

'Things as They Are.'

BY THE REV. ALEX. TOMORV, M.A., DUFF COLLEGE, CALCUTTA.

THIS is probably the most vivid word-picture of mission work in India ever written. Books on missions are often dull and ponderous. But every one of the thirty-two chapters of this book is clear cut as a cameo, and positively throbbing with sensation. The author is obviously a highly qualified observer, gifted to a rare degree with a photographic power of depicting actual scenes so as to make them live, and a gruesome faculty of disclosing the horrible in its hideous nakedness. The result is a book that, whether we like it or not, we are bound to read to the finish, and that will drive its pictures deep into the mind and memory. The style is crisp and bright; the thoughts of the writer are burningly stated; her attitude and her convictions thrill through every chapter. In one chapter (xx.) she excels herself in her description of child life in South India, and lets herself go in humorous pictorial word-painting that delights the reader with the almost idyllic presentment of children as they are.

But the author is not an artist in perspective. She selects episodes, describes them so that they live before our eyes, and leaves us with the impression that there is nothing else in mission work than the kind of scene she depicts so graphically. In chapter xxxi. she explains her point of view. She is a missionary doing pioneer work among women in outlying villages in the Tinnevely district of Southern India. She felt it to be her duty to go where there were no other mission workers, and to break new ground. This desire is laudable and intelligible, but it gives a misleading picture of mission work in the Madras Presidency or in India generally to-day. Nor is the first preaching of the gospel to such ignorant and superstitious and degraded people as she depicts likely to bear much fruit in any conditions, let alone in Indian villages, where the new white *mem* would first be regarded probably with fear as a ghost or demon, and on closer acquaintance with pity as an escaped lunatic. What one who knows and

loves India misses in the book is any sign of true perception by the author of the domestic virtues of the Hindus, of the Scotch-like self-sacrifice of mothers for the education of promising sons at school and college, of the un murmuring self-effacement of many Hindu men for the benefit of other members of their family, of the noble reverence for aged and sickly relatives, of the love strong as death that animates their domestic life. The absence of such admissions vitiates the picture as a study in perspective.

Each episode is doubtless true; the narrative bears the marks of vivid eye-witnessing; but there are too many peeps into hell, and too few allusions to the homely virtues of Hindu folk. The author is an intense lady who has attained to a very high degree of self-surrender to the will of God, and of obedience to the call to a missionary life of self-sacrifice. Her very exalted standard may well shame average Christians, but it operates cruelly and unfairly when applied to the poor women she depicts as sunk in benighted ignorance and sinful superstition.

Things are bad enough in India to-day without any one-sided presentations. The dislocation that has taken place between the mind and the conscience of young India is producing a pathetic sickness of soul. The mind is approximating to the European standard, while the conscience is of Asia, Asiatic; and that means from the shores of the Bosphorus to those of the Pacific comparative indifference to immorality, un veracity, and cruelty, coupled with a singularly inflammable fanaticism on all matters affecting religion and nationalism. The young Hindu of to-day is in a very tight place, and wise missionaries will have 'long patience' with him, until perhaps after many days he will find in Christ the solution of all problems, and the incentive to the highest life. India is coming to Christ more rapidly than Hindu advocates like, as is shown by recent utterances of anti Christian leaders in India on the results of the census of 1901. If the men with all their opportunities for culture and enlightenment are so circumstanced, how can the women, who are admittedly far behind the men in enlightenment be expected to be receptive

¹ *Things as They Are: Mission Work in South India.* By Amy Wilson-Carmichael, Keswick Missionary, C.F.Z.M. London: Morgan & Scott. Pp. 303, and 39 illustrations.

of the first message of the gospel as Miss Wilson-Carmichael gave it to them?

The author's heart rightly burns with indignation at the cruelty perpetrated in child-marriage on girls who become mothers almost before they have attained maidenhood. She could not write too strongly of the evils attending the custom, or of the indifference of enlightened Hindu men who permit it, or of the crass fanaticism of Hindu women who have gone through its sufferings themselves and yet do not end the cursed tyranny. If ever one nation had the right to interfere in the cruel customs of another, Britain has the right to interfere in this matter in India, and it is to be hoped that the reading of this book will stir many a British mother's blood and lead her to agitate till the evil is removed. How difficult it will be to get reform secured is indicated on p. 228, where the author refers to the Age of Consent Act, which raised the age of consummation of marriage for girls to *twelve* years, and yet the law is known to be a dead letter; for the police surveillance of Hindu Zenanas, without which breaches of the law cannot be discovered or proved, is simply impracticable in the present conditions of Hindu society. Till the women of India rise against the abomination themselves there is little hope of legislation producing any useful result. God speed the day when this shall be!

The author returns again and again to three topics that she thinks want representing to the British heart: (1) caste; (2) girl-devotees of Hindu temples; (3) violence to would-be converts to make them renounce Christianity.

1. In her view caste is the greatest foe of Christianity in India. So malignant is its operation that she regards it as the masterpiece of Satan. There is a much simpler explanation. The Hindu regards caste as almost a divine institution, though it belongs to later Hinduism, and can be shown to have been a social classification in the first instance. But whatever its origin, it stands to the Hindu to-day for purity of blood, for clanship, for comradeship, for patriotic enthusiasm, for nationalism, for trades-union-like co-operation, as well as for God's verdict on religious and moral character in a previous life. The Hindu grips on to caste with a tenacity that is the resultant of three forces: tradition, intensive selection in marriage, and self-interest retention of privilege.

