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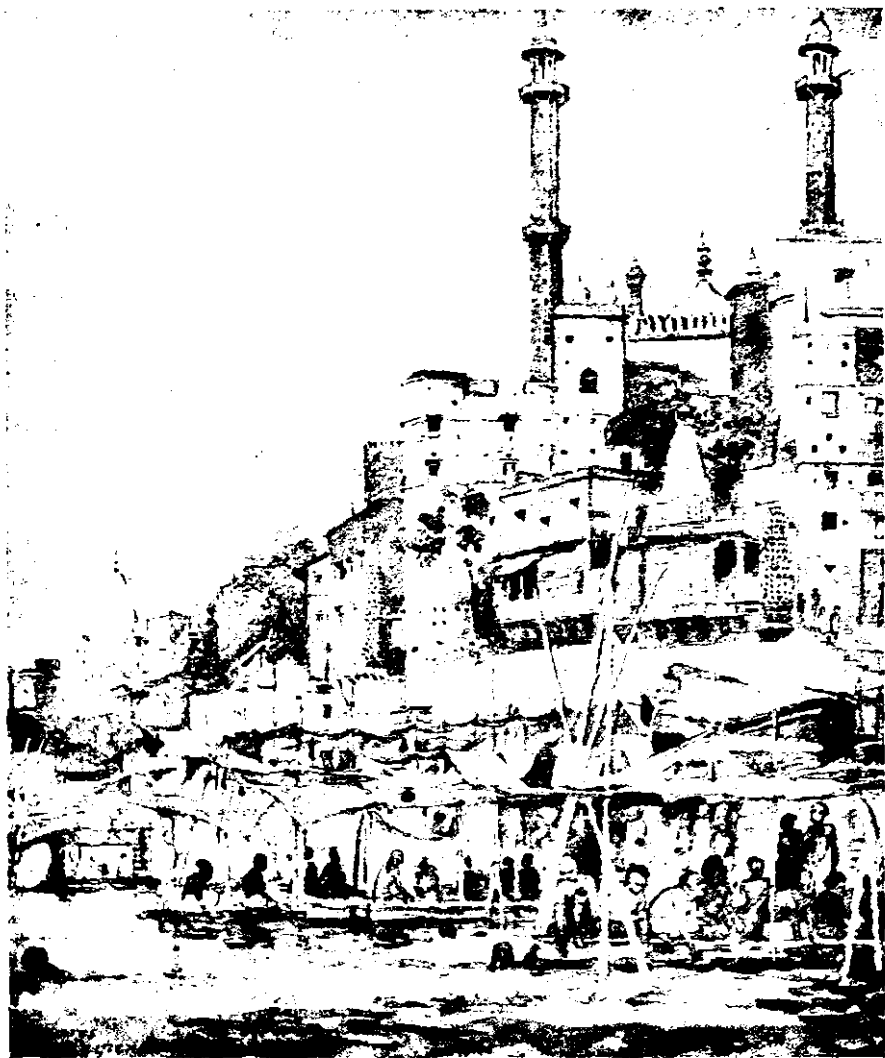
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1 The Ghats, Benares

*Detail of a
Water Colour by
William Carpenter*

THE SPIRIT OF INDIA

By
W. J. GRANT

Illustrated by
141 Photographs

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PREFACE

POSSIBLY you have noticed that there are dead facts and living facts. A dead fact is a scientist's fact; a living fact an artist's. It has always been my impression that the latter is truer than the former. There is more in a rock than its chemical content, and a flower in a botanist's drawing is but what his skeleton is to a Shakespeare. Knowledge, of course, must be accurate; but a mere tabulation of qualities and appearances does not, to my mind, constitute knowledge. Places and things are alive. Merely to state what they are and what they look like is to distort and mislead. The true descriptive writer must be warmed by the very soul of what he sees; he must *be* his subject just as a novelist must *be* his character. India has a soul choice and individual. My object in this book is to give that soul wings. There are no nebulous weavings of the imagination, however. Facts are stated with clearness and precision. But my constant endeavour is to give facts breath; to make them twinkle in vivid silver not just as points of light but as things that pulse and quiver as the sweetest and grandest of our constellations.

Probably no country in the world will overtake India in human interest. And yet I am convinced that we of the West have gone far astray in estimating India's value to modern thought. In the realm of religious philosophy she has done a great and precious thing; she has given to us the most searching examination of the ethical law the world is ever likely to have. No Greek was ever more splendid in his scientific fidelity than the quiet company of Indian thinkers who made the Upanishads and traced the whole beauteous outline of the Eastern spirit. In the following pages I have endeavoured to convey not only the grandeur of India's mind but also the loveliness of India's scenery. There are cities in India whose grace and charm are matched only by the sweetness of an immemorial religion. Nowhere else in the world have I been so exquisitely invaded by the mystic quality of life. To stand beside the holy

Ganges or in the shadow of some voiceless Dravidian temple on a slumberous Indian afternoon is to come near to things that are among the purest and tenderest of all human aspirations.

During the twelve odd years I have spent in the East I have never ceased to be enchanted not alone by her differences from the West, but also by a golden splendour in her spirit. India, indeed, has a preciousness which a materialistic age is in danger of missing. Some day the fragrance of her thought will win the hearts of men. This grim chase after our own tails which marks the present age cannot continue for ever. The future contains a new human urge towards the real beauty and holiness of life. When it comes India will be searched by loving eyes and defended by knightly hands.

This work tries to give as much general knowledge about our great Eastern Empire as possible, but I hope I have succeeded also in suggesting the rich, deep ecstasy which envelopes the Westerner in contact with a land of so unique a character that a whole literature would be required to give her a song worthy of her grace and majesty.

I have deliberately omitted Buddhism from my review of Indian religions because it no longer has a following among the Aryan race, although deeply respected in Burma, China, Ceylon, etc.

W. J. G.

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