

sinners and advise them, the Catholic doctrine is not perfectly pure and moral. Lawyers, medical men have to deal a great deal more with dangerous matters. Who would accuse them of being immoral, because they have books referring to those things which they have to know in order to discharge the duties of their responsible office? If the Rev. J. Dickson believes in the Bible, he must admit the necessity of confession for the remission of sins committed after baptism, when a priest can be had. Can my friend deny that our Blessed Lord gave to His Apostles the power of fortifying sins? "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain they are retained" (John, xx., 21-23). The Apostles had the power to forgive penitent sinners and to retain the sins of those who will not promise to amend, to forgive their enemies, to repair the scandals they have given, to make restitution, etc. Could God forgive anyone who is not sorry for what he has done or who would not promise not to do it again? And yet my friend finds fault with the withholding of absolution, when the penitent is not properly disposed? As to this power having been continued after the Apostles and transmitted to their successors, the bishops and priests of the Catholic Church, history is there to show that they have always exercised it from the Apostolic times, and that all Christian nations believed that Jesus had given this power to them, so that no one can attack the dogma of confession without denying the Scriptures and authentic history. The various canons referred to by our separated friends refer to the time at which confession should be made and other points of discipline concerning it, but the dogma was always believed by the whole Christian world is still except by a few sects. The Ritualists of the Church of England believe in confession and enforce it.

### WHAT I SAW AT BENARES.

(Specially written for the NEW ZEALAND TABLET)

I SAW Benares several years ago, but the vision of it is as clear, as definite, and as distinct to-day, as it was on that memorable day when I trod its winding streets. This vision was too deeply engraven on my mind to be easily effaced by the *tempus edax*, the flight of years. The first glimpse I had of it was from the railway carriage, as the locomotive engine was slowing down, previous to its crossing the bridge which spans the river Ganges. It was a revelation, a thing of beauty, a fairy scene—one that has baffled the descriptive powers of eminent Anglo-Indians and Americans. There I saw spread before me, for three long, running miles, all along the left side of the Ganges, broad flights of winding steps, noble buildings eight or nine stories high, magnificent mosques and towering temples rising in amphitheatre form, from the banks of the river. The steps are constantly crowded with swarms of preachers, Brahmins, pilgrims, worshippers, loungers, bathers and fruit sellers. Above mansion and mosque, I saw the two beautiful and graceful minars, a landmark to the weary, footsore, worn-out pilgrim to Benares, which the moslem victor, Aurungzebe, erected to perpetuate the triumph of Islam, and the humiliation of Ind. High above the highest I saw the darting rays of an oriental sun bring out in bold relief the gaudy, loud, flashy colours of the peoples' costumes, and light up the gilded tops of the countless temples, all sparkling, quivering and babbling in a flood of sunshiny light. The *tout ensemble* formed a gloriously grand sight, a nine-days' wonder, one that would in itself amply repay a long, wearisome eighteen hour's railway ride from Calcutta. This I say without gushing over it. I must not forget to mention that the train stopped for a while to give us time and leisure for feasting our eyes on the beautiful panorama exhibited before us. I then saw the new iron-lattice girder bridge. An imposing stone structure, partaking more of the nature of a beautifully embattled tower than of a simple embankment, stands sentinel on either bank. The bridge is 3518 feet long. It is called the Duffarin Bridge, after the popular Viceroy who opened it. It crosses the Ganges in sixteen spans, and it deserves to be described as a great triumph of engineering skill. After crossing the bridge, however, the scene was changed, beauty vanished, the spell was broken, the scales fell from my eyes, and the true oriental city stood revealed before me, in all its repulsive reality. Now I saw narrow, steep, nasty, dirty, dusty streets. Houses tall and dismal, of all sizes and shapes, but all equally shutting out air and sun, owing to their small apertures, which did service for windows—a wise course, no doubt, to prevent inquisitive, peeping Toms from prying into the domestic arrangements of their less obtrusive neighbours. As I wished to see some of the "lions" of the place I was compelled to thread some "fearful and wonderful" alleys. Indeed, some of the narrow lanes through which I had to pick my way are considered so unsafe for a white man to venture alone that I had to provide myself with an English soldier, an Indian policeman, besides a native guide and a brother-priest. All together, we wended our way to the world-wide renowned "Golden Temple," where Sivah, the god of creation and presiding deity of Benares, receives supreme and universal worship. Of all the three hundred and thirty million gods of the Hindoo mythology, Sivah is not only the chief, but, what is

