

## BURNING OF CHILD WIDOWS BREAKS OUT AGAIN IN INDIA

"Faithful Wives" Hurl Themselves Into Flames That Are Consuming  
Remains of Dead Husbands—Horrible Hindu Practice  
Revived Despite British Government's Warnings.

[New York Journal.]

Lucknow, India, April 4.  
The British Government in India is much disturbed over the failure of all its efforts to stamp out the horrible Hindu practice of suttee—the burning alive of a widow on the funeral pyre of her husband.

Such an example was made a year ago of seven of the principal convicted of having aided in this barbarous religious rite, when a rich widow voluntarily to her fate, that the officials believed there would be no further recurrence of the ancient but now forbidden custom.

Yet, even while the guilty persons connected with that occasion were appealing to the courts, promising to renounce a religion which demanded such a sacrifice of life, another widow, aided by relatives and neighbors of her village, has just now been sent by way of the flaming pyre to join her husband in paradise—as is the belief of orthodox Hindus.

It is not exactly known when the practice of suttee originated. It is mentioned by Diodorus Siculus as being common when the Macedonians first entered India. Today all the holy spots along the routes of Hindu pilgrimages are crowded with little white pillars, each commemorating a "Sati," as the "good woman" and "faithful wife" is called who throws herself into the flames which consume the body of her dead husband.

The Emperor Akbar is said to have prohibited suttee, but vainly. Not until the year 1829 did the English dare to interfere with a religious rite so deeply rooted. Then Sir William Bentinck declared those who assisted in the ceremony guilty of culpable homicide. He enforced the law so rigorously that only in isolated communities and in secret was the practice continued.

It is known that in the year 1817, in the Bengal presidency alone, 700 widows were thus burned alive.

This religious custom does not force a widow to die in the flames of her husband's funeral pyre. It never has been necessary to use compulsion. The alternative—a miserable and degraded existence, in which she was despised by all—sent the widow willingly to the flames.

### ACT OF A FAITHFUL WIFE.

Besides, the Hindus regard this act as that of a virtuous and faithful wife. Until English rule forbade it, it was strongly recommended by public opinion, among the Rajputs especially, as the only means of the widow's and her husband's happiness in the future state. The primitive view of the future life held by Hindus regarded the dead as having the same needs as the living.

This explains the difficulty the English Government has in stamping out the practice of suttee.

Until a year ago, when seven Hindus were sentenced to terms in prison for complicity in the burning alive of her husband's body of the young widow of Chaudhri Missir, a rich merchant of Bombay, there had been no known instances of this practice for several years. Suddenly, a little more than a week ago, the Lucknow officials learned that the forbidden practice has just claimed a widow, little more than a child, at Cawnpore.

An investigation proved that the report was only too well founded. The funeral pyre had been set up in a shallow chasm in an ill-kept outlying street in which half-burned sticks of wood still lay. The officers were unable in this instance to make any arrests, for the reason that the husbands of those guilty of complicity were carefully guarded by fanatic adherents to the old religion.

But it was proved that on the same pyre whose flames consumed the dead body of Shunder Mookerjee, a skilled laborer of Cawnpore, his 15-year-old widow voluntarily gave up her life. There were Hindu witnesses of the act, who, while they took no part, apparently, in the horrible rite, and who refused to name any persons who did take part, told the English officials the main details.

Chunder Mookerjee, when taken with his fatal illness, had only recently married his child wife. Both were of the old religion, and were known to be deeply attached to each other. The wife personally attended her sick husband, refusing to take rest while he still lived. When, after a few days, he died, she seemed dazed. She watched vacantly the preparations for cremation. As far as the officers could learn no one urged her to immolate herself.

In fact, she did not accompany the body to the pyre. It was only when the wood had been lighted that she, suddenly rushed upon the scene. Those near her noticed that her garments

were soaked with kerosene; also that she had tightly bound up her lower jaw as though she were already a corpse. This was probably for the reason that she feared that the agony of the flames might cause her to cry out in spite of all her resolution.

### GARMENTS SATURATED WITH OIL.

In her eyes, according to the testimony, was the half-mad light of her resolve to join her husband in the other world, where he would still be her lord, and thus to escape the disgrace which widowhood on earth would bring to her among the Hindu fanatics.

Without pausing for an instant the corpse of her husband's body in the midst of the flames. As her oil-saturated garments blazed up, she sprang to her feet for an instant, raising her eyes heavenward, with her arms upraised, and then sank back, stiff and unconscious, soon to be only a cinder.

