



ants, down to the lowest native servant of the Mission,* and with that his connexion with the Khonds, for whom he had done so much, was brought precipitately to a close.

I make no comment on these things. It is sufficient to state that one of the ablest of the Company's civil servants† was commissioned to inquire into the charges against Macpherson—the substance of which was that his maladministration had driven the people to rebellion, and was keeping it alive among the tribes—and that the result of the inquiry was a most honorable acquittal upon every charge. "Captain Macpherson," said the Governor-General in Council, "has, with a very little exception, cleared himself and his administration of all General Dyce's accusations;" and he would have taken an opportunity of evincing his undiminished confidence in Macpherson, had he not been compelled, by ill health, to return to Europe. That justice was rendered to the two assistants of the Khond Agency, Dr. Cadenhead‡

* It would seem, however, that Sir Herbert Maddock had resolved on Macpherson's removal before General Dyce's charges had been received.

† Mr. John Peter Grant.

‡ When, in 1844, Capt. Macpherson was driven by sickness from his post, Dr. John Cadenhead, of the Madras army, was appointed to act for him, and carried on the Khond work for above twelve months with entire success. At the close of the inquiry referred to, the supreme Government adopted the following estimate, formed by the Commissioner of Dr. Cadenhead's recent conduct and services:—"During the whole of this period of three months and a half, from the first outbreak in Gullery, he was constantly, in good health or in bad health, scouring these unwholesome jungles and hills, accompanying the troops in all their movements, and present with them in every action; . . . and my opinion of those proceedings is, that they were conducted with rare spirit and energy, and with great skill, and that they reflect great credit on the conductor of them."

Dr. Cadenhead was afterwards appointed principal assistant in the South-West frontier agency, and on the as-

sumption of the extensive Zemindarry of Sumbhulpore, was selected for the important and delicate task of bringing its rude and turbulent population under the immediate authority of the Government. That duty he executed so as to command the entire approbation of his official superiors, while, by his unceasing devotion to the interests of the people, alike in the lines of public and of private duty, he gained in an extraordinary degree their confidence and affection. Amongst his works of private benevolence may be noticed the institution of a school, which opened in April, 1850, with seven pupils, who soon increased to sixty, including youths of the highest families in the district. The system of tuition was that pursued by Dr. Duff, of Calcutta. On Dr. Cadenhead's death, the people of Sumbhulpore petitioned the Government to maintain the school. The Commissioner warmly seconded their petition, "not only for the direct good which would accrue from the permanent establishment of the school under Government patronage, but as a monument of the active and characteristic benevolence of the founder." The Government immediately apportioned the sum of 240*l.* per annum for its efficient maintenance.



and Lieutenant Pinkney, by immediately appointing them to offices of equal responsibility.

But although Macpherson had been removed from office, and soon after the conclusion of the investigation into his proceedings he was driven home by the warnings of a constitution shattered by long residence in the Khond country, the good that he had done lived after him. It does not seem that, during the disturbances which rent the country, his proselytes fell back into their old errors, and resorted to their old evil practices. The Khond agency survived, though Macpherson had been recalled ; and Colonel Campbell, who had long been employed in that part of the country, was appointed to fill his place. The good work is going on, under diminished difficulties, towards a prosperous conclusion. It was obviously, indeed, a work of which the beginning may almost be said to be also the middle and the end. The Khonds offered human sacrifices because they believed that in no other way they could propitiate the Earth-Goddess, and that their failure to lay these dreadful offerings at her feet would be visited with the infliction of the most terrible calamities to which humanity is exposed. The *premier pas* was everything in such a case. "The first operations," it is truly said by Colonel Campbell, "among a wild and strange people, always the most difficult and the most hazardous, having been successful, those of succeeding seasons, if the same principles are adhered to, are mere gleanings."* The sacrificing Khonds had made the terrible experiment, and yet the earth had yielded her increase with unwonted prodigality, and the pestilence, which walketh in the darkness, had never been so idle before. And the result was, that in the minds of all the intelligent men in the Khond districts—and the Khonds were by no means wanting in intelligence—the

* Colonel Campbell to Supreme Government, April 10, 1852. *MS. Records.*



omnipotence of *Tari Pennu*, the Earth-Goddess, sank down into a delusion and a sham.*

