

*GEMS OF LAW FROM INDIA'S CORAL STRAND.*

"If a Brahmin voluntarily eats onions or garlic, the magistrate shall banish such Brahmin from the kingdom." A code of laws that is thus mindful of the purity of breath of the Four Hundred is one which is assuredly worthy of grave consideration when the Patron is to bring back the days of innocency again. The same code enacts that "if a man, having at first begun a trifling conversation with a woman, afterwards increases and prolongs such conversation, the magistrate shall fine him"; "if a man speaks reproachfully of his mother-in-law or father-in-law, the magistrate shall fine him"; "if a man speaks reproachfully of any country, as, 'That country is most particularly bad,' the magistrate shall fine him." And the fines inflicted for those offences were not liquidated by a few silver coins, but required "puns of cowries" to satisfy them.

It took eighty cowries to make a pun, and 3,840 of them to make a rupee, in Bengal, in the old days. Now, in Siam, 6,400 of these half-inch-long shells, white and straw-coloured without and blue within, are worth about one shilling and sixpence. Do not let us sneer at this currency. In 1644, taxes might be paid in New England in beef, pork, or grain, hides, tallow, or dry fish, whalebones, cattle, or boards; in one town, even in milk-pails. In Delaware, in 1679, there was a suit about a debt payable in "pompkins." In Pennsylvania, produce of all kinds was a legal tender, and, in Massachusetts, musket-balls were current at "a farthing apiece."

These Indian laws are contained in "A code of Gentoo laws, or ordinations of the Pundits, from a Persian translation, made from the original, written in the Sanscrit language." The translation, we are told by Warren Hastings, was made with great ability, diligence, and fidelity by Mr. Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, and was published in 1776. As we find among the compilers of this pootee such names as Ram Gopant Neeayalunkar and Sirree Keisub Terkalungar, and as they quote from such works as Dherum Ruttenteeka and Dayadhe-Karce-Kerm-Shungerah, one can have no reasonable doubt of the correctness of the law as given. What authority this code has in these days we leave to the decision of the practitioner in India. Meanwhile let us delve a little deeper among these curious laws and rules. First,