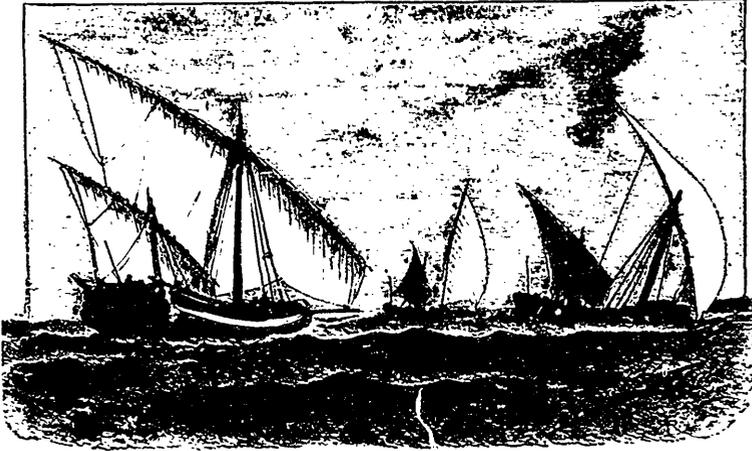


THE TRANSFORMATION OF BURMA.*

BY ERNEST G. HARMER.



MERCHANT DHOWS, INDIAN OCEAN.

II.

THE peoples of Burma are not all Burmese. We have already seen that the unrivalled opulence of its soil attracts year by year a ceaseless influx of many other Asiatic

racess. The caste peoples of India still hesitate to incur the odium of crossing the "foreign water," and until the railways of Burma are linked up with those of Assam and Bengal the high-born Kshatriya caste, and the haughtier Brahmin, will be no frequent migrants into the Irawadi plain, which first

they entered by the land route centuries before the birth of Christ. They are to be found in the coast ports, striving with the immense Moslem population for the rewards of trade. But the bulk of the Hindu settlements are of little social account, although they hold with unflinching tenacity to the customs of their race.

The Chinese, too, swarm up the coast from Singapore, and there are indications that, in the new ethnic struggles, which this contact of race with race engenders, the pure Burmese are destined to be absorbed. Out of this commingling of human elements a new race will one day spring into being. For—as may be seen also in the West—the capable Burmese woman has come to learn that the astute Chinaman is a better mate, because a more masterful, than the easy-going, listless youths whom she has watched from childhood. And their offspring, inheriting the strength of both parents, may one day prove to be the arbiters of the future of the land.

Beside the half-million of mi-

* "Burma, Under British Rule—and Before." By John Nisbet, D.Occ. (Westminster: Archibald Constable & Co. 1901.)

"A Handbook to India, Burma, and Ceylon." Fourth Edition. (London: John Murray. 1901.)

"Burma Administration Report, 1899-1900. (Rangoon: Government Press. 1900.)