Preface.

All those who are conversant with ethnology are aware that the pagan population of India is divided into two great classes, viz., the Arian or immigrant, and the Tamulian or aboriginal, and also, that the unity of the Arian family, from Wales to Assam, has been demonstrated in our own times by a noble series of lingual researches—researches which have done for the history of Man a service analogous to that done for the history of the globe he inhabits by the fossil investigations of Cuvier. The moral and physical condition of the several branches of the Arian race having been well known prior to these investigations, their sole object was to recover the clue to the common connexion and relationship of all the Arians, notwithstanding the obliterating effects on speech of ages of diverse social progress and of unrecorded migrations over half the globe's surface, and notwithstanding the striking physical changes worked in the lapse of ages by settlements in every clime, from the Equator to the Arctic circle. What a glorious triumph of literature to bridge such a profound and vast gulf!

The Tamulian race, confined to India and never distinguished by mental culture, offers, it must be confessed, a far less gorgeous subject for inquiry than the Arian. But, as the moral and physical condition of many of the scattered members of the Tamulian body is still nearly as little known as is the (assumed) pristine entirety and unity of that body, it is clear that this subject has two parts, each of which may be easily shown to be of high interest, not merely to the philosopher but to the statesman. The Tamuliens are now, for the most part, British subjects: they are counted by millions, extending from the snows to the Cape (Comorin); and, lastly, they are as much superior
to the Aryan Hindus in freedom from disqualifying prejudices as they are inferior to them in knowledge and all its train of appliances—a fact of which the extensive and important uses now making of the Kōl or Dānger race, offers a valuable exemplification. Yes! in every extensive jungly or hilly tract throughout the vast continent of India there exist hundreds of thousands of human beings in a state not materially different from that of the Germans as described by Tacitus. Let then the student of the progress of society, of the fate and fortunes of the human race, instead of poring over a mere sketch of the past, address himself to the task of preparing full and faithful portraits of what is before his eyes; and let the statesman profit by the labours of the student; for these primitive races are the ancient heritors of the whole soil, from all the rich and open parts of which they were wrongfully expelled by the usurping Hindus.* It is one great object of this research to ascertain when and under what circumstances this dispersion of the ancient owners of the soil took place, at least to demonstrate the fact, and to bring again together the dismembered fragments of the body, by means of careful comparison of the languages, physical attributes, creed and customs of the several (assumed) parts. It is another object, not less interesting, to exhibit the positive condition, moral and material, of each of these societies at once so improveable and so needful of improvement, and whose archaic status, polity and ideas offer such instructive pictures of the course of human progression.

I have said that the unity of the Arian race has been demonstrated chiefly through lingual means. We have now similarly

* It can hardly be necessary for me to say that I do not entertain the idle notion of now ejecting the Hindus and replacing the aborigines, but that of drawing well-informed heedfulness to the condition and claims of the latter.

Surely a subject so worthy of the best attention and ablest examination ought not to be treated superficially, or as if we aimed merely to learn how far the aborigines have a common tie of descent.
to demonstrate the unity of the Tamulian race, an interesting but a difficult task; for there is an immense number of spoken tongues among the Tamulians, whereof I have already ascertained not less than 28 in the limited sphere of my own proposed inquiries;* and all these, though now so different as to be mutually unintelligible to the people who use them, require to be unitised, while one of the highest authorities† on such points fairly declares that he cannot tell what constitutes identity of language. It is clear therefore to me that in this inquiry we shall require all the helps within our reach, and that a copious vocabulary, as well as a rudimentary grammar, of each tongue, will be indispensable. But the rudiments of grammar are to be had only with extreme toil, as creations of your own, from the crude element of very corrupt sentences supplied by unlettered children of nature; and, in proportion as all such grammars are likely to be deficient, in the same proportion do copious vocabularies become more and more desirable. Besides, summary vocabularies are apt to deal with generals, whereas particulars embody the character and racy virtue of speech. But homebred words are all very particular, and proportionally numerous; while general terms, if more conveniently few, are less characteristic and very apt to be of exotic origin; take the English general term to move; it is Latin and one; but of the numerous sorts of special motion (to hop, to skip, to jump, to tumble down, to get up, to walk, to fly, to creep, to run, to gallop, to trot,) all are “genuine Saxon, by the soul of Hengist.” Again, the long and perfect dispersion and insulation of the several members of the Tamulian body have led to an extremity of lingual diverseness which, as contrasted with the

* I confine myself to the aborigines of the mountains and tarai between Kumaun and Assam, a rich and extensive field of research. But I hope that other inquirers will, under the auspices of the Society, join me, to complete the investigation.

