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[Douglas Jones, Photographer.]

INDIAN WOMEN IN FIJI.

In the December issue of the "White Ribbon" a short article on indentured labour in Fiji was published. We propose now to deal more fully with the subject, in order that our readers may understand something of the social and moral conditions that obtain among their Indian sisters in that colony.

The system of indentured labour already referred to was decided to provide a supply of cheap labour for the mills and plantations in various colonies. Under this system men and women were recruited in India for work in Fiji. By a regulation of the Fijian Government the proportion of the sexes was fixed at 40 women to

every 100 men. The arrangements made were that the recruits agreed to work for five years at a fixed rate of wages—1s 3d per day for a man, 1s for a woman. They had no choice either of employment or employer, but on their arrival in the colony they were allotted to the various plantations and mills. Naturally in the course of years reports of the conditions of life amongst these labourers were carried back to India, and in 1913 the Government of India sent a Commission to all the Crown Colonies employing labour, in order to make enquiries into the condition of indentured people. This Commission, however, concerned itself more with the economic and material side of things than with the inner life of the people. Certain features of this

report, however, convinced some leading Indian gentlemen of the urgent necessity for further investigation, and in 1915 they deputed the Rev. C. F. Andrews and Mr H. W. Pearson to visit Fiji in order to study the conditions of the indentured labourers. The report issued by these gentlemen made a good impression on the Indian people, and in the following year the Viceroy announced that the indentured system would be brought to an end. In 1917, however, news reached India that the British Government contemplated a delay of five years, during which time recruiting might still be carried on. It was then that, for the first time on record, leading women from every province in India went in a deputation to the Viceroy, and asked that the indentur-