

"THE PEOPLE OF INDIA."

THIS series consists of 132 Photographs selected from the work entitled "The People of India," prepared at the India Museum, and of which six volumes have now been issued.* The whole series has been divided into two groups. The first group (Nos. 1 to 95) is arranged as far as possible so as to represent all the leading types characteristic of native society in India as a whole, although drawn chiefly from Northern India, or Hindustan Proper. The arrangement of this group follows in some measure the natural stratification of Indian society, beginning with the ruling and proprietary classes, and ending with the gipsies and wandering tribes.

The second group (Nos. 96 to 132) illustrates locally interesting tribes, reputed aborigines of the country, and some of the more interesting frontier tribes. The arrangement of this group is entirely geographical.

A.—THE PRINCIPAL RACES, CLASSES, AND TRIBES OF INDIA.

a.—BRAHMINS.

The Brahmins are divided into two main classes—one, "Loukik," or "secular;" the other, "Vaidik," who follow sacred callings. To these a third class may be added—"Bheekuk," or those whose sole support is begging and the alms of the charitable. These classes are subdivided in every part of India into an infinity of sects, some of which do, and others do not, intermarry with each other. Brahmins may be considered to be divided into ten great nations, five of which belong to Northern, and five to Southern India, but there is little or no connexion between them. The Brahmins of Northern India are held in small repute by those of the South, and vice versâ. In regard to sacred professions, some are literally priests, who perform ceremonies and make offerings for other Brahmins, assisting at household offices, daily prayers, purifications, marriages, and funeral ceremonies. Others are purohits, or family priests or chaplains, not only to rich Brahmin families, but to princes of lower caste—Rajpoots or Sudras. Such offices are for the most part hereditary. Brahmins who have attained a high degree of sanctity and learning are frequently chosen as gurus, or spiritual directors by other Brahmins, and also by lower castes. A very large proportion of Brahmins support themselves and their families by begging, visiting wealthy persons, reading to them from Sanscrit books or more popular treatises, or from dramas, the recitation of which, with episodes from the Mahabharat and Ramayana, are fertile sources of profit. Nor do the lower classes escape. At marriages, at funerals, at naming of children, Brahmins must be consulted, paid, and fed. Nor is any action of social life complete without them. As astrologers, they are in full occupation. Brahmins, except those connected with them as ministering priests, rarely resort to temples for their devotions, and except in fulfilment of a vow, or on public occasions, are seldom seen there. The home service is considered sufficient for all purposes of purification, and if a temple is visited, it is after the ordinary home service has been concluded.

* "The People of India," a series of photographic illustrations of the races and tribes of Hindustan, originally prepared under the authority of the Government of India, and reproduced by order of the Secretary of State for India in Council, with descriptive letterpress by Col. Meadows Taylor, C.S.I., M.R.A.S. Edited by J. Forbes Watson, M.A., M.D., and Sir John William Kaye, K.C.S.I., F.R.S., London: W. H. Allen & Co.