

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

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BRITISH INDIA.

INDIA! What a brilliant pageant the very word suggests! The ivory palaces, the gilded temples, the gaudy idols, the broad leaves of the palms, and the bananas, the sky-piercing Himalayas, the vast sun-lined coast, the dark skins and the snow-white robes of the natives, the rice fields and the tanks, the elephants and palanquins, "the bazaars, humming like beehives, and the jungle where the lonely courier shakes his bundle of iron rings to scare away the hyænas." But the most stupendous thought of all is that of the two hundred and fifty millions of immortal souls,—the devotees of a dark and degrading superstition, or the followers of the false prophet Mahomet.

The British East India Company, though formed in 1600, had up to the middle of the last century only six factories scattered over the peninsula. The real beginning of English political ascendancy was in 1757, when on the banks of the Indus, where the foot of an Alexander had faltered, a merchant's clerk conquered an Empire. With three thousand troops, on the Plains of Plassey, Robt. Clive routed an army of sixty thousand and laid the foundation of our Indian Empire of 250,000,000 souls. The almost uniform success of the English Company attracted alliances with the native chiefs, and gradually the British Empire became extended over nearly the whole country. Not all the annexations can be justified, yet on the whole the vast extension of territorial sway has been a providential responsibility which could not be avoided.

Step by step the dominion has mostly been forced upon the British government. And especially since, with the suppression of the mutiny, the power has been taken back by the Crown from out of the unworthy hands of the great commercial company, all Christendom has overwhelming reasons for gratitude that the sovereignty of England extends over India.

India presents one of the most im-

portant mission fields in the world. With a civilization going back to the time of Alexander and a literature to that of Zoroaster, with its highly-cultivated Brahmin caste and a vast substratum of human wretchedness, it presents at once extraordinary difficulties and remarkable facilities for the diffusion of the Gospel. While

over 700,000 inhabitants. Here are the superior law courts, the magnificent residence of the Viceroy, and splendid public buildings that would do credit to any capital in the world, Bombay, the chief port on the west coast, has over 500,000 inhabitants. Its crowded streets present a strange concourse of many races and tribes. It is more

temples, Lucknow, the capital of Oude, with its thrilling memories of the mutiny, Delhi, the metropolis of the Mohammedan Empire, with its exquisite Saracenic mosques and palaces, Lahore, Poona, Hyderabad, Agra, Allahabad and many more, all containing over 100,000 inhabitants each. The engraving of the Hindu Temple on this page is a fine specimen of the native architecture—a confused mass of mythological sculpture.—From *Methodist Magazine* for August.