At the very moment when this awful ceremony was in progress the accessories to the suttee of Chaudhri Missir's widow a year before were appealing to the court for a mitigation of their prison sentence and promising to frown upon the forbidden practice thenceforth. They were Juggernath Missir, a son, sentenced to five years of rigorous imprisonment; Balkishun Missir, Dwarika Missir, Ram Charan Missir, Somar Choudkhar and Gunga and Dildhand Chamar, near relatives, sentenced to terms ranging from three years down to nine months.

The testimony given in court, covering the most minute details, showed this instance of suttee to have been performed with the most elaborate ceremony. Chaudhri Missir was a high caste Brahmin, of influence, living in the village of Sanchal, near Behar. He died, and arrangements were made for the burning of his body on a hillside near the banks of a small river called "Devi Sthan."

Under the direction of his eldest son, Juggernath, some of his humble retainers dug shallow trenches in the soil of the village, and across and over this piled the wood of the pyre. In the cutting of the wood, which is a part of the funeral ceremony, Juggernath Missir, the eldest son, assisted. Being a Brahmin gentleman he had no axe of his own. Ram Lal Barhi, a carpenter of the village, lent him his axe. Many of the villagers assisted, too, while others gathered about as spectators.

When the villagers saw the widow of Chaudhri Missir bathing in the river the whisper ran from one to another: "Suttee! Suttee! The widow of Chaudhri Missir will be Sati!"

### CREMATION OF BRAHMIN.

The cremation of a dead Brahmin was no ordinary occurrence, but Sanchal village had known no suttee in half a century. Soon, while Juggernath Missir continued to cut wood and arrange it upon the pyre, hundreds were joining the crowd on the hillside. Volunteering musicians brought their drums, cymbals and gongs. Others brought the sacred tanks or shells upon which to blow solemn tones as the spirit of the widow joined that of her husband.

At length the pyre was ready. Bearers brought the body of Chaudhri Missir and laid it thereon, with his feet toward the setting sun. It was afternoon. Ram Charan, Dwarika and Balkishun Missir, the younger sons, brought the helmet, the sword, spear, and modern rifle, and the clothing of Chaudhri Missir and laid them beside the corpse on the pyre.

The hillside was now alive with thousands of villagers and countrymen. Their bodies swayed to and fro, and low moans ran from woman to woman. The men with the drums, the cymbals and gongs, and sacred tanks, sat in a row near the pyre. All were waiting for the widow of Chaudhri Missir to appear.

They had not long to wait. From her house, bathed and attired in her bridal robes, accompanied by two maids, she came. Her face was radiant. She looked like a young bride. The women on the hillside moaned again, but now there was a more triumphant note in their lamentations. They bowed their heads toward the widow, murmuring: "Blessed be good wife. Blessed be Chaudhri Missir."

Juggernath Missir, as perfectly composed as his mother, gave her his hand and helped her to mount the pyre. There she stretched herself out beside her husband, her head beneath his shoulder, as became a humble wife.

All was now ready. The men with the sacred tanks blew a long note. The drums, gongs and cymbals gave forth muffled sounds. The women on the hillside waved their bodies, bowing their heads low towards the pyre. Then

the voice of the widow was heard softly calling to Juggernath Missir: "My son, since you are here and fear not the law, do your duty as becomes a faithful Hindu."

Then Juggernath Missir lighted some wheat stalks and, having walked three times around the pyre, according to custom, applied the fire to the mouth of the corpse. This failing to ignite the pyre, Juggernath Missir called upon four good Brahmins, to assist him in performing the "Humar."

### DIED FACING THE SETTING SUN.

Those who responded were the three younger sons—Ram Charan Missir, Balkishun Missir and Lachman Tewari. First they burned incense all about the pyre. Then they took chips of wood dipped in ghee, lighted them and placed them under the wood of the pyre. Flames leaped upward, joining the smoke of the incense. The widow lay still beside the corpse of her husband.

Now the drums, gongs and cymbals gave forth their full volume of sound. Notes from the tanks responded through the grove. Every face upon the hillside was alight with religious ecstasy.

As the flames reached the garments of the widow she began to writhe in agony. Suddenly, wrapped in flame, she stood up, lifted her arms and turned her face toward the setting sun. Above the din of the drums and cymbals the crowd could be heard shouting from the Hindu ritual:

"Sat Ram! Sita Ram! Sati Mai Kal Jal!"

