

INDIA : SCENES AND PECULIARITIES OF THE PEOPLE.

LETTER FROM REV. G. MACKELVIE TO REV. J. BARCLAY.

(Continued.)

IN order to get a good view of things, let us "make a day of it," and leave the bungalow about 5 a. m., note book in hand. Do not think 5 a. m. too early : for, as we leave the house we find that nearly all the servants are up. Indians are early risers. As we walk in the direction of the village bazaar we pass what is called a river. It is composed of patches of water kept in place by "bunds," and seems to be almost stagnant. Here are great numbers performing their daily ablutions with all solemnity and earnestness : for bathing is a religious rite. It is begun by a repetition of certain texts and other forms sufficient to satisfy the cravings for ritual of even the Bishop of Lincoln himself. After these have been satisfactorily performed the bather sets about the serious occupation of washing himself. This being completed he washes his garments, and winds up by taking a hearty drink of the water that he has been washing in. If he be a Brahman, low caste men will be anxious to drink this water, as it confers great spiritual benefits on them. Leaving this pond, with its groups of bathers, let us hurry on to the bazaar. As we enter we see great numbers sitting on their heels at their doors performing the first important religious rite of the day—teeth cleaning. If this is not done according to strict rule, and with due repetitions of the proper texts, the merits of the whole day's religious rites are lost. Hence the solemnity with which they all sit, like so many crows in a row, scrubbing away at their teeth. The proper instrument to be used is a twig from the fig tree. It is never used a second time. No words can depict the repugnance with which an Indian views the Englishman's tooth brush that has done duty for a month. After the tooth-washing ceremony comes the bathing. Next comes the worship before the images of the gods, which is wound up with the sacred mark of the forehead. This also is accompanied by elaborate forms. The mark is made by ashes from the sacred fire mixed with pigments of different colours. These marks are of different kinds ;