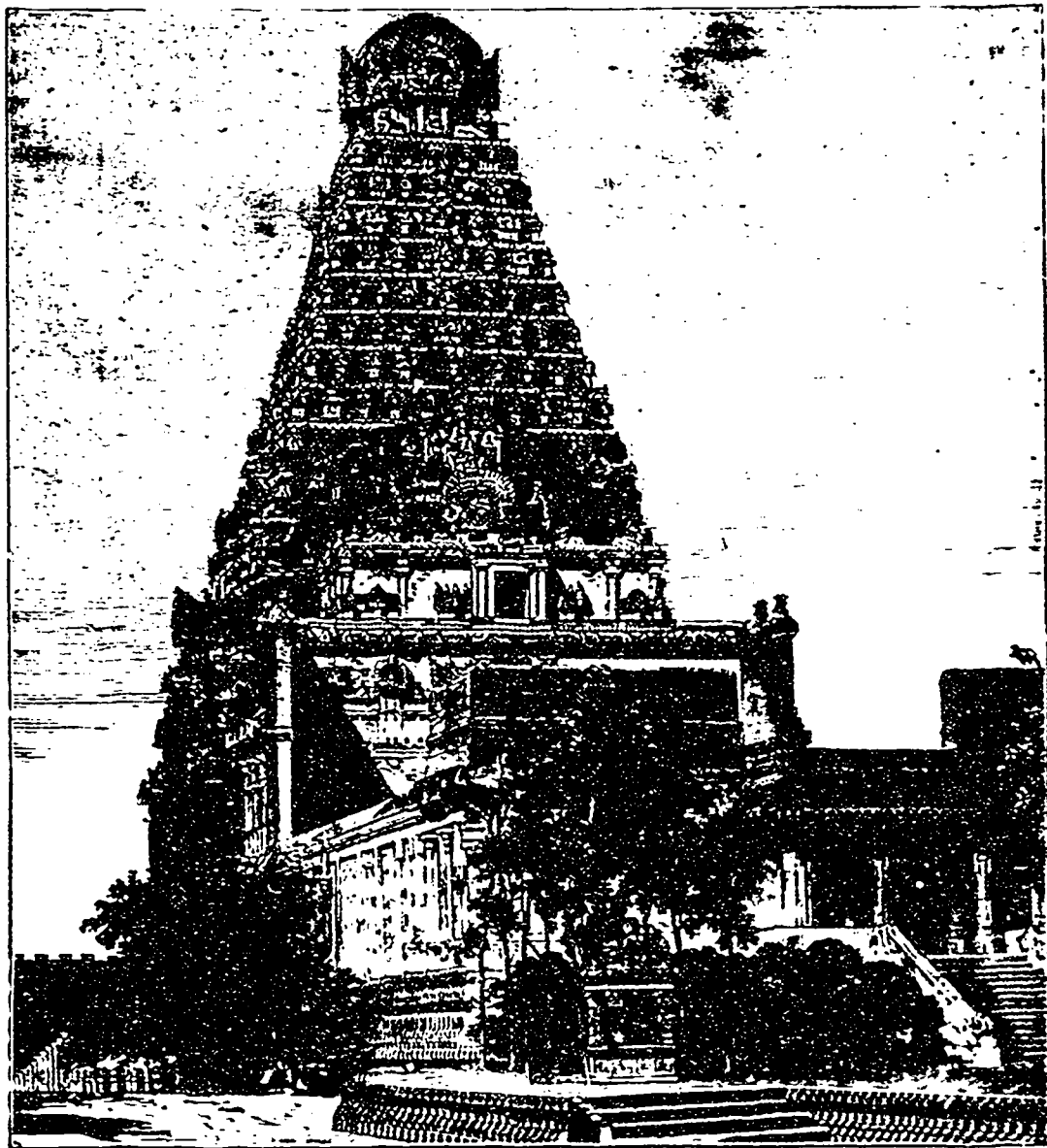
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CHINESE FINGER NAILS.

THE Rev. James W. Lambuth, D.D., writes from China:

"The ladies of China allow their finger nails to grow very long—sometimes two, three, and four inches—and they protect them by wearing long sheaths made of gold and silver. They take good care, when they can, to make a display of them to those who may be near them. Chinese gentlemen allow those on the left hand to grow, while those on the right hand are cut short. The nails on the left hand of the Chinese gentleman are left to grow, twist, and turn any shape they like, and are then greatly admired by the people. If he is ever accused of theft, he immediately exhibits the long nails on his left hand to prove that he is a scholar, and therefore not a thief. When the nails are broken off, as they are sometimes, they are at once taken to the drug shop and sold for medicine. At one time I had a Chinese teacher who had long nails on his left hand, and I had often reminded him that we foreigners thought only wild

animals ought to have long nails, and that they did not become a man, and especially a learned man. But my remarks had no effect upon him, for he treasured up those long finger nails as something very precious. On one occasion one of them was broken, and he brought it to me, nicely wrapped in a bit of paper, as a present. While he was opening up this treasure I wondered what he had in mind, that



HINDU TEMPLE.

the proud Brahmin looks down from the heights of a lofty scorn on his conquerors, who were naked savages at a time when the ancient pundits of India were learned sages, yet now, as in the days of the personal ministry of our Lord, the common people, weary with waiting for a hearer of their woes, hear gladly the word of life.

India is a country of great cities, Calcutta, the capital, in Bengal, has

oriental-looking than even Calcutta. Madras, on the Coromandel coast, is nearly as large. No great seaport ever had so wretched a harbour, or rather, it has no harbour at all, only an open roadstead, where every person and every thing must be transhipped in surf-boats through the "league-long rollers tumbling on the shore." In the interior are Benares, the Holy City of the Hindus, with its fourteen hundred