The pyre was now a roaring furnace. All at once, amid the beating of the drums and the clang of the cymbals, the body of the widow fell upon the corpse of the husband, and the two seemed to dissolve together. So they were but ashes mingled with the ashes of the pyre.

Now that this second instance of suttee has come to light, when the English officials believed that the wide-

ly reported trial and sentences of those implicated in the burning to death of Chaudhri Missir would have the effect of wholly stamping out the practice, it is likely there will be any mitigation of those punishments. The Government has issued orders that isolated Hindu communities are to be closely watched to guard against secret commissions of this demoralizing crime.

The most shocking feature of this recrudescence of the ancient rite is that it particularly menaces wives who are hardly more than children—for marriages of Hindu girls at 13, 12 and 11 years of age, are not uncommon.

### ATTITUDE TO WIDOWS.

When the husbands of these mere children die, the attitude of friends, relatives and neighbors toward the poor little widows changes immediately. Will they be "Sati"? Will they throw themselves into the flames and thus prove themselves "good women" and "faithful wives," or will they accept the alternative of the lowest form of degradation during all the years to come?

The young widow cannot fail to observe the looks of inquiry directed at her, the already growing coldness of even her near relatives. First, despair at her vision of the future assails her, then comes mad fanaticism for the old religion, and, unless restrained by those who fear the law of their English masters, she runs wildly to the pyre where her husband's body is being consumed and gives herself to the flames.

The British Government, striking at the root of the matter, encourages the missionaries in their efforts to teach these Hindu fanatics that a good wife who becomes a widow through no fault of her own is as worthy of respect as any other woman, and has the same right to continue an honored member of society. But these sporadic revivals of the practice of suttee indicate how difficult is the task.

## ANECDOTES OF NOTED ACTORS

BY T. P. O'CONNOR, M. P.

I suppose Enobarbus' description of Cleopatra,

Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale Her infinite variety,

must often, and aptly, have been applied to late Miss Ellen Terry, who celebrates this year her golden wedding to Thalia. A Dublin friend told me he once saw a beggar woman looking with such noticeable intentions after an old gentleman who was tripping up Grafton street with all the light alertness of boyhood, that he asked, "What's the matter with the old gentleman?" "What's the matter with him? Yerra look at him! He but touches the ground with one of his feet!"

Miss Ellen Terry treats the boards, "which she hardly seems to touch," with all the girlish grace of 50 years ago. Mr. Cibber when close on 60 was cast for the part of the 16-year-old heroine, Celia, of Whitehead's comedy, "The School for Lovers." When the play was read over to the performers at Garrick's house, some one suggested that the age of the heroine should be advanced by a few years to make the discrepancy between it and that of the lady who was to play her less noticeable. Mrs. Cibber, however, who was reading over the play with the help of a pair of spectacles, protested that the part of a girl of 16 suited her better than that of a woman of 25. And such was the representation of Celia that the audience agreed with her!

### NANCE OLDFIELD.

While Nance Oldfield, as Lady Townley in "The Provoked Husband," was taking the house by storm, a beau paid this subtle compliment to a lady of quality of uncertain age: "You are madam, they say Anne Oldfield will never see 42 again; but I warrant still in her teens and the lady of quality her 50 years." Nance, while still back in her teens at the age of 15, was discovered in an odd way by that genial Irish genius, George Farquhar, who, while enjoying himself at the Mitre Tavern, heard the most exquisite girl's voice reciting scenes from "The Scornful Lady," with a dramatic expression. The voice came from the room behind the bar, which George made some excuse to enter, to find, to his astonishment, the reciter to be an exquisitely beautiful girl of 15. He discovered, to his greater amazement, that this poor little seamstress, the niece of the landlady of the Mitre, knew Beaumont and Fletcher by heart, and was, in fact, a born actress. He introduced her to Captain Vanbrugh—not yet Sir John—and the author of "The Confederacy" introduced her to Rich, the manager of Drury Lane. The happy accident (for Nance), of Mrs. Verbruggen's illness threw to her the humble part of Leonora in "Sir Courtly Nice," of which she made so much that Colley Cibber, who was prejudiced against her, confessed his amazement at her performance, "so forward and sudden a step into nature I had never seen." Henceforth she had a succession of triumphs till she died in harness in her 53rd year, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

