

*View of the bathing place—Offerings of the Worshippers.*

But to resume the thread of my narrative. Continuing to push our way through the mass of people, of whom, by the by, a very large proportion consisted of women, the most bigoted of the votaries of Hinduism—we approached with them their most sacred place, where they bathe, and where their temple is situated; but here a sight presented itself to our view which is difficult to describe. Masses of people, men, women, and children, young and old, high and low, are all crowded together on the banks of the Ganges, or in the river, washing themselves in the muddy water of the Ganges, (which has been stirred up by thousands of other worshippers,) now and then diving, and every now and then taking a sip thinking thereby to cleanse their polluted souls; at the same time murmuring a few words or sentences from their Shastras, or the name of their favorite god. The passage in Mat. vi. 7, came forcibly to my mind whilst viewing this revolting spectacle.—Here you see fathers with their children, whom they, perhaps, with great danger and difficulty, have brought upon their heads or shoulders through the crowd, forcing them into the river, notwithstanding their crying and opposition; and washing and dipping them in order that they also may have the benefit of the heart-cleansing waters of Ganga. Among them there are a great many young men, who, while they appear to be deeply engaged in their religious ceremony look about with a sinful eye upon other objects that attract their attention; for men and women are all bathing in the same place.

A great many of the worshippers bring some kind of offering with them; rice, fruit, flowers, cowries, &c., which they throw all, or partly, into the Ganges, giving the remainder to one of the Brahmans, who are present in large numbers. Intermingled with the people in the river, you see also cows, calves and kids, either standing in the water, kept by a man, or held in the arms of the worshipping Hindu in the river. These are also offerings; and the Brahmans take great care that the goddess Ganga may devour none of them: for whilst these animals are led by the offerer into the water, the Brahman, with an eye beaming with delight in the anticipation of receiving these presents, stands in front of them, in the water waiting for the desired moment when its proprietor lets the rope go out of his hands. I have been told that the fate of little kids, at such times, is often not to be envied; and any one may conceive what will be the consequence, if, perhaps, half a dozen of such Brahmans, after the worshipper has thrown the kid into the river, seize it with a brahmanical grasp, each one wanting to claim it. One's attention is also attracted by another class of people, standing

in the river, namely by the divers, who every now and then disappear under the water, to pick up from the bottom of the river, money which has been offered to the goddess as *goot-dan*, or a "secret gift." This money, some Hindus, whilst bathing, drop into the river, but so that no one may perceive it; which makes the act very meritorious.

*Painful Impression—The chief fakir—About fifty ugly idols—Missionary labours at the Mela.*

Now looking upon these thousands of deluded creatures, bathing, murmuring, offering, &c., all for the good of their souls, produces even in one who like me has seen it so often, a feeling of sadness, which cannot be described. And whilst feeling every desire to help them and lead them to Christ, our heart sinks within us, when we think of the magnitude of the work to be done by us, and our insufficiency. Oh for more zeal in the work and more earnest prayer that God may pour out his blessing upon us!—Without this all our efforts are in vain.

From the bathing-place we went to the temple. There we saw multitudes pressing into the door to get a view of the idol and offer rice or something else. We did not enter it, as we had often seen similar examinations. Close by the temple the before-mentioned Mahant or head-fakir has his seat. There, on a platform, within an octangular brick enclosure about a foot high, and under a red canopy, this wretched saint sits almost naked; forehead, arms and breast marked with the signs of his god, with an expression upon his face, which seems to imply, every one must worship me and offer me their money. Close by his side, on a heap of ashes, he has a large piece of wood, still smoking; and every one who offers him money, receives a little of his sacred ashes. Money was readily offered to him by the Hindus, who threw it into that enclosure. I heard from Babu Gopendranundy, that on such a mela-day this fakir realizes sometimes eight hundred rupees, or about \$400 dollars—a sum to a Hindu worth ten times its value in America or Europe. The man knew us already, having seen us before, and did not return one answer to our questions. He knew we were padres, and that we were opposed to all his tricks and wickedness, being fully aware of them.—Not far from the temple, standing upon a heap of stones, we addressed the people, who surrounded us in large numbers, and listened as attentively to our words as the present circumstances would admit. We distributed also a small number of tracts to persons who could read.

From there we turned homewards, but soon a new sight presented itself to us. Upon a small platform there were about fifty ugly-looking idols, big and small, placed where they could be worshipped. On one side stood their proprietors, four dirty fakirs, with rude musical instruments in their