

sort for pilgrims. The Mahant is known to be a deceiver and a hypocrite, and a few years ago narrowly escaped being sent to jail, on account of some wicked act of his; yet his success in feigning himself a saint, and imposing upon others, is very great; hence great multitudes flock to the place, to worship there, and to present offerings to the fakir.

We pitched our tent in a mango-grove, being surrounded by natives, men, women, and children, all dressed in their best and gayest clothes, who together with their horses, bullocks, carts and carriages, presented the most motley and striking appearance. On walking through the different parts, and reconnoitring the mela, we saw not far from us a temporary bazar, or rather a row of booths erected for the occasion, in which there were clothes, toys, fruit, candles, sweet-meats and other things—all covered with dust—for sale, spread upon the ground or upon platforms. Here and there swings were erected for the amusement of the people; and altogether the mela presented not so much the appearance of people having assembled for religious purposes, as of having come in pursuit of pleasure. I was forcibly reminded of Bunyan's Vanity-fair. The constant din and noise, together with the incessant beating of tom-toms, and the tinkling of rude brass plates, which the natives call music, now and then interrupted by the discordant blasts of rude trumpets or horns, all this, together with the noise produced by the people's calling loudly to each other, has such a bewildering effect upon the visitor, that he scarcely knows at first what he is doing or saying.

*Strange Scenes; hideous looking Saints; their professions and character.*

His attention is now and then arrested by strange scenes. He sees, for instance, here and there two women, sitting or standing, embracing each other, one of whom is crying, or rather howling in a dreadful manner, so that really for a time you can forget the din of the mela. You naturally imagine that some distress or great affliction causes such a fearful lamentation, but upon near inquiring, you learn, that this is an expression of joy, caused by the meeting of a mother with her daughter at the mela, after having been separated for some time; and Hindustani etiquette requires that the daughter must first make such a howling, ringing on the neck of her mother. You then also can understand why these cryings are sometimes so forced and unnatural, for tears are not always so readily forthcoming as rules or etiquette would demand it. Another sight, and rather a disgusting one, presents itself to you almost everywhere by a certain class of men, that look more like brutes than human beings. They are almost, nay sometimes entirely naked, having the body besmeared with ashes; upon the

forehead, breast and arms, some singular white, red, or yellow marks, sometimes in the shape of a curve, sometimes in that of a fork; the hair matted, or at least hanging down in great disorder, with a hollowed gourd in one hand and a pair of tongs in the other: a face bespeaking ignorance and vice, and eyes—if they have still a lustre—expressing stupidity, and yet slyness, greediness and yet contentedness, impotence and yet lust, independence and yet cringingness, with an air of sanctity intended to hide the expression of vice; they rather appear to be some infernal beings in human shape, or at least men that wish to appear as disgusting and frightful as possible. You inquire who they are, and you hear, to your utter astonishment, that these are Hindu saints or fakirs. You ask, why they go without covering, or nearly so, and whether they have no shame; and the answer of these singular saints is, shame is only where there is sin, but we being without sin, or having at least our passions in due subjection, know nothing of shame, why then should we put on clothes? But why then, you continue, do you make yourself so filthy? Why do you rub your body with ashes, and mat the hair, &c., &c., and they will tell you, perhaps, not only with the air of a saint, but also a philosopher: "All visible things of this world are vain and transitory. There is nothing beautiful and nothing ugly. There is only one existing thing which is worth our consideration, that is the mind, and that mind, within me, and you, and every one, is God. Why then seek for cleanliness or external beauty in a man whose mind is absorbed in God?" You hardly know what to answer, but your wonder and astonishment knows no bounds when you hear, that these ashes upon their bodies are not common, but sacred, and why? because they are the ashes of burned cowdung, which with the Hindu is sacred. The horrid-looking marks on their foreheads, surpassed in hideousness only now and then by the marks that sin impresses upon their faces, remind you of the passages in the book of Revelation, where you read of the mark of the Beast upon the forehead of the wicked. Places of pilgrimage generally abound with these creatures, because there they collect often a great deal of money by begging. With very rare exceptions these fakirs are generally the offspring of Hindus, and a pest to the community. Yet they have immortal souls, and also unto them the gospel is preached. Though they stand so very low, yet now and then we meet with a sincere fakir. During the twelve years that I have been in India, I remember having met with two fakirs of that kind, and these two became Christians.—They are now both catechists, one in Benares the other in Tirhoot. Of these I shall give you an account perhaps at some other time.