

cousins. The kingdom devolved on Dhritarāshtra, who in turn made his nephew Yudhishtira the heir apparent.

§ 5. Yudhishtira's exploits aroused the ill-will of his cousins, and, to escape their plots, the Pāndu princes went away to the king of Panchāla, whose daughter, Draupadi, became their common wife. In view of this strong alliance with the Panchālas, Dhritarāshtra thought it best to conciliate the Pāndus. So he divided the kingdom, and gave Hastinā-pura to his sons, and to his nephews a district to the south-west, where they built Indraprastha, the modern Delhi. Here the Pāndavas and their people lived happily under king Yudhishtira.

§ 6. On one occasion Dhritarāshtra held a great assembly of princes at his capital. The Pāndavas were invited and came. Yudhishtira was challenged to play with Duryodhana, and accepted. The dice were thrown for Duryodhana by his uncle Śakuni. Yudhishtira loses everything—wealth, kingdom, brothers, wife. A compromise, however, is made, by which the Pāndavas give up their part of the kingdom for twelve years, and agree to remain incognito for a thirteenth. With Draupadi, they retire to the Kāmyaka forest, on the Saraswati.

§ 7. For twelve years the Pāndu princes dwell in the wood. Many legends are told to divert and console them in their exile; and these stories, with the description of the forest-life of the princes, combine to make up the third or 'Forest-book,' the *vana-parvan*, which is one of the longest in the whole poem.

§ 8. The thirteenth year arrived and passed. "Then in the fourteenth the Pāndavas demanded back their possessions, but received them not. From this arose the conflict. They overthrew the ruling house, slew prince Duryodhana, and then, although losing most of their warriors, they got back again their kingdom." MBh. i.61.51=2280. Thus ended the Bhārata, doubtless, in its oldest and simplest form.

§ 9. The poem, as we now have it, spins out the story of the combat through several books and through thousands of distichs. At length Yudhishtira is crowned in Hastinā-pura, and Bhishma, the leader of the Kurus, although mortally wounded, instructs him, for about twenty thousand distichs, on the duties of kings and on other topics, and then dies. In the seventeenth book, the Pāndus renounce the kingdom, and in the next, the last, they ascend to heaven with Draupadi.

§ 10. The Nala-episode illustrates very well how loose is the connection of the episodes in general with the main thread of the Bhārata. The story of Nala is one of those inserted in the third book (above, § 7), and its setting is as follows. Arjuna had gone to the heaven of Indra to get from him divine weapons. The other Pāndavas, remaining in the forest with Draupadi, lament their brother's absence and the loss of their kingdom. Meantime the fierce and stout-armed Bhīma addresses his brother Yudhishtira, and offers to go out and slay their deceitful cousins. Yudhishtira counsels Bhīma to wait till after the thirteenth year, and is trying to calm his impetuous brother, when suddenly there arrives a mighty sage, Brihadāçwa. The holy man is received with honor and with the customary guest's-dish of milk and honey. When he is seated, Yudhishtira sits by him, bewails his sad lot, and asks, "Hast thou ever seen or heard of a man more luckless than I am? I believe there never was one more unhappy." "On this point," replies the sage, "I will tell thee a story of a king who was even more luckless than thou. King Nala was once cheated out of his kingdom by a false dice-player, and dwelt in the forest, and