† H. H. Wilson’s preface to the Mackenzie papers. Wilson’s scepticism is somewhat wanton and affected: a sly hit at ignorance.
similarity of their creed and customs, is the enigma of their race, and an enigma which assuredly no ÕEdipus will solve except by dint of words. In Hindi and Urdu, structure is the same; vocabularies make all the difference; which is there broad and clear owing to the evidently foreign elements of the diversity. Not so, however, in the Tamulian tongues, in which there is very little of foreign element: all is homogeneity in the vocabularies, and from its sameness of kind is less open to distinct separability. A summary comparative vocabulary was framed some years back by that able and zealous enquirer, the Rev. Mr. Brown, and it has been extensively filled up with the dialects of the mountaineers round Assam. But, in applying this vocabulary to the uses of the present Essay, I have found it quite insufficient to the ends in view, to raise, not to solve, doubts; and in reference to this question of the adequacy or otherwise of a very limited number of words even of a primitive character, I request particular attention to the fact, that the popular opinion of the decisive nature and effect of such words, propagated by that able polyglottist, Abel Remusat, has been lately shown to be far from decisive by Schott, whose observations on the subject may be seen, in lucid epitome, in Prichard's Physical History.* Mr. Brown's words are scarcely of that kind which Remusat justly laid stress on as "prerogative instances" of speech.† They are also, I think, much too few in number to yield decisive results, even had they been quite faultlessly selected. Any vocabulary that aspires to be useful, must, however summary, contain a fair portion of words belonging to each and all of the "parts of speech," and must also give the cardinal numbers, at least down to 10.

With regard to the second object of these inquiries, or the

* Vol. IV. p. 395, and the following.
† For example, light, lux, is a high abstraction which none of my informants can grasp, though they readily give equivalents for sunshine and candle or fire flame.
determination of the moral and physical status of each aboriginal people, it is to be observed that, as the Tamuliens have, none of them, any old authentic legends, and are all very uninformed, save in what respects their immediate wants and habitual ideas, it is exceedingly difficult to learn any thing of this sort from them directly their creed especially is a subject of insuperable difficulty, through the sole medium of direct questioning: their customs, again, are apt to afford but negative evidence, because being drawn from book nature, they tend to identity in all the several nations; and lastly, their physical aspect is of that osculatant and vague stamp, which indicates rather than proves any thing; or rather, what it does prove is general, not particular. We are thus driven back through all the media of research upon the grand stay of a copious vocabulary. It is my fixed conviction that every distinct effective idea must have an appropriate word to express it; that the more important the idea or want (if felt by the parties themselves) the more surely will the correspondent term be forthcoming. Now, in regard to the creed of two of these nations (the Bodo and Dhimal), I have toiled for weeks to come at the verity by means of direct questions; and yet, if at this moment I have any distinct notion of the real belief of these people, certainly I am as much indebted for it to my ample vocabulary as to all my direct interrogations. In the vocabulary, I had no adequate word for God, for soul, for future state, for Heaven, for Hell, for piety, for sin, for prayer, for repentance, for pardon; and I apply this broad and sure basis of inference, but without exaggeration, to its legitimate purpose! Nothing can exceed the vagueness of all direct statement on this most important of subjects: the gods (void of godhead: creator, lawgiver, judge) are very angry: why? not because you have sinned, but because they are neglected: they must be flattered with gifts. This is all; save what may be surely, if carefully gathered from a copious vocabulary. I have adverted to the number of people whose speech is to be investigated, (28) as
PREFACE.

well as to the careful and ample style of investigation which I conceive can alone suffice for the realization of the ends in view; for our aim is not to raise doubts but to solve them.* But time is the most precious of all things; and as the present investigation has cost me six months, I purpose to seek aid and help from abroad, furnishing to each of my co-operators the present paper as a model, it being indispensable for purposes of ready and effective comparison, that all information should take a like direction, and that direction a sound and good one. In submitting therefore the first of an intended series of papers to the Asiatic Society of Bengal, I have the honour to solicit its revision of my labours, in order more particularly to render the form of the vocabulary and grammar as good as may be, containing all that is essential and nothing superfluous. Should the Society favour me with any such suggestions, or should it practically ratify my present work by printing it, I intend forthwith to have 50 blank and 50 full copies of the essay printed for distribution to co-operators; and meanwhile I shall conclude this too long preface with a few explanations of the reasons which have led me to give this particular form to the vocabulary, the grand stay, as I conceive, in these inquiries, for the reasons already given. It will be seen at a glance that my vocabulary is not alphabetical. I think the alphabetical plan liable to two extreme objections; for we become thus entangled amid synonyma that are superfluous or deceptive, and among vague words that are worse than less. But, worse than this, the alphabetical plan is void of all that facilitation which is so indispensable towards the accomplishment of the end in view, it being at once most difficult and most necessary to lend the vagrant minds of our primitive informants some helps towards comprehension and steadiness of attention in to them so new, so strange, and so tedious, a labour. The principle I have proceeded upon is the association of ideas by simi-

