Title: The Zend-Avesta

Author: Darmesteter James

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THE

SACRED BOOKS OF THE EAST
THE

SACRED BOOKS OF THE EAST

TRANSLATED

BY VARIOUS ORIENTAL SCHOLARS

AND EDITED BY

F. MAX MÜLLER

VOL. XXXI

OXFORD

AT THE CLARENDON PRESS

1887

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THE ZEND-AVESTA

PART III

THE YASNA, VISPARAD, ÁFRÎNAGÂN, GÂHS, AND MISCELLANEOUS FRAGMENTS

TRANSLATED BY

L. H. MILLS

Oxford
AT THE CLARENDON PRESS
1887

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PREFACE.

It would savour of affectation for me to say very much by way of meeting the necessary disadvantages under which I labour as in any sense a successor of Professor Darmesteter. It is sufficient to state that I believe myself to be fully aware of them, and that I trust that those who study my work will accord me the more sympathy under the circumstances. Professor Darmesteter, having extended his labours in his University, found his entire time so occupied that he was obliged to decline further labour on this Series for the present. My work on the Gâthas had been for some time in his hands¹, and he requested me, as a friend, to write the still needed volume of the translation of the Avesta. Although deeply appreciating the undesirableness of following one whose scholarship is only surpassed by his genius, I found myself unable to refuse.

As to my general treatment, experts will not need to be informed that I have laboured under no common difficulties. On the one hand, it would be extremely imprudent for any scholar not placed arbitrarily beyond the reach of criticism, to venture to produce a translation of the Yasna, Visparad, Ârînagân, and Gâhs, without defensive notes. The smallest freedom would be hypercriticised by interested parties, and after them condemned by their followers. On the other hand, even with the imperfect commentary which accompanies the Gâthas here, the generous courtesy of the Delegates of the Clarendon Press has been too abundantly drawn upon. One does not expect detailed commentaries in this Series. My efforts have therefore been chiefly confined to forestalling the possible assaults of unfair or forgetful critics, and so to spare myself, in so far as it may be possible, the necessity for painful rejoinder.

¹ See the Revue Critique, Nov. 26, 1883.
To print a commentary on the Yasna, &c., which would be clear to non-specialists, and at the same time interesting, would occupy many times more space than could be here allowed. In treating the Gāthas however, even at the risk of too great extension, I have endeavoured to atone for the necessary obscurity of notes by ample summaries, and a translation supported by paraphrase, as such matter has more prospect of being generally instructive than a commentary which must necessarily have remained obscure. These summaries should also be read with the more indulgence, as they are the first of their kind yet attempted, Haug's having been different in their scope. With regard to all matters of mere form, I expect from all sides a similar concession. It will, I trust, be regarded as a sufficient result if a translation, which has been built up upon the strictest critical principles, can be made at all readable. For while any student may transcribe from the works of others what might be called a translation of the Yasna, to render that part of it, termed the Gāthas, has been declared by a respected authority, 'the severest task in Aryan philology.' And certainly, if the extent of preparatory studies alone is to be the gauge, the statement cited would not seem to be an exaggeration. On mathematical estimates the amount of labour which will have to be gone through to become an independent investigator, seems to be much greater than that which presents itself before specialists in more favoured departments. No one should think of writing with originality on the Gāthas, or the rest of the Avesta, who had not long studied the Vedic Sanskrit, and no one should think of pronouncing ultimate opinions on the Gāthas, who has not to a respectable degree mastered the Pahlavi commentaries. But while the Vedic, thanks to the labours of editor and lexicographers, has long been open to

1 'Es bilden diese fünf Gāthās, die insgesamt metrisch abgefasst sind, den sprachlich wichtigsten, aber auch den weitaus schwierigsten teil des ganzen Avesta, ja man kann sagen, ohne dass man fürchten muss der übertreibung gezeichen zu werden, sie bilden den schwierigsten teil der ganzen indogermanischen philologie.' Altiranisches Verbum; von C. Bartholomae; Einleitung, s. 3.