

tion, decently clad in the sacred salmon yellow, accepting no alms save food, refusing the touch of any metal, is here, doing the distance cheerfully on foot. Next comes an ascetic, with withered arm held aloft and useless this many a long year. Again, a proud mahant, abbot of some rich foundation, master of elephants and treasure uncounted, is borne past. * * * Then there are the naked Swamis, men who wear neither sashes nor clothing beyond the necessary scanty rag, who wander among sunny deserts and snowy mountains alike, indifferent to heat or cold, and of whom when one talks to them, one remembers nothing, save that here are friends with the culture of scholars, and the breeding and rank of gentlemen.

THE NATIVE HINDU.

THE WEB OF INDIAN LIFE. By the Sister Nivedita (Margaret E. Noble) of Ramakrishna-Vive-Kananda. Pp. 301. New York: Henry Holt & Co. \$2.25.

Profusely florid is this "Web of Indian Life," so much so that the ornamentation, you might think, hid at times the material itself. Perhaps the impressions of India we have received, as seen through English spectacles, have been commonplace and entirely wanting in local color. Then, too, there has been the inclination on the part of the English official to smile at the Baboo and his method of expression. Now, it may be, for the first time we are made to understand what India is. Certainly in every page of the book laudation is conveyed and praise piled up for the Indian and his country, until you come to the opinion that both the Hindu man, and more particularly the woman and the child, are human paragons.

Do we not know that the Hindus have the deepest love and reverence for the Ganges? Just live alongside of the river, writes the author, and you must "fall under the spell of her personality. Yellow, leonine, imperious; there is something in her of the caprice, of the almost treachery of beautiful women, who have swayed the destinies of the world."

"Without praying, no eating; without bathing, no praying!" is the short strict rule to which every woman at least conforms; hence the morning bath in the river is the first great event of the day. It is all dark when little companies of women of rank begin to leave their houses on foot for the bathing stairs. These are the proud and high bred, on whom "the sun has never looked." Too sensitive to tolerate the glance of passers-by, and too faithful to forego the sanctifying immersion, they cut the knot of difficulties at once in this way. Every moment of the ablution has its invocation, and the return journey is made carrying a brass vessel full of the sacred water, which will be used all day to sprinkle the place in which any one eats or prays.

The noblest of all beggars is the Hindu one. There are no vagrants in India. To ask for alms is the proudest of vocations. A poorhouse would be out of place. The story is told of a charitable Englishwoman who offered a beggar a loaf of bread. He declined the gift. In England you do not give money, because the tramp will certainly spend it in beer. Declining the bread is accounted for in this way:

In India there is no risk whatever on this score, because not one man in the hundred ever tasted liquor, at the same time a Hindu beggar at least may not eat bread made with yeast or baked by any but Hindus of his own or better caste. Now, the offering made in this case was a yeast-made bread, baked by a Mohammedan and, handled by a Christian.

There has come about an appreciable change in India.

The days when the little boys in the village school wrote on the floor in sand are of the long past. Steel pens instead of wooden stylus, cheap paper, smooth writing fluids are everywhere. Soap is becoming a necessity. * * * Kerosene, tin, and modern brass are to be found in every village. * * * Even the brass smiths have quietly accepted the fact that their metal is cheapest brought in sheets from Europe, and housewives mourn in vain that the beautiful looking, brass cooking vessels are no longer fit to be heirlooms, as were those of their grandmothers.

As far as it goes, the institution of castes finds an apologist in the writer. One reason presented is that of hygiene. The aborigines were "often carrion eaters." The fact is that the Aryan and non-Aryan discussion has been carried very far indeed. As the writer cleverly explains it:

By a continuous crystallization, all caste laws—from being the enunciation of broad canons of refinement as between Aryan and non-Aryan—came to be the regular caste barriers between one class and another of the same race. In this way they lost their invidious character.

This, the description of pilgrims on the way to a shrine, is particularly vivid:

Old women, bent double with age, toll, hobbling along, by the help of the pointed alpenstock. Monks of all descriptions are to be seen. Some of them are covered with ashes, have long reddish-looking hair, wear only the yellow loin cloth, and carry curious tongs and begging bowls. These may be Yogis of the order that believes in the mortification of the flesh, or Nages, the militant monks, who were once ready to defend the faith at any moment, and who to this day are powerfully organized to meet the shock of the world that has long ago, alas! passed away like a dream. The sannyasin, often a man of modern educa-