

get the grewsome vision out of his eye? What lookout who has started from his doze to see a lofty ship pass silently across his bows without sound or hail can ever forget the stifling terror of his fears, or drown the thought that he has seen a phantom? Sight and sound aloft and aloft are to the sailor as trail and track to the woodsman, eloquent of meaning. His perception in times of calm or storm is open wide to the slightest sound or sight that may foretell coming change. To this consciousness cloud and mist shapes, mirages, and the thousand sights and sounds of the ever shifting panorama bring many extraordinary and inexplicable things, which are stored away in memory, and find their expression in the tenacity with which sailors cling to their belief in the "supernatural."

## MISCELLANEOUS.

### A HINDU CRITICISM OF MRS. BESANT.

Mrs. Annie Besant has published an attack on Hinduism in *The Commonwealth* of Madras, of which she is the editor, and Mr. M. V. Srinivasa Aiyangar has written an answer which is very severe. By stating the case in his own words we leave it to our readers to form their opinion. In the form of an open letter he accuses her of meddling with affairs which are no concern of hers and in which she has no right to intrude as a reformer. He writes: "Not till after I read your Foreword and Mr. Johan Van Manen's article... did I realize that there were more [insane] persons outside the asylum than in it. 'By examining the tongue of a patient,' says Justin, 'physicians find out the diseases of the body and philosophers the diseases of the mind.' For some time past your tongue has been talking more and more at the head's cost."

Quoting from a Jewish sage, Rabbi Ben Azai, he gives Mrs. Besant advice as follows: "Give your tongue more holiday than your hands or eyes."

We have no doubt that Mrs. Besant has the best intentions to promote much-needed reforms in India, but whether her attempts are directed by wisdom and discretion is another question. At any rate she has offended leading Hindus, and one result is seen in this pamphlet before us, entitled, *An Open Letter to Mrs. Annie Besant, Being a Reply to Her Attacks on Hinduism*. M. V. Srinivasa Aiyangar, the author, calls himself, on the title-page, "a humble appendage at the gate of Pachaiyappa's College, Madras."

The case which Mr. Aiyangar makes may be set forth by a few quotations. He says:

"It is true, as Steele says, that 'all a woman has to do in this world is contained within the duties of a daughter, a sister, a wife, and a mother;' as we believe it is true, your claim to be heard on the Hindu marriage question will depend not a little, if not entirely, upon the proofs you can give of your successful training in those four universities. Have you graduated in those

universities? Have the sages, saints, and heroes who preside over the destinies of those universities granted you any diplomas? Are you authorized to wear the gowns and hoods which are the badges of those universities? Unless and until you produce these credentials, whatever else you may produce, you have no *locus standi* in the parliament of gods or men. Satisfaction in this particular will make up for deficiency in aught else; non-satisfaction, naught else can make up for."

After a detailed summary of parts of Mrs. Besant's autobiography, which he rates somewhat lower than the Confessions of St. Augustine, he says: "You are so eager to force on us your own views of these details without gracefully leaving us to form our own view."

The Hindu thinker sums up his view of her right to pose as a reformer in these words:

"Thus on your own showing and according to your own admission, *as a daughter* you hastened the death of your idolized mother; *as a wife* you were very unsatisfactory from the beginning, and were legally separated from your husband; *as a mother* you resolutely turned your back upon your own children, and sought solace in becoming a mother to all helpless children; and, last but not least, all orthodox society in your liberty-loving land of birth turned up its nose at you. So you stand convicted out of your own mouth. The presiding deities of the respective universities have not thought it fit to honor you with their diplomas. As an undutiful daughter, as a disobedient wife, as an unnatural mother, you have put yourself out of court as regards the question of your right of being heard on the Hindu marriage problem. That you have qualified yourself otherwise is beside the point; nay, it is worse—it is 'putting out the natural eye of one's mind to see better with the telescope,' as Carlyle says.

"If one may speak what many feel, in the name of my revered *guru*, the late Yogi Parthasarathy Aiyangar, and of the orthodox Hindu society whose humble slave I am, I arraign you, madam, not only before the bar of your own quiet conscience (though 'quiet to quick bosoms is a hell,' as Byron says), but of public tribunal, on the ground of ignorant and wanton interference in our social and religious questions—ignorant in the sense that, not having lived the life you should, you lack that within you which would enable you to see and judge that which is without you, and wanton in the sense that you want to see your ignorance acting unfettered, cost what it might,—an interference which is all the more regrettable and mischievous, considering your reverence for our customs and religion so long professed."

This may be enough to characterize the pamphlet, which however contains many items regarding the difficulties involved in the child marriage problem and the caste system of India. Mrs. Besant's friends will naturally regard this defense of Hinduism as uncalled for, but the pamphlet will give the unwelcome reformer much food for thought, and proves that the mere introduction of western ideas is not sufficient to work any far-reaching reform.

The letter is a pamphlet of 140 pages, with many quotations not only from Hindu sources but also from a wide range of western literature and Christian philosophy. The publisher is M. C. Narasimhacharya of 14 Baker Street, Madras, E.