more, he comprises them all. Every orthodox Hindoo is expected to visit the Golden Temple at Benares at least once in his lifetime. Many vow pilgrimages to it. The better class avail themselves of the modern comfortable methods of making them; but the many go on foot, or on their knees, till the skin is scraped off, the muscles worn out, the bones laid bare, and the poor, unfortunate, self-deluded creatures expire on the road in agonies of pain. Others measure their length and roll over and over all the way along, for hundreds of miles to the city and temple. Others again expose themselves to the scorching rays of the sun till they either go stark, staring mad, or die of sunstroke. Others—but I will refrain from needlessly shocking my readers. I will now proceed to describe what I saw in the Golden Temple. The temple itself is a poor, mean structure with three small rooms in it, each crowned with a dome the exterior tops of which are supposed to be covered with plates of gold—hence its appellation. On entering the outer courts of it I was horror-stricken, for I saw priest and people paying supreme Divine honour to a live cow and a bull; a bull, too, so hideously deformed that I covered my face with both my hands in order not to see it. And would you believe it? Its deformity serves only to heighten the veneration those poor benighted people entertain for it. I was informed that the bull was born and bred in the temple. Penetrating further, my horror was changed into pity and dismay at the sight that met my bewildered eyes. There, right in front of me, but utterly heedless of me, I saw an immense crowd of men and women prostrate before a rude, undisguised conical stone and praying in a most earnest and suppliant manner; their trembling hands uplifted, their quivering voices choked with emotion, their glistening eyes streaming scorching tears, their beautiful faces wearing the imprint of sincerity, their whole edifying demeanour such as to do credit to a better cause. And surely, methought, if we Christians exhibited half as much fervour, earnestness and devotion at our prayers as they seem to have, we would be viewed in the light of so many living saints. It is a thousand pities that such seemingly deep devotion and piety should be given to the devil, instead of their being bestowed upon God. The remark of Ovid about Althea applies to the Hindoos in a particular manner, for they are really "impiously pious." Then, turning my eyes in another direction, I saw some attendant Brahmins offering sacrifice to what do you think?—a stone representation of a large egg, set in a polished brass cup, with a number of small ones around it! Proceeding further still into an adjacent enclosure I saw another crowd of worshippers prostrate round a handsomely wrought iron colonnade. I inquired what it was, and my guide replied that it was now standing *vis-a-vis* with the celebrated "Gyan-Bapi" or "Well of Knowledge," the Hindoos pray before it and partake of its slimy water, in the hope that the deity residing in it may reveal to them their future fate. Curiosity prompted me to look down into it, and a more putrid sulk had never burst upon my astonished sight till then, for I saw floundering in its pestilential waters all the garbage of the temple. One of the ministering Brahmins offered me a ladle full of water assuring me, in all seriousness of its miraculous properties. In the twinkling of an eye, I'd know what was in store for me from now to my dying day, I'd be wonderfully wise without the aid of books, an ever blooming youth would cheer my life, and so on, and so on, and all this for a sixpenny piece. Somehow, his cogent arguments could not induce me to partake of that nauseating beverage. And it must be, no doubt, owing to this utter disregard of "carpe diem" that I now find myself tossed in a whirlpool of uncertainty, ignorance and senile decay. At this juncture, however, the Brahmin's face lit up with smiles, and catching my eye, with a twinkle in his own, said "Sabib! won't you give me a backbeesh?" I readily complied with his more reasonable request by placing a silver coin in his hand and I took my leave of the golden temple. After this I saw many more highly interesting and amusing sights; but just now, methinks I see rising up before my eyes, the figure of the editor of the N. Z. TABLET holding in his hands the inexorable scissors and threatening to cut and clip and slash me up, if I dare to inflict another word upon his long-suffering and patient readers.—D. A. AMANDOLINI, O.S.B., Hamilton, Auckland.

### "DO NOT FORGET ME!"

I dreamed of you in purgatory—  
That from the darkness you were crying,  
"Do not forget me!"

Pleading and praying,

But only saying,

"Do not forget me!"

I dreamed of you in bliss and glory—  
You smiled from heaven; I wakened crying,

"Do not forget me!"

Weeping and praying,

But only saying,

"Do not forget me!"

—Sarah Francis Ashburton, in *Ave Maria*.

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