

expressed his approval of the verdict. He then read a list of former convictions of the prisoner for offences of a similar character, and sentenced him to three months imprisonment with hard labor. *Parturient montes nascetur ridiculus mus.* A murderer with a long list of convictions against him gets three months' imprisonment!

WIDOWS IN INDIA.—A most amusing letter, dated as of the 31d of August, and printed in the *Madras Standard*, above the signature "A Sympathizer," vividly describes the sufferings of a Brahman widow, which included the shaving of her head. The writer states: "All her entreaties were in vain. At the fixed hour, when she resisted and refused to undergo this ceremony, her hands and legs were tied with a rope, some persons caught hold of her and the crown of her head was removed, then she fainted and fell senseless, and was ill for some days after that event." He then goes on to observe: "I know that people are punished for cruelty to animals, and I leave the readers of your journal to judge whether this act can be classified as cruelty to a human being, although it is a privileged custom." If, indeed, it is a privileged custom in the benighted presidency to remove the crown of the Brahman widow, the society for the suppression of cruelty to animals certainly should look to it. Another statement of this agreeable writer is very puzzling. He says the widow "came away to Madras without the knowledge of her parents, with her attendant, a Sudra woman, wearing the only cloth she had on her body at the time she left her house and went directly to Miss Brandon." Now—which of the two wore the only cloth? And whose was it?—*Indian Jurist*.

EVIDENCE OF ACCUSED PERSONS.—How often do we find counsel employed to defend persons accused of crimes pointing out to the jury that "the prisoner's lips are sealed!" The incompetence of a prisoner as a witness at his own trial is, as Sir James Stephens has remarked, "one of the most characteristic features of English criminal procedure." It would seem that, down to the period of the Civil War, prisoners were usually in *errogato* on being arraigned. Under the Stuarts, questions were still asked of the accused, though, owing principally to the unpopularity of the Star Chamber procedure, the maxim "No one is bound to accuse himself" began to be recognized as one of the first principles of justice. The practice of questioning the prisoner died out soon after the Revolution of 1688; and, as the rules of evidence passed from the civil to the criminal courts, the rule that an interested party was incompetent as a witness, which prevailed in civil cases up to 1853, was extended to criminal cases. It should, however, be observed that formerly a prisoner accused of felony could not be defended by counsel, and had, therefore, to speak for himself. Moreover, by certain statutes of Philip and Mary, the committing magistrate was authorized to "take the examination of the person suspected." In 1848 the present system was established by the 11 & 12 Vict., c. 42, under which the prisoner is asked whether he wishes to say anything, and is warned that, if he chooses to do so, what he says will be taken down, and may be given in evidence at his trial. It