

THE CHANGE OF FRONT IN INDIA.

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A generation has fully passed since the writer, in 1859, joined the ranks of those attempting the conquest of India for Christ. How different the condition and the outlook then and now ! Then India was just emerging from the troublous and turbulent times of the great Sepoy Rebellion. The sway of the East India Company, which had been growing for some two centuries, had recently been merged into the rule of Great Britain's Queen, and religious toleration had been proclaimed throughout her dominions. Then the first two hundred miles of railway had just been opened ; now some twenty thousand miles run through all the provinces. Then Western education was in its infancy ; now fifteen millions of the educated classes all through the land, but chiefly in the large cities, freely use the English language, and are more or less well up in Western science and Western thought, the vernaculars, however, still retaining undisputed sway in the households of all.

Then Hinduism was as firmly seated on its throne as it had been at any time since the days of Moses. It had, indeed, passed through a slow process of modification, of deterioration. The essential monotheism of the Védas of Moses' age had degenerated into the polytheism of the Shastras and the Puranas, and, farther, into the gross forms of idolatry of the later period, with its three hundred and thirty millions of deities, named and unnamed. The system of caste, invented long after the Védic times, and gradually imposed upon the people, binding them hand and foot and preventing all genuine progress, still manifested all its power, and one would sooner die than break caste rules and lose his caste and so his soul.

Then Hindus thoroughly believed and upheld and practised their religion. Then Benares, Tirupati, Sri Rangam, Rameshwaram, and the host of holy places were monthly thronged with their scores of thousands, and in their yearly festivals by their hundred thousand pilgrims, and on all the roadways you would meet the returning pilgrims with two brass pots hanging from their *kavadi*, or neck-yoke, filled with holy water at the Ganges, and replenished at each of the sacred streams as they wearily walked their thousands of miles to their distant homes. Then they believed in the efficacy of these pilgrimages and penances and tortures.

In February, 1861, I met a venerable Brahman pilgrim who told me of his sixty years of pilgrimages—of twice ten thousand miles—to every sacred shrine in India, all made on foot and begging his food by the way. "And yet," said he, sadly and with disappointment—"and yet the burden of sin is just as heavy as when, a young man, I started on this quest. Oh, sir, does your Vēda tell how I can get rid of this burden of sin, and be at peace with God ?" One sees no such pilgrims now.

Then hook-swinging and spike-walking and self-torture and immola-