Caste is the most characteristic feature of the

Hindu of to-day. However widely the Hindus of one province may differ from those of another in mental and moral qualities or in economic conditions, they are equally inflammable on the subject of caste, with a sensitiveness and a fury that make Europeans gasp. Caste knows no richer classes and poorer classes, literate and illiterate. All caste-fellows are brothers; others are outsiders. There are many secondary applications of caste, but probably only one primary application. In enlightened centres, such as Calcutta, men of different castes may, and do, eat together, smoke the same hookah, sit on the same benches at school and college, or in the tramway car or in the railway carriage. In these particulars a rigid interpretation of caste rules has been modified. But in the primary relation, in marriage, there is no relaxation. No self-respecting Hindu can marry out of his caste or sub-caste. If he does he forfeits respect and loses his status. It is difficult for a simple straightforward European to understand why some things break caste and others do not. Believing in Christ, reading the Bible, praying to God, attending Christian services, learning from missionaries—these do not affect caste, but baptism breaks caste. Is it impossible to hope for such a modification of caste as will allow Hindu heads of families to regard baptized members of their families as not necessarily out-casted? Even advanced Hindu thinkers shake their heads at this suggestion; but in view of the numerous modifications of caste that have taken place in a generation, nothing is impossible. Such a relaxation would undoubtedly remove the greatest obstacle to the acceptance of Christianity by men who are theologically Christians but sociologically Hindus.

The author is right in her analysis. Every Hindu rejection of Christ turns upon caste. Still there seems little utility in denouncing it, but great promise of success in working for its modification from within, as the result of the knowledge and the progress that are rapidly changing the leading centres of India into outposts of Western civilization.

2. In the chapter headed 'Married to the God,' and throughout the book, the author refers to the degraded girls and women attached to temples in South India and associated with worship. Their relations with priests and others are undeniably immoral. This immorality is part of Hindu

worship in South India. In some other provinces, if it is done, it is done surreptitiously, so that it is not an obvious scandal that can be exposed. But there is no doubt of its openness in South India. There is no doubt also that the more thoughtful Hindus deplore the obscenity and the scandal. But it is a far cry from a Hindu's deploring a scandal to his taking any action to remove it. Agitation must begin in this Christian land and pass to the minds of Indian leaders before any such reform will take place. May this book help to bring about this healthy change! It would not be difficult for police authorities to suppress the open and shameless vice that goes on in temples in Southern India, but they would only drive it under the surface. In the meantime the immorality should be made known and denounced till the priests are forced into cleansing the Augean stables.

3. The author refers in several places to instances in which Hindu parents are said to have killed their children by poison, or to have driven them mad with drugs, in order to prevent them from becoming Christians. Such cases are reported all over India, and no Hindu parent expresses abhorrence or even astonishment at the occurrence. He regards the caste law as so sacred that he feels

justified, like the judges of the Spanish Inquisition, in destroying his son's body for the good of his soul. Still it would be murder if it were detected. But the police can be bribed, a death certificate can be bought from a doctor, the superintendent of the cremation ground asks no questions, and the cremated ashes tell no tales.

It is difficult to see how such skilfully elaborated methods of removing recalcitrant converts can be effectively exposed by the only persons who care enough, namely, the missionaries. Besides, life in India is terribly cheap at best, and in comparison with caste honour its value is infinitesimal.

This book teaches the needed lesson that Hinduism is not dead as a tradition and a social force, and does not hesitate on occasion to have recourse to violence to prevent its honour from being sullied. If only the fanaticism of the caste could be converted into loyalty to Jesus Christ, what a modern miracle the world would see! Hindus exhibit a solidarity and a devotion when their religion is touched, that not only shames Christians, but gives a promise of good things to come when they shall accept Christ as Lord, and their collectivism and piety shall become forces on the side of the kingdom of God, instead of sullenly antagonizing its advance, as they do now.

Recent Foreign Theology.

A SURVEY.

BY THE REV. J. A. SELBIE, D.D., MARVCULTER, ABERDEEN.

The Babel-Bibel Controversy.

THE issue of this controversy, which is now drawing to a close, has been in every way satisfactory. Professor Friedrich Delitzsch, without intending it, has helped to set the unique character of the religion of Israel in a clearer light than ever, while labouring to prove that religion to be simply a (sometimes degenerate) descendant of the system of beliefs that prevailed in ancient Babylon. In Germany there has been, as a matter of course, a great deal of well-meant, but mistaken and misinformed, zeal displayed against the famous two lectures and their author. Such attacks may be ignored. But there have been damaging criticisms from the side both of Assyriology and

Old Testament Theology, criticisms which, we have no hesitation in saying, have shattered entirely the main contentions of Delitzsch. From time to time we have noticed the more important of these contributions to the controversy. Since our last reference to the subject, we have received four publications, all of value and all fitted to exercise a sobering effect upon those who are either inclined to follow blindly the lead of Delitzsch, or disposed to reject *in toto* the idea of any Babylonian influences being at work in the development of the religion of Israel.

The first two of these works are Zimmern's *Keilinschriften und Bibel nach ihrem religionsgeschichtlichen Zusammenhang* (Berlin: Reuther & Reichard, 1903; price M.1) and Bezold's *Die*