

on minor questions, he has deferred to my judgment, though his view may have been right just as often as mine. Where erroneous conclusions have been drawn, the reader will be helped to correct them by the method I have pursued of supplying from the original texts the evidence on which such conclusions are based.

Scope of the Work.—At the outset it was proposed, as I have already stated, that the book should furnish the historical material in Vedic literature as represented by proper names. As soon, however, as I began to examine more carefully the historical material thus available, I became convinced that restriction to proper names would result in a harvest too meagre to deserve being gathered in the form of a book. It seemed essential to collect all the historical matter accessible to us in the earliest literary documents of India, and thus to furnish a conspectus of the most ancient phase of Aryan civilization that can be realized by direct evidence. If properly and thoroughly treated this matter would, I felt sure, yield a book of genuine value, a comprehensive work on Vedic antiquities; for it would include all the information that can be extracted from Vedic literature on such topics as agriculture, astronomy, burial, caste, clothing, crime, diseases, economic conditions, food and drink, gambling, kingship, law and justice, marriage, morality, occupations, polyandry and polygamy, the position of women, usury, village communities, war, wedding ceremonies, widow burning, witchcraft, and many others. The proper names would embrace not only persons, tribes, and peoples, but also mountains, rivers, and countries. The geographical distribution of the Vedic population would thus also be presented.

From the historical data amplified in this way I proposed, however, to exclude matter belonging to the domain of religion, which it seemed better to relegate to a separate work. At the same time it soon became clear that certain aspects of religious activity inseparably connected with the social and political life