

Illustrated News

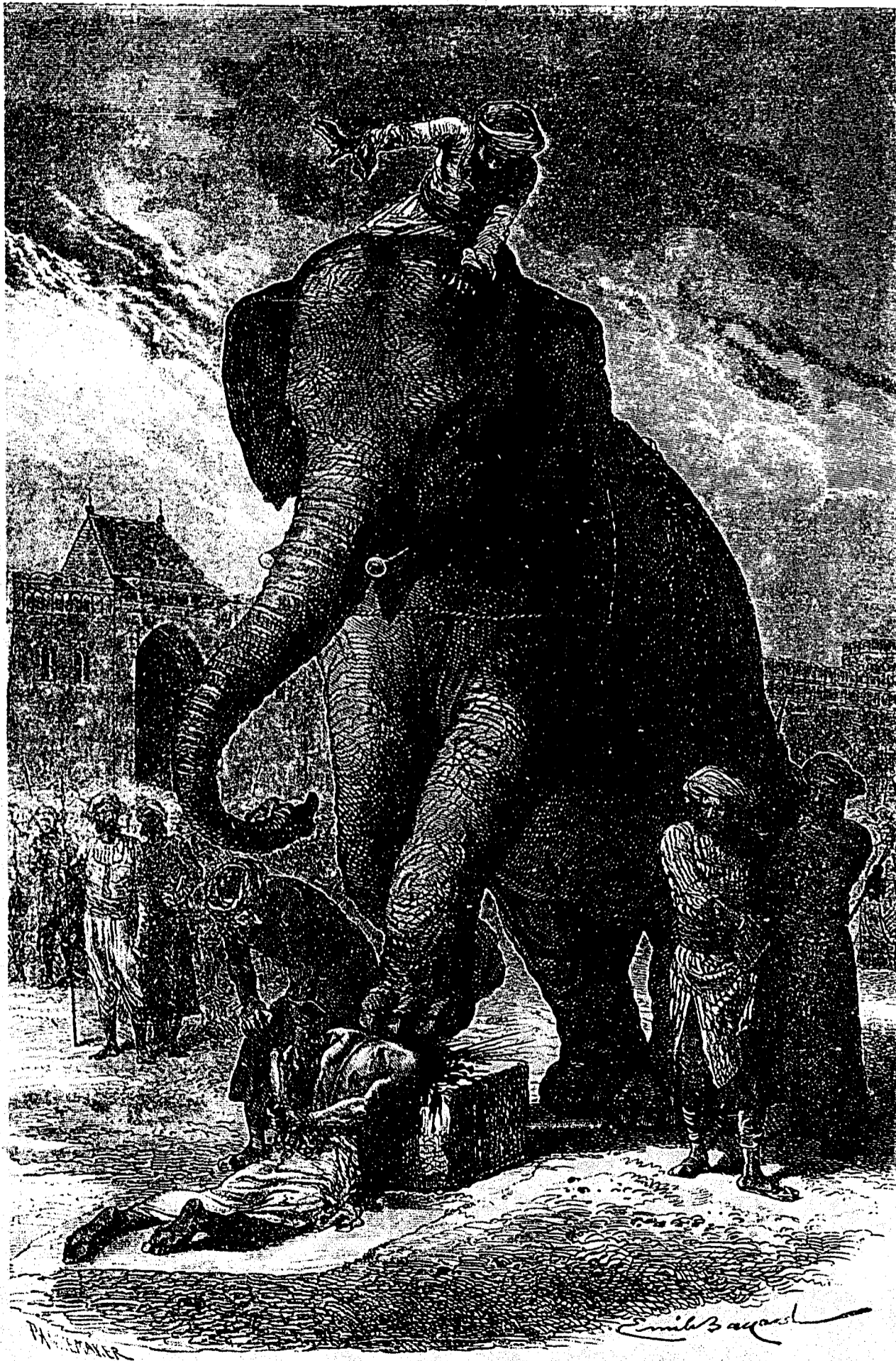
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HAMLET.

