Vidûshaka, or jocose companion of the hero, presenting a certain analogy to the servus of the Roman stage, as does the Vita of some plays to the Roman parasite)—for which the assumption of some acquaintance with the Greek comedy on the part of the earlier Hindu writers would afford a ready explanation. On the other hand, the differences between the Indian and Greek plays are perhaps even greater than their coincidences, which, moreover, are scarcely close enough to warrant our calling in question the originality of the Hindus in this respect. Certain, however, it is that, if the Indian poets were indebted to Greek playwrights for the first impulse in dramatic composition, in the higher sense, they have known admirably how to adapt the Hellenic muse to the national genius, and have produced a dramatic literature worthy to be ranked side by side with both the classical and our own romantic drama. It is to the latter especially that the general character of the Indian play presents a striking resemblance, much more so than to the classical drama. The Hindu dramatist has little regard for the “unities ” of the classical stage, though he is hardly ever guilty of extravagance in his disregard of them. The dialogue is invariably carried on in prose, plentifully interspersed with those neatly turned lyrical stanzas in which the Indian poet delights to depict some natural scene, or some temporary physical or mental con­dition. The most striking feature of the Hindu play, however, is the mixed nature of its language. While the hero and leading male characters speak Sanskrit, women and inferior male characters use various Prakrit dialects. As regards these dialectic varieties, it can hardly be doubted that at the time when they were first employed in this way they were local vernacular dialects; but in the course of the development of the scenic art they became permanently fixed for special dramatic purposes, just as the Sanskrit had, long before that time, become fixed for general literary purposes. Thus it would happen that these Prakrit dialects, having once become stationary, soon diverged from the spoken vernaculars, until the difference between them was as great as between the Sanskrit and the Prakrits. As regards the general character of the dramatic Prakrits, they are somewhat more removed from the Sanskrit type than the Pali, the language of the Buddhist canon, which again is in a rather more advanced state than the language of the Asoka inscriptions *(c.* 250 b.c.). And, as the Buddhist sacred books were committed to writing about 80 B.C., the state of their language is attested for that period at latest; while the grammatical fixation of the scenic Prakrits has probably to be referred to the early centuries of our era.

The existing dramatic literature is not very extensive. The number of plays of all kinds of any literary value will scarcely amount to fifty. The reason for this paucity of dramatic produc­tions doubtless is that they appealed to the tastes of only a limited class of highly cultivated persons, and were in consequence but seldom acted. As regards the theatrical entertainments of the common people, their standard seems never to have risen much above the level of the religious spectacles mentioned by Patanjali. Such at least is evidently the case as regards the modern Bengâli *jâtras—*described by Wilson as exhibitions of some incidents in the youthful life of Krishna, maintained in extempore dialogue, interspersed with popular songs—as well as the similar *râsas* of the western provinces, and the rough and ready performances of the *bhanrs,* or professional buffoons. Of the religious drama Sanskrit literature offers but one example, viz., the famous *Gîtagovinda, @@1* composed by Jayadeva in the 12th century. It is rather a mytho-lyrical poem, which, however, in the opinion of Lassen, may be considered as a modern and refined specimen of the early form of dramatic composition. The subject of the poem is as follows:—Krishna, while leading a cowherd’s life in Vrin- davana, is in love with Radha, the milkmaid, but has been faith­less to her for a while. Presently, however, he returns to her

“ whose image has all the while lingered in his breast,” and after much earnest entreaty obtains her forgiveness. The emotions appropriate to these situations are expressed by the two lovers and a friend of Radha in melodious and passionate stanzas of great poetic beauty. Like the Song of Solomon, the Gîtagovinda, moreover, is supposed by the Hindu commentators to admit of a mystic inter­pretation ; for, “as Krishna, faithless for a time, discovers the vanity of all other loves, and returns with sorrow and longing to his own darling Radha, so the human soul, after a brief and frantic attachment to objects of sense, burns to return to the God from whence it came ” (Griffith).

