

AN ORIENTAL GOD IN NEW YORK.

In an "off" evening—mentally off—we were lured to the feet of the Hindu monk, Swami Vivikananda, who is the present fad in New York. He overflows a vast hall Sunday afternoons, and all day and evening he sits in an uptown drawing room with his worshippers at his feet, and discourses on the special unknowableness of Buddhism, the Yoga, the Kosmos, and kindred light themes. It long ago passed into an axiom that there is no disputing about tastes. It is one of the few that can be uttered in every known tongue, so universal is its truth accepted. So when I heard a lady, whose name is familiar from the Atlantic ocean to the Pacific, and beyond, say that she had never seen another who filled her ideal of God as Swami did, it was not my turn to speak, and I bravely kept still. It is the mystery of the Himalayas that he brings that fascinates, and neither him nor his thought. His diction is simple and clear, with scarcely any accent, and his range surprisingly wide; but the trend of his thought is toward the fatalism of the orient which would be pessimism to the Anglo-Saxon, who will never bow his head in blind obedience to a decree of philosophy. But in picturesqueness the occasion was surpassing. Sitting on a low seat in oriental fashion in the center of the room, his dark, richly colored face, absolutely motionless, save for the flashing light of the great brown eyes, his head surmounted by a lemon-colored silk scarf turban, his well formed, rather stout body enveloped in a deep orange-hued, silken robe, held around the waist by a scarlet sash—such was the god of the far east who enchained the interest of all, and loosened the tongues of women in rapturous praise. But he seemed a well-fed, well-groomed god, and one who may not be entirely free from human leanings. He talks in a monotone, which, when he breaks out in his own tongue, as he frequently does, descends into a chanting rhythm of tone that is rich and musical. Crowds throng about him day and evening, two-thirds women, and for the moment Swami Vivikananda reigns! But I am sure he does not look like—not even like an oriental god!