

The Oriental in British Columbia

WITH SOMETHING ABOUT THE ONLY HINDU WOMAN IN CANADA.

By A. E. GREENWOOD

THERE is only one Hindu woman in Canada, the "prisoner" wife of Dr. Kaishoram Davichand, the pioneer of the twenty-five hundred Hindus now in British Columbia. Not another dusky Britisher from the Punjaub has yet brought his wife here. Fully a thousand are not likely to, for not only has this sudden immigration from the coral strand ceased about as suddenly as it began, but the receding tide has fairly begun and is not likely to end until that number, nearly half, of these brave Sikhs have returned to their native land. The rest seem inclined to remain. Many have already discarded their beturbaned headgear, shaved and donned our dress. The first of these was the Doctor. But the "imprisoned" Mrs. Davichand continues in her native way.

"She never go out," said the Doctor, according me the privilege of looking upon the only Hindu lady, veiled or unveiled, in the Dominion. As the doctor explained, and as travellers in India know, the liberty of the average Hindu wife is all in doors. Only twice has Mrs. Davichand been seen on the streets of Vancouver, once when she arrived on the Empress of Japan eighteen months ago, and once recently when the Doctor moved from his Hastings Street apartments to their present home in Sapperton, on the Fraser, ten miles from Vancouver.

"Harkour" was preparing the evening meal. Her tall form was clad in the ordinary calico of the ordinary housewife. At the Doctor's suggestion, in Hindustani—it might have been a command—there was a sudden transformation, the obedient sad-faced wife soon re-appearing in a fantastic silk dress or oriental robe, richly figured and still more richly adorned with rings, bracelets and bells.

There came tripping to the soft and merry jingle of the jewels the only Hindu baby perhaps in America, little Yogi, two years old, also bejewelled to the very ears. A mass of jet black hair, with more ornaments, was rolled up in the misleading fashion of a little Hindu lady. Of course I made the stupid mistake. It's a boy.

Upon the forehead, ears, centre and side of the nose, neck, shoulders and wrists hung the fantastic gold and silver jewels while the wife handed to the Doctor as many more. The disappointed babe toyed with an empty cup before a stove such as you would seldom see outside of a miners' camp. The bejewelled mother, who hasn't yet mastered a single word of English, gazed down upon the



Mrs. Davichand, the only Hindu Woman in Canada.

hungry child. The father stared at vacancy. Surely never were Punjaub jewels so much out of place.

"Why did you come here, to British Columbia?" I ventured.

"I come first," returned the Doctor, who speaks English well, "come this way to England. But here I stay. Often wish I had gone on but I stay. We hope better things when we know country better and people. Eighteen months ago my nephew come and he bring my wife and child. We not yet see much of country, but like it here by beautiful river, big trees, and mountains."

The Doctor only practises upon his native friends. His medicines are chiefly herbs and he cures everything.

It should be stated here that the Hindu on this Coast has been grossly libelled, chiefly by sensational Coast papers and by correspondents who haven't taken the trouble to get the facts.

The answer to the libel that they are immoral and unclean is the records of the Police courts of Vancouver and New Westminster, the districts within which practically all of the 2,500 Hindus have made their homes as best they could. These records for the past year show but two cases and both were dismissed. One was assault and the other a charge of obtaining money under false pretences.

It is true that they were for a time living in Vancouver in unsanitary conditions but that was the city's fault, the scarcity of houses which drove the Hindu to shacks quite as bad as anything that could be found in the Punjaub.

And here a word should be said for other Orientals. The wish that British Columbia should be a white man's country is not universal in the Province, even if it were possible to have it so. Nine out of ten of the "domes-



Hindu Immigrants Newly Arrived.