* See note at the end of this Preface.
litude, contrast and habitual connection; and I have found this grand principle, (which is to our cogitative, what sympathy is to our emotive faculties) when understood and applied with the requisite simplicity, to be of great assistance to myself in guarding against vague words, whose name is legion, and of yet more and more important assistance to my primitive-minded respondents. In numberless instances the mutual doubts created by the first word were removed by mere utterance of the correlative or contrasted term; whilst in each of the arts and crafts the clue furnished by connexion and dependency of parts enabled me rapidly and surely to work onwards with the vocables. I perceived also that I was at the same time thus preparing so many distinct pictures of the state of knowledge in its several departments, such as it is within the ken and use of the races interrogated (an important part of my plan of absolute as well as comparative estimates); and, even when no such knowledge was to be had in the particular case before me, I have carefully preserved the blanks, deeming the negative almost as valuable as the positive evidence—not to mention that, having in view application to other respondents of different nations, it followed that the blanks in one paper might be well filled in another. Still, the vocabulary is too large and too difficult; and it is therefore a great object to reduce it in the complex terms without mutilation, and also to give the essentials of grammar with the utmost simplicity and conciseness; and for aid to these ends I shall be thankful, though no pains have been spared to render the whole paper as it now stands worthy of the Society's acceptance and a fitting model for future research. Of the three separate people* treated of (the Koch, the Bódó, and the Dhimál) I have given physical delineations of the Bódó only, because the

* I distinguish by language, and assume that wherever there is a broad spoken diversity of tongue unintelligible to neighbours, there is distinct people. The value of these spoken diversities will be hereafter determined as one general result of the inquiry on foot.
faintly yet distinctly marked type of the Mongolian family is similar in all three, but best expressed (so to speak) in the Bodo features and form. I am not unaware that a great deal has been already done in the line of research which I have now, not taken up, but resumed, and if I have not adopted and followed up the method of investigation of any of the many able men who have, with reference to my present attempt, preceded me in this field, it is not because I am insensible of the value of those labours, but because their diversity is quite opposed to every idea of system, where system is most needful, and that the best system: wherefore the corrections of the Society are solicited for my own work prior to its dissemination (as a model) for being filled up by various co-operators either within the limits assigned to myself (if such aid can be had), or elsewhere and beyond those limits.

B. H. Hodgson.

Darjeeling, June, 1846.

Note.—The great Scythic stem of the human race is divided into three primary branches, or the Tungus, the Mongol, and the Turk. The first investigators of this subject urgently insisted on the radical diversity of these three races: but the most recent inquirers more incline to unite them. Certainly there is a strong and obvious character of physical, (if not also of lingual,) sameness throughout the Scythic race; and it is remarkable that this peculiar character belongs also to all the aborigines of India, who may be at once known, from the Cavery and Vigarú to the Cosi and Bhagaran, by their quasi-Scythic physiognomy, so decidedly opposed to the Caucasian countenance of the Arians of India, or the Hindus. I apprehend that there

* Mongolian? potius Scythic.—See the appended note on the subject.

† When I went to England in 1844, I possessed vocabularies of all the languages and dialects of Nepal; but these, with many other valuable papers, were lost owing to circumstances I need not dwell on. I have recovered some fragments, and am reconstructing the vocabularies of these dialects upon the plan above delineated.
PREFACE.

will be found among the aborigines of India a like lingual sameness, and that very extended and very accurate investigation will consequently alone suffice to test the real nature and import of the double sameness, physical and lingual. That all the aborigines of India are Northmen of the Scythic stem seems decidedly and justly inferrible from their physical characteristics. But, inasmuch as that prodigious stem is every where found beyond the whole Northern and Eastern boundary of India, not merely from the Attok to the Brahmaputra, where these rivers cut through the Himalaya, but from that point of the latter river all the way to the sea, and inasmuch as there are familiar and trite Ghâts or passes over the Himalaya throughout its course along the entire confines of India from Kashmir to the Brahma Kûnd, it follows of necessity that very careful and ample investigation will alone enable us to decide upon the question of the unity or diversity of the aborigines of India, in other words to decide upon the questions, whether they owe their confessed Scythic physiognomy to the Tangús, the Mongol or the Türk branch of the Tartars or Scythians, and whether they immigrated from beyond the Himalaya ("the hive of all nations") at one period and at one point, or at several periods and at as many points. Between Gilgit and Chittagong there are 100 passes over the Himalaya and its south-eastern continuation to the Bengal Bay; while for the time of passage, there are ages upon ages before the dawn of Legend and of chronicle.

I incline to the opinion that the aborigines of the Sub-Himalayas, as far cast as the Dânsâr of Assam, belong to the Tibetan* stock, and east of that river to the Chinese stock—except the Gârós and other tribes occupying that portion of the Hills lying between Assam and Sylhet; and that the aborigines of the tarai and forest skirting the entire sub-Himalayas inclusive of the greater part of the circuit of the Assam Valley, belong, like those last mentioned, to the Tamúlian stock or aborigines of the plains of India generally. But what is this Tamulian stock? what the Tibetan stock? and what the Chinese? and to which of the three great and well known branches of the Scythic tree (Tangús, Mongol, Turk) do the Tamilians, the Tibetans and the Chinese† belong?—I have now said enough to enforce caution and stimulate curiosity, and I pause.

* Notices of the Languages and Literature of Nepal.
† The Tartars of China are Manchurian Tangús. I allude to the Chinese proper.