

Eastern sky, an officer lay dying. With gallant daring he had led his followers through many a devious path, guided alone by the pale starlight of the heavens, until at last they reached the enemy; and now the strife is over, but he is wounded, mortally! As the general, his cheeks bedewed with tears, gazed down with sadness on his face, a sudden radiancy illumined for a moment the youth's countenance as, looking up to Wolseley, he exclaimed, 'General, didn't I lead them straight?' and so he died. Oh, brothers, when o'er our eyes there steals the film of death, and when the soul flits solemnly from time into eternity, may it be ours to say in truthful earnestness to Christ concerning those committed to our care, 'We led the people straight.'—
H. D. BROWN, B.A.

INDIVIDUALS die! but the amount of Truth they have taught, and the sum of Good they have done, dies not with them.—MAZZINI.

Preaching and Practice.—If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, chapels had been churches, and poor men's cottages princes' palaces. It is a good divine that follows his own instructions. I can easier teach

twenty what were good to be done, than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching.

God bends from out the deep, and says—
'I gave thee the great gift of Life;
Wast thou not called in many ways?
Are not My earth and heaven at strife?
I gave thee of My seed to sow—
Bringest thou Me My hundred-fold?'
Can I look up with face aglow,
And answer, 'Father, here is gold?'

LOWELL.

FOR REFERENCE.

- Davies (D. C.), *Atonement and Intercession of Christ*, 34.
Macdonald (G.), *Miracles of our Lord*, 303.
Matheson (G.), *Voices of the Spirit*, 137.
Randolph (B. W.), *Ember Thoughts*, 31.
Sunday School Addresses, *New Manual*, 102.
Vallings (J. F.), *The Holy Spirit of Promise*, 92.
Vaughan (C. J.), *Rest Awhile*, 15.

'The Web of Indian Life.'

BY THE REV. NICOL MACNICOL, M.A., POONA, INDIA.

THE writer of this book, Miss Margaret E. Noble, occupies a somewhat unique position as an interpreter of India to England. She is an English-woman, who became a disciple of Swami Vivekananda, that apostle of a modern eclectic Hinduism who attracted so much attention at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago. She belongs to the Ramkrishna brotherhood, of which the Swami was the head until his death, and calls herself Sister Nivedita. It appears from the somewhat vague account given by her in the opening chapter of this book that she spent the greater part of a year in Calcutta, living among Hindus and seeking to make herself one of them in her worship and in her habits of life. Miss Noble may for these reasons claim to write of India to some extent from the inside, and certainly her book is informed by a deep and even passionate sympathy with its peoples and their ideals, as she conceives them. She is, at least, no mere globe-trotter. It is true that until we approach India, not only without contempt but in a spirit of reverence, she is not likely to yield up to

us her secret. Miss Noble perceives aright that India more than most countries has dreamed great dreams and cherished lofty ideals.

But Miss Noble's attitude of uncritical admiration blinds her to the other fact that in India, more than in most countries, those ideals have failed woefully to find realization. Recently a missionary lady published a remarkable book called *Things as They Are in Southern India*. Miss Noble's book might almost be called 'Things as They Are Not.' If the Christian writer's fault is a rather lurid realism, and if she errs sometimes by generalizing too hastily from certain hideous facts that she has herself observed, this neo-Hindu is still further led astray from sober truth by a sentimental enthusiasm for an ideal India that has scarcely any relation to the facts at all.

As regards the actual situation in India Miss Noble seems to be a 'lost mind'; she has apparently renounced the critical faculty altogether. Her book, with all its vague and sometimes hysterical eloquence, will serve a useful purpose if it reminds us that India has been for many thousand years the home of profound reflexion and of impossible ideals, that it has had within

¹ *The Web of Indian Life*. By Sister Nivedita [Margaret E. Noble] of Ramkrishna Vivekananda. London: Heinemann.

it philosophers as subtle as Aristotle, saints more serene and self-forgetful than Aurelius ; but it will only mislead or deceive if we do not realize at the same time that these have been as stars shining rare and remote in a vast and melancholy night, and that India as she is to-day forms a tragic comment on the saying, 'Corruptio optimi pessima.'

If there is any part of Indian life of which Miss Noble might be expected to write with special knowledge and insight, it is that which concerns the Hindu wife and mother. To this a large part of the volume is devoted, but with the result of darkening counsel rather than bringing any illumination. One can go far with her in her tribute, though expressed with a depressing monotony of eloquence, to the simplicity and the domestic piety that not seldom redeem the sordid narrowness of the Hindu woman's life. Especially when she is mother of a son, her attainment of what is recognized as her only end and purpose in living gives her a dignity that almost justifies Miss Noble's description of her as a Madonna.

But there can be no doubt that even here Miss Noble has entirely misread and misinterpreted the facts. It is characteristic of her whole book that she is so largely possessed by the Christian sentiment, which she probably imagines herself to have outgrown, that she is continually importing Christian conceptions into the midst of Hindu ideas and ideals to which they are completely alien. There is beauty in many aspects of Indian life, and especially in the affection and the dependence of the relation of the mother and her child, but there is little in it of the beauty of spiritual affection. Hinduism, in spite of the profound reflexion that it embodies within itself, is, after all, a natural religion ; and Hindu family life likewise is based upon the impulses of nature and not, in practice or in theory, on any higher or less selfish instinct. To speak of the Hindu husband as being to his wife 'the window of the Eternal Presence' is not only untrue to the facts ; it is simple nonsense. She worships him, more probably, because he is the 'window' in her narrow life to much more immediate and accessible rewards. There is some element of truth in Miss Noble's words—though one can with difficulty be patient with her language—when she speaks of the Hindu woman's worship of the 'Child Saviour' (p. 28) ; the pathos of her worship and of her earnestness in it is due to the fact that

