PREFACE

This Reader is meant to be a companion volume to my Vedic Grammar for Students. It contains thirty hymns comprising just under 300 stanzas. These hymns have been taken exclusively from the Rigveda, not only because that Veda represents the earliest and most important phase of the sacred language and literature of India, but because the addition of specimens from the later Vedic literature with their divergences in speech and thought would tend to confuse the learner beginning the study of the oldest period. All the books of the Rigveda have been drawn upon except the ninth. The reason of this exception is that, though the whole of the ninth book practically consists of hymns addressed to Soma only, the hymn which in my opinion represents that deity best occurs in another (the eighth) book. All the most important metres are represented, though no specimens of the rare and complex strophic measures could be given because none of the hymns composed in them seemed to be suitable for the Reader. I have also considered literary merit as far as possible in making the selection. As regards subject-matter, each of the more important deities is represented by one hymn, Agni alone by two. There are besides a few hymns of a different type. One is concerned with social life (x. 34), one with magical ideas (vii. 103), two with cosmogony (x. 90. 129), and three with eschatology (x. 14. 15. 135). The selection thus forms a brief epitome of the Rigveda, the earliest monument of Indian thought. The arrangement of the hymns follows their order in the text of the Rigveda as own, together with their respective deities and subjects, in the
table of contents (p. ix). As the latter list is so short, the name of the deity addressed in any selected hymn can be found at once, but it also appears in its alphabetical order in the General Index.

Unlike all Sanskrit and Vedic chrestomathies known to me, the present work is intended primarily for students who, while acquainted with Classical Sanskrit, are beginners of Vedic lacking the aid of a teacher with an adequate knowledge of the earliest period of the language and literature of India. It will moreover, I think, be found to contain much detailed information useful even to more advanced students. Hence difficult and obscure stanzas have never been omitted from any of the selected hymns, because the notes here afford an opportunity of illustrating the methods of critical interpretation (see, for instance, pages 36, 47, 139-40, 152, 166, 175).

In conjunction with my Vedic Grammar for Students, the Reader aims at supplying all that is required for the complete understanding of the selections without reference to any other book. Each hymn is preceded by a special introduction describing briefly the deity or the subject with which it deals. The text of every stanza is printed in three different forms. The first is the Saṃhitā text, in Devanāgari characters, exactly as handed down by tradition, without change or emendation. But each Pada or metrical line is printed separately so as to exhibit to the eye the versification of the stanza. Then comes on the right half of the page the traditional Pada text in which each word of the Saṃhitā text is given separately without Sandhi, and in which compounds and certain derivatives and case-forms are analysed. This is an important addition because the Pada text, as nearly contemporary in origin with the Saṃhitā text, furnishes us with the earliest interpretations, within the sphere of phonetics and word-formation, of the Rigveda. Next follows the transliterated Saṃhitā text, in which by the removal of vowel-contractions, the resolution of semivowels, and the replacement of a, the original metre of the Rigveda is restored and, by the use of punctuation, the sense is made clearer. The translation, which follows, is close, accounting for every word of the original, and is
based on the critical method of interpretation. The notes furnish minute explanations of all matters concerned with grammar, metre, accent, syntax, and exegesis. The general introduction gives a concise account of the form and matter of the Rigveda, describing in outline its arrangement, its language and metre, its religion and mythology, besides the critical method here applied to the interpretation of its hymns. The vocabulary supplements the translation and notes by giving the derivation of every word and adding in brackets the most obvious cognates from the other Indo-European languages allied to Sanskrit, especially Avestic, Greek, Latin, and English. I have added a copious general Index for the purpose of enabling the student to utilize to the full the summary of Vedic philology which this book contains. Any one who has worked his way carefully through the pages of the Reader ought thus to have laid a solid foundation in Vedic scholarship, and to be prepared for further studies on independent lines.

Freedom from serious misprints is a matter of great importance in a book like this. Such freedom has, I trust, been achieved by the aid of my two friends, Dr. James Morison, Librarian of the Indian Institute, and my former pupil, Dr. A. Berriedale Keith, Regius Professor of Sanskrit and Comparative Philology in the University of Edinburgh. In the course of this obliging task Prof. Keith has supplied me with a number of suggestions, the adoption of which has undoubtedly improved the notes in many points of detail.

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