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THE SUTTEE.

It was during one of those lovely sunsets so peculiar to the Eastern world, that I arrived at a small village on my route to the Northern Division. The day had been excessively hot, and I was doubly enjoying the refreshing breeze that came from the sea at no great distance. Sunset in India is indeed a glorious sight. The golden hues spread over every object, and towards the great orb itself the brightest shades are presented of variously tinted red. I had stood on the brow of a hill watching its rapid decline, and gazing on the lovely scene before me.

In the valley was the humble village. The neighbouring wells were surrounded by the water-drawers, the Pcottah was at work, and the melodious and peculiar song of the men as they drew the bucket and caused nature's stream to flow over the parched fields, threw a singular charm over the whole scene. All wore the appearance of happiness. I had listened to the wild chaunt, and had gazed for some time, when I saw a procession slowly winding its way up an acclivity to my right: it seemed to me to be a mournful one, as it was attended by a number of fakcers* dressed in yellow, while the horn sounded its dismal notes before them. There were several women in the group; but my eye was particularly attracted to the centre, where three females were walking robed in the purest white. The sun was just dipping below the horizon, and I knew it would shortly be dark, as no lengthened twilight gives its softened hue to the Eastern landscape; the departure of the sun is the harbinger of almost immediate darkness. I felt an irresistible impulse to follow the procession, which had nearly reached a small pagoda on the top of the hill; and yet I felt that in doing so I might be benighted before I could reach

the bungalow that was to be my shelter till morning, where also my servants and baggage were waiting my arrival. My curiosity, however, got the better of every other consideration. I mounted my horse, which for the last mile or two I had been leading by the bridle, and descended the hill on which I had been admiring the lovely scene. I soon reached the level ground; but before I had ascended the top of the other hill, the procession had all passed into the pagoda. I again dismounted, and having tied my horse's rein to the branch of a large banian tree which grew near the building and half overshadowed it, I walked towards the entrance. I knew the custom of the natives too well to intrude within the forbidden ground; I therefore quietly waited till they should again emerge from the gloomy interior.

At a few yards' distance I saw an old woman, who had been kneeling to the setting sun, and now that it had gone down, she was about to depart from the temple. I stepped up to her to inquire the nature of the procession I had seen, and as I was fortunately conversant with the Malabar language, I distinctly understood her, though the pronunciation was different from that to which I had been accustomed. She informed me that the three widows of a great man in the neighbouring town were going to burn themselves on the morrow, at daylight, with the remains of their late husband: the present procession was for the purpose of prayer in the pagoda, for the last time, at sunset.

"Oh!" continued the old woman, "it is a pity, a great pity that all must burn, and one of them too so young, and as lovely as the sun: she has been his wife but one week, and that much against her own inclination. Well, some of his people carried her away from her own village about twenty miles off. Poor child! her's has been a short life and a sad one."

"But," said I, "did not her parents try to

* Native priests.