### COLLEY CIBBER'S DEBUT.

In a speech made some years ago Lord Rosebery made apt use of the respective advice given by an Englishman, a Scotsman, and an Irishman to a landlady whose steward had embezzled a large sum of money. "I should dismiss him at once," advised the Englishman. "Nay," urged the Scotsman, "I should keep him on and deduct the sum from his wages." "But," demurred the landlady, "the sum embezzled is far more than his wages." "Then," promptly suggested the Irishman, "I should raise his wages." I wondered at the time if Lord Rosebery had developed the story out of an anecdote told of Beaumont and Colley Cibber. Colley Cibber's first appearance upon the stage was as a boy bearing a message to Betterton, who delivered so blunderingly as to put the great actor out in his part. At the close of the play Betterton summoned the prompter, Downes, and quivered angrily. "Who was that blundering beast of a boy?" "Master Colley, sir," "Then forfeit him!" cried Betterton. "But he has no salary, sir."

"No salary! Then put him down ten shillings and forfeit him five!"

### "MARK ME!"

Another boy debutant, who became afterward a famous actor, was less fortunate in his debut than Colley Cibber. Thomas Ellington in his boyhood was apprenticed to a French upholsterer in Covent Garden, who had no patience with his "Thespian" pretensions. Tom played the Ghost in "Hamlet" one evening without a suspicion that his French master was amongst the audience. However, all went well until the Ghost began his first speech in "Hamlet," "Mark me! I am a sepulchral tone. Whereupon the Frenchman, shouting "Begar! me vill mark you!" rushed on the stage and so belabored poor Tom that he bolted off the boards and out into the street, pursued by his furious master. Some of the audience, however, pursued the Frenchman, rescued the Ghost, and brought him back in triumph. I fear, though, that Tom must have spoken with unfeigned horror the speech of the Ghost describing the purgatorial torment in wait for him, since his irascible French master was ready to pounce upon him at his exit.

### "YOUNG ROSCIUS."

William Henry West Betty became stage-struck in his eleventh year upon seeing Mrs. Siddons in the part of Elvira in the play of "Pizarro." Before the twelve he appeared at Belfast in the character of Osmund in the tragedy of Zara. In Belfast, Dublin, and Cork, and in Glasgow and Edinburgh, he became the rage, and was encouraged to try his fortune in London. In London he was engaged to act alternately at Covent Garden and at Drury Lane, receiving first five guineas, and a little later one hundred guineas a night at each house; while the crowds that crushed to secure seats were so great that the Foot Guards were called out to keep order. Byron spoke of the "Roscomania" as an incredible insanity, and, indeed, it took such hold of all ranks and classes that Master Betty was presented to the king, was painted by Opie, and was made the subject of the Cambridge University's prize poem for that year. He earned £20,000 in his fifty-six performances for the managers of Drury Lane and Covent Garden, and then retired for a time. When he reappeared in his manhood on the boards his failure was as decided as his success in his childhood. He received little notice from the public, who had recently taken London by storm become Pagamini.

### THE SMART POT-BUY.

The great comedian Shuter owed his education to an odd accident. When a pot-boy at a Covent Garden public-house he was dispatched by a customer to fetch a coach. The coach was fetched, and the gentleman rode off, to find his arrival at home that he had left in the coach a pocket-book containing papers of great consequence. As, however, he had not noted the number of the coach, he called next

morning at the public-house to ask the pot-boy if he had taken note of it. Shuter, who could neither read nor write, nor express numbers in any other way than that in which he scored quarts and pints of porter against customers, answered the gentleman's inquiry with, "Two pots and a pint." "Two pots and a pint!" exclaimed the gentleman, turning perplexed to the landlady. The landlady explained that "two pots and a pint" answered to the figures 771, and that this must have been the number of the coach, as it was. The gentleman, delighted at once at the recovery of his pocket-book and at the smartness of the pot-boy, undertook the expense of Shuter's education, and continued his patron while he lived.

### SHUTER AND MACKLIN.

Macklin, now in his seventy-fifth year, was so tedious and prolix in a rehearsal of Macbeth that Shuter, who was, as usual, in his cups, impatiently quoted in the aged actor's hearing:

The time has been That, when the brains were out, the man would die, And there an end.

Macklin good-naturedly replied, "Ah, Ned, Ned, and the time was that when liquor was in, wit was out; but it's not so with thee. To which Shuter replied with another Shakespearean quotation:

Now, now, thou art a man again!

### To Right the Wrong

"Miss Jane is in the garden," said the maid. She was quite right. Jane was not only in the garden, physically, but was also entirely absorbed in it, mentally. At all events, it was not until I had ventured on my third salutation that she condescended to become conscious of my presence.