the son whom she desires is indeed in a very real sense her saviour. This tragedy is concealed beneath fine words by Miss Noble when she says, 'In motherhood alone does marriage become holy ; without it the mere indulgence of affection has no right to be' (p. 28). Certainly without it there is apt to be the very opposite of affection in India. But surely she reaches the very climax of misrepresentation in her account of the Indian widow. It was no belief in a 'mystic union of souls' (p. 53) that was the motive of *suttee*, but the monstrous selfishness of the male animal, and it is the same motive that still maintains the widow in bondage and in shame. A perpetual faithfulness that is required of the wife but not of the husband has nothing in it of which India need be proud. Instead of Miss Noble's picture of the child-widow dwelling 'in a great calm' in 'the thought of the Divine itself,' we see her, shaven and half-starved, shunned as a bringer of misfortune, living out her bleak and joyless life, indeed a patient, pitiful 'mother of sorrows.'

It would take too long to go through the whole of this book, pointing out its consistent and unvarying misrepresentation of the facts. When it is said (p. 14) that 'any woman is safe' in an Indian street, 'not even the freedom of a word or look will be offered,' one can scarcely believe that Miss Noble can really be as ignorant of Indian life as such a statement implies. Has she never heard, for example, of the annual Holi festival? Again, she is guilty of ignorance that in the writer of a book on India is culpable if she really supposes that polygamy is now 'practically obsolete' (p. 43). Did she live in Calcutta for a year without hearing of Kulin Brahmans? And indeed, not a few among all classes in India would have to say with a candidate at a recent examination, 'I do not believe in polygamy, but I am one.' Students of Mohammedanism will be surprised to learn that that austere and haughty faith is 'another name for *bhakti*, the melting love of God,' and amused, perhaps, to find the grim prophet himself described by Miss Noble's favourite adjective 'sweet.'

It would not perhaps be worth one's while to spend time over such a work of imagination as this is, were it not that one recognizes it to be a romance with a purpose. Miss Noble is one of several, of whom Mrs. Besant is another, who have come from the West to the help of Hinduism, and whom genuine Hindu reformers by no means

welcome. By their blind enthusiasm for all Indian institutions they retard progress towards better things. There is no hope of a society that is built up upon the bondage and degradation of its women as Indian society is, and Indian reformers, perceiving this, have always put among the first of their aims a determined opposition to enforced widowhood. Both Mrs. Besant and Miss Noble have ranged themselves with orthodoxy in seeking to uphold and glorify what is merely a crime and a cruelty. They do their best to cast a halo of fine sentiment about this practice, as about caste,—which, according to Miss Noble, 'ought to stand translated as honour' (p. 127),—and much else that degrades and enslaves India. To speak of *mukti* as 'the beatific vision' sounds very well, but it conveys an idea that is the very opposite of what the Sanscrit word really means. There is a like ignorance or worse in her representation of the prayer 'make me Brahman' as meaning 'make me holy' (p. 221), and in her statement that Hinduism seeks constantly to 'express the idea that in the great Heart of the Absolute there dwells an abiding charity towards men' (p. 222). Her whole account of Hinduism is a weird blend of Occidental sentimentalism and Oriental metaphysics. Miss Noble must know perfectly well that *mukti* or the attainment of Brahman is neither 'beatific' nor a 'vision.' It is much more like what Schelling, I think, described as 'a night in which all cows are black.'

One of the aims of Miss Noble and her coadjutors—and an excellent one—is to encourage the

creation of an Indian nationality, to seek to unify its diverse and antagonistic races and creeds. But that result is not likely to be brought about by misrepresenting facts and falsifying history. The Mohammedan lion and the Hindu lamb are not likely to be beguiled into lying down together by being told that their past conflicts were merely 'athletic contests between brothers and cousins' (p. 178). Hinduism is itself a bundle of irreconcilable and diverse religious elements, and when the attempt is made to harmonize it with Mohammedanism in the 'synthesis of Indian thought,' even Miss Noble's hazy rhetoric is inadequate to the task. She moves in a region of thought far above the ordinary requirements of consistency. Thus it appears at p. 196 that in the Hindu view of life 'high over all law rose, rises, and shall for ever rise, the human will, its brow bright with the sunshine of freedom,' but by p. 204 the scene is changed, and 'to the wise man, frankly, life is a bondage.' 'Frankly,' this kind of thing will not do. Such fine words will not heal the wounds of India, and will only mislead England. India needs sympathy, but it must be a sympathy that does not deceive and is not deceived. Even an orthodox Poona paper, which hailed Miss Noble's book with enthusiasm, was constrained to express this feeling. With a quaint mixture of metaphors it summed up our criticism and condemnation of this book. 'We must not forget,' it says, 'that there is also a seamy side to the canvas which, if at all it were exposed to the public view, would tell quite a different tale.'

Recent Biblical and Oriental Archaeology.

BY A. H. SAYCE, LL.D., PROFESSOR OF ASSYRIOLOGY, OXFORD.

An Archæologist on the Pentateuch.

ONE of the most interesting and suggestive books I have read for a long while has been published by a young Danish archæologist, Dr. Ditlef Nielsen, under the title *Die altarabische Mondreligion und die mosaische Ueberlieferung* (Trübner, Strasburg, 1904). On the one side it is a continuation of Professor Hommel's researches into the religion of the ancient civilized kingdom of Arabia, and on

the other it is the first attempt that has been made to apply to the Pentateuch the archæological method which in Professor Ramsay's hands has achieved such brilliant results for the study of the New Testament. The book consequently falls into two parts: in the first we have three chapters on the early lunar worship of the Arabians, and in the second a systematic examination of the Mosaic narrative in the light of the recent discoveries of Oriental archæology. One by one the historical