Within the limits of a single play Shakespeare has admirably personified the three varieties of human character. It was necessary for the full expression of Hamlet's nature that he should be brought into contact with the exponents of practical ideas, and accordingly the dramatist, with the utmost refinement of art, has relieved his essential unworldliness against different depths of the worldly character. So refined, indeed, is the first contrast that it holds within it an element of harmony. Between Hamlet and Horatio there is a close and enduring friendship—a friendship which is in truth based upon the most profound differences of nature. Horatio is the true type of the man of the world, but his worldliness is so noble and unseeking that it contrasts, without conflicting, with Hamlet's ideal vision. Hamlet is in himself the expression in art of the artistic attitude towards actual facts. He is no nearer to the world than a spectator of a play to the life which it symbolises, and he is as incapable of carrying on the practical drama of life as the same spectator, if suddenly summoned from his place in the audience, would be of completing the unfinished action of the stage. His constant endeavour is to put himself outside the circumstances with which he is brought into contact, and to get far enough away from them to be able to measure their value and determine their drift. This, which he believes to be the necessary preliminary to action, renders him at last entirely powerless to act. At each step he is only carried further from the real world, and though his vision of it grows in distinctness, he becomes only the more incapable of altering or reshaping the fixed lines of the picture which rises before him. It is true that his fate combines with his character to keep him thus a mere spectator of actual life. With happier fortunes he might have gradually bridged over the gulf that separated him from the reality, and he had already by his love for Ophelia attempted to find an ideal pathway that should lead him beyond the confines of mere speculation; but on the very threshold of the new realm he is met by a crime that makes him shrink back with double recoil, while at the same time it compels him to terrible action. Side by side with this character we find the steadfast nobility of Horatio. Without a touch of what is sordid or selfish he nevertheless possesses the unfaltering grasp of facts and the sober reserve of feeling which mark the true man of the world. He bears himself gravely, but without cynicism or bitterness, as a man who has tutored himself to moderate desire by instinctive knowledge of the little that life has to offer.



THE PRINCE OF WALES' VISIT TO INDIA;—CAPITAL PUNISHMENT, AS PRACTISED AT BARODA.

THE BELLS OF LIMERICK.

The old bells that hung in the tower of Limerick Cathedral were made by a young Italian after many years of patient toil. He was proud of his work, and when they were purchased by the prior of a neighbouring convent, near the Lake of Como, the artist invested the profits of the sale in a pretty villa on the margin of the lake, where he could hear their Angelus music wafted from the convent cliffs across the waters at morning, noon and night. Here he intended to pass his life; but this happiness was denied him. In one of those feudal broils which, whether civil or foreign, are the undying worm in a fallen land, he suffered the loss of his all; and when the storm passed he found himself without home, family, friends, and fortune. The convent had been razed to the ground, and the *chefs-d'œuvre* of his handiwork, the tuneful chimes whose music had charmed his listening ear for so many happy days of his past life, had been carried away to a foreign land. He became a wanderer. His hair grew white and his heart withered before he again found a resting place. One day he met a mariner from over the sea, who told him a story of a wondrous chime of bells he had heard in Ireland. An intuition told the artist that they were his bells. He journeyed and voyaged thither, sick and weary, and sailed up the Shannon. The ship came to anchor in the port near Limerick, and he took passage in a small boat for the purpose of reaching the city. Before him the tall steeple of St. Mary's lifted its turreted head above the mist and smoke of the old town. He leaned back wearily, yet with a happy light beaming before his eyes. The angels were whispering to him that his bells were there. He prayed: "Oh, let them sound me a loving welcome! Just one note of greeting, O, bells! and my pilgrimage is done!" It was a beautiful evening. The air was like that of his own Italy in the sweetest time of the year, the death of the spring. Suddenly the stillness was broken. From St. Mary's tower there came a shower of silver sound, filling the air with music. The boatmen rested on their oars to listen. The old Italian crossed his arms and fixed his streaming eyes upon the tower. The sound of his bells bore to his heart all the sweet memories of his buried past; home, friends, kindred, all. At last he was happy—too happy to speak, to breathe. When the rowers sought to arouse him, his face was upturned to the tower, but his eyes were closed. The poor stranger had breathed his last. His own *chefs-d'œuvre* had rung his "passing bell."