I wonder you are not ashamed of yourself," she began encouragingly. "It sometimes surprises me," I admitted.

Jane glared. She has a particularly demoralizing glare. "It is a good thing you are able to see what cause there is for it," she said.

"AI," said I. "Shows there's not so much the matter with me, after all." "After all what?"

"Well, of course there have been times," I said, "when I have been in a bad way. I have been, for instance, in a bad way, perhaps, hardly fair to the girl—"

Jane was upon me at once. "What girl?" she demanded.

"O, nothing. I beg your pardon. Thinking aloud, you know. Bad habit. Must break myself of it."

Jane did not follow my lead. My attempt to create a diversion was a failure. "I hate men who think they know things," she observed, sniffing a marguerite abstractedly, and looking at nothing in particular.

I agreed. "So do I. Most objectionable animals."

"It seems to me that the very things they think they know are the things that nobody who does know could tell them they don't know."

I rested my head on my hand for a moment or two. "Give it up," I said finally.

Jane was really quite angry. Her cheeks were flushed like wild roses. She looked so entirely kissable, but concluded that it would not be safe.

Besides we had broken off our engagement the day before yesterday. "What do you mean?" she demanded. "Sorry! Thought it was a riddle, you know." I smiled at Jane vacuously.

Jane stamped her foot. She was wearing very dainty shoes, I noticed. "No one can call me unreasonable," she began.

"I wouldn't advise them to," said I. "But," Jane continued, taking no notice of my remark, "in this instance I consider your conduct outrageous."

Here she threw out her arms in a manner too graceful to be believed unless seen, and apparently appealed to all the visible universe—including two rocks and a tortoise-shell cat—for support.

"Upon my word, I don't know what you mean," I said. "I have a light dawned upon me. Unless you happened to see the Times yesterday morning."

I felt very nervous. "I did see the Times," said Jane. "I will give you the dignity of which she was capable."

It occurs to me that it is astonishing how dignified she can look for so small a person.

"But you always have the Telegraph," I objected feebly.

"Mr. Thumkin, who lives at 'The Gooseberry Bushes,' was good enough to send me his copy of the Times last night, thinking I might be interested to see your letter. And," said Jane freely, "I was!"

I registered internally a vow to wring Mr. Thumkin's neck and burn "The Gooseberry Bushes" at the first available opportunity.

Jane was continuing. "What do you know about 'The Lack of the Governing Instinct in Women?' What do you know about women, indeed? Or about governing, for the matter of that?"

I was dumb. "What do you mean by saying that all history proves women to be absolutely a failure as rulers? What do you know about history? Or about rulers? Or about anything except tennis? And what about Queen Elizabeth? and Cleopatra? and Mrs. Fawcett? and that Assyrian woman? and ever so many of them?"

Jane smiled a rather unsuccessful smile and began to explain. I am good at explanations. As a matter of fact, I was very proud of that letter. It was full of close and careful reasoning, and had given me no end of trouble to write. That was why I wanted to put my name to it, thinking Jane would never see it.

But no matter. After about an hour and a half of careful evasion and prevarication I succeeded in averting Jane's anger. She apologized prettily, in the manner calculated to do the most good. "How silly of me not to see that it was just a satire, and not meant seriously at all," she said.

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There was an interval for refreshments. "And you believe women can govern, after all?" she observed again. I hedged a bit. "Some women can." It was the most I could bring myself to admit.

"Just wait until we are married," said Jane, playfully, "and you'll discover one of them!"

I went home thoughtfully.—Black and White.

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all this beer and liquor were put into a tank and were allowed to run through an ordinary water tap at the rate of a gallon a minute, the receptacle would require 99 years and 36 days to empty itself.—Pearson's Magazine.

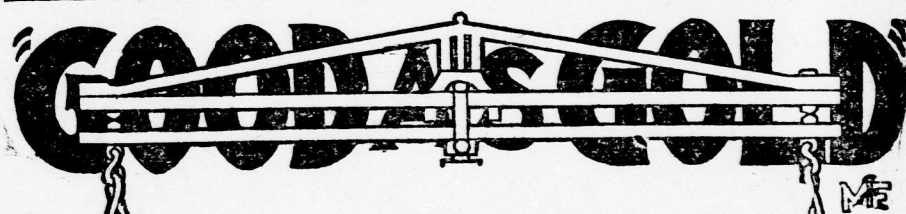
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