his arms.

When pleasure is arrived, it is worthy of attention; when trouble presenteth itself, the same; pains and pleasures have their revolutions like a wheel.

One, although not possessed of a mine of gold, may find the offspring of his own nature, that noble ardor which hath for its object the accomplishment of the whole assemblage of virtues.

Man should not be over-anxious for a subsistence, for it is provided by the Creator. The infant no sooner drop-peth from the womb, than the breasts of the mother begin to stream.

He, by whom geese were made white, parrots are stained green, and peacocks painted of various hues, — even he will provide for their support.

He, whose inclination turneth away from an object, may be said to have obtained it.

I ASKED the angels to come to me, the angels I saw in the clouds:

They came in a shower of rain, they wrapt themselves in shrouds;

Saddened and chilled I turned away, seeking the mortals on earth;

They gave me sweet welcoming smiles, and a seat by the glowing hearth.