The *Mrichchhakatikâ, @@2* or “earthen toy-cart,” is by tradition placed at the head ol the existing dramas; and a certain clumsiness of construction seems indeed to justify this distinction. Accord­ing to several stanzas in the prologue, the play was composed by a king Sudraka, who is there stated to have, through Siva’s favour, recovered his eyesight, and, after seeing his son as king, to have died at the ripe age of a hundred years and ten days. Accord­ing to the same stanzas, the piece was enacted after the king’s death ; but it is probable that they were added for a subsequent performance. In Bana’s novel *Kâdambarî* (c. 630 a.d.), a king Śûdraka, probably the same, is represented as having resided at Bidisa (Bhilsa)—some 130 miles east of Ujjayinî (Ujjain), where the scene of the play is laid. Charudatta, a Brahman merchant, reduced to poverty, and Vasantasenâ, an accomplished courtezan, meet and fall in love with each other. This forms the main story, which is interwoven with a political underplot, resulting in a change of dynasty. The connexion between the two plots is effected by means of the king’s rascally brother-in-law, who pur­sues Vasantasena with his addresses, as well as by the part of the rebellious cowherd Aryaka, who, having escaped from prison, finds shelter in the hero’s house. The wicked prince, on being rejected, strangles Vasantasena, and accuses Charudatta of having murdered her ; but, just as the latter is about to be executed, his lady love appears again on the scene. Meanwhile Aryaka has succeeded in deposing the king, and, having himself mounted the throne of Ujjain, he raises Vasantasena to the position of an honest woman, to enable her to become the wife of Charudatta. The play is one of the longest, consisting of not less than ten acts, some of which, however, are very short. The interest of the action is, on the whole, well sustained; and, altogether, the piece presents a vivid picture of the social manners of the time.

In Kalidasa (? *c..* 550 a.d.) the dramatic art attained its highest point of perfection. From this accomplished poet we have three well-constructed plays, abounding in stanzas of exquisite tenderness and fine descriptive passages, viz., the two well-known mytho- pastoral dramas, *Śakuntalâ* in seven and *Vikramorvaśi @@3* in five acts, and a piece of court intrigue, distinctly inferior to the other two, entitled *Mâlavikâgnimitra, @@4* in five acts. King Agnimitra, who has two wives, falls in love with Malavika, maid to the first queen. His wives endeavour to frustrate their affection for each other, but in the end Malavika turns out to be a princess by birth, and is accepted by the queens as their sister.

In the prologue to this play, Kalidasa mentions Bhasa and Saumilla as his predecessors in dramatic composition. Of the former poet some six or seven stanzas have been gathered from anthologies by Prof. Aufrecht, who has also brought to light one fine stanza ascribed to Ramila and Saumila.

Sri Harslia-deva—whom Dr F. Hall has proved to be identical with King Siladitya Harshavardhana of Kanyakubja (Kanauj), who reigned in the first half of the 7th century—has three plays attributed to him. Most likely, however, he -did not write any of them himself, but they were only dedicated to him as the patron of their authors. Such at least seems to have been the case as regards the *Ratnâvalî, @@5* which was probably composed by Bana. It is a graceful drama of genteel domestic manners, in four acts, of no very great originality, the author having been largely indebted to Kalidasa’s plays. Ratnavali, a Ceylon princess, is sent by her father to the court of King Vatsa to become his second wife. She suffers shipwreck, but is rescued and received into Vatsa’s palace as one of queen Vasavadatta’s attendants. The king falls in love

@@@1 Ed., with a Latin transl., by C. Lassen; Engl, transl. by E. Arnold.

@@@2 Edited by F. Stenzler, translated by H. H. Wilson; German by O. Bohtlingk and L. Fritze; French by P. Regnaud.

@@@3 Both these plays are known in different recensions in different parts of India. The Bengali recension of the *Sakuntald* was translated by Sir W. Jones, and into French, with the text, by Cliezy, and again edited critically by R. Pischel, who has also advocated its greater antiquity. Editions and translations of the western (Devanagari) re­cension have been published by O. Bohtlingk and Mon. Williams. The *Vikramorvaśî* has been edited critically by S. P. Pandit, and the southern text by R. Pischel. It has been translated by H. H. Wilson and E. B. Cowell.

@@@4 Edited critically by S. P. Pandit; transl. by C. H. Tawney, and previously into German by A. Weber.

@@@5 Edited by Taranatha Tarkavachaspati, and by C. Cappeller in Bbhtlingk’s *Sanskrit-Chrestomathie* ; translated by H. H. Wilson.