But although the way was smoothed by these initial successes for all subsequent efforts, the later operations in the Khond country ought not to be passed over with this brief incidental notice. Colonel Campbell, as I have said, has been carrying on, with undiminished success, the good work commenced by Macpherson. He has pushed on his inquiries and exerted his authority among tribes unvisited by his predecessor, and the result of each new visit to the hills, in succeeding cold seasons, has been a progressive diminution in the extent of the great crime. Tribe after tribe has yielded to the good influences of the Christian officer.† Victims have been brought in; pledges have been subscribed; and the promises which have been freely made have been faithfully performed. The last report of the Agent for the suppression of Meriah sacrifice contains the most cheering evidence of the progress of the good work; and it may reasonably be hoped that a few more years of continued activity, animated by the same humanity and intelligence, will see the utter extinction of

* The Court of Directors watched these proceedings with the greatest interest, and wrote out to recommend the same mild, conciliatory measures as Cleveland and Ovens had prosecuted with such good success. "We would recall to your recollection," they said, "the happy effects produced at a former period by the benevolent and judicious arrangements of Mr. Cleveland, the then Collector of Bhaugulpore, to effect the civilisation of the Hill tribes of that district, who bear a strong resemblance in many particulars to the barbarous tribes in the Goomsur country. Similar measures have also been successfully pursued to improve the condition of the various Bheel tribes in different parts of our territory."—[*Court's Letter, June 16, 1847. MS. Records.*]

† I must give at least one extract from Colonel Campbell's last report, in

illustration of the character of his proceedings and the difficulties which he has overcome. One of the tribes regarding his approach with fear and suspicion, "I used my best endeavours," he says, "for several days to undeceive these wild people, but they either did not comprehend me, or there was some underhand influence at work which I could not detect. After repeated threats and demonstrations, emboldened by the smallness of the force at my disposal and excited by liquor, about three hundred of them attacked my camp, shouting and yelling more like demons than men, supported by as many more, uttering cries of encouragement from the rocks and jungle which surrounded the camp, but a steady and resolute advance soon drove them off, a few shots over their heads, which did no harm, completed the rout, and we pursued them rapidly over the mountains till they



the barbarous rite throughout all the tracts of the Orissan hills.*

were lost in the jungle dells on the other side. The next day delegates arrived from the several villages of the confederation, and the day following, all came, made their submission, delivered up their Meriahs, entered into the usual agreement to forsake the sacrifice of human beings for ever; confidence was established, and my camp was crowded with our late foes, gazing with astonishment at all they saw. The whole population of the neighbouring Mootahs, including those of Chinna Kimedya, were intensely watching the result of the struggle at Lumbragaum, the successful termination of which exercised a most favorable influence on the proceedings which followed in the large Mootah of Sirdapore."—[*MS. Records.*]

* The following passage from Colonel

Campbell's report, touching upon the subject of the colonisation of the rescued Meriah victims, to whom grants of land were made by Government, will be read with considerable interest:—"The several Meriah families settled as cultivators in Goomsur, are doing very well—about a third of the number (those originally established) have this year, for the first time, paid the rent of their land. From a third the full amount was collected; but remitted to support them till next harvest and for seed; and a third or more, recently settled, are maintained at the expense of the state. By the next harvest I anticipate that nearly all will be in a condition to support themselves."—[*Colonel Campbell to the Supreme Government, April 12, 1852. MS. Records.*]



CHAPTER IV.

Suttee—Its Antiquity—Its Origin—General Features of the Practice—Its outward Manifestations—Suttee under the Moguls—Its frequency under British Rule—First idea of its Suppression—Lord Amherst—Lord William Bentinck—Opinions and Instructions of the Court of Directors—Views of the Company's Servants—Suppression of Suttee in the British Provinces—Our Efforts in the Native States.

In the preceding chapters I have endeavoured to show the manner in which the energies and activities of British officers in India have been put forth for the civilisation of savage tribes inhabiting tracts of country brought under our rule, within comparatively recent periods of Indian history, and not subjected to the formal administrative system embraced by the Regulations. In continuation of this interesting inquiry, it is proposed to devote the two following chapters to the consideration of certain specific measures of the same humanising tendency, not confined to any particular tract of country—measures for the suppression of those abominations of cruelty and unrighteousness, engrafted upon the social institutions of the country, which generation after generation of priest-ridden Hindoos, in their ignorance and credulity, have practised.

Foremost among these abominations is the unholy custom of "Suttee," or widow-burning. Whence it came—what its origin, it is hard to say. Religious sanction it has none.* The great Hindoo lawgiver

* I have come to this conclusion after much consideration and inquiry. Mr. Ward, in his "Account of the Hindoos," quotes no less than eight texts from the Hindoo sacred writings in recommendation of the practice—one of



ordained it not. Constructively he legislated against it. All that can be said positively on the subject is, that it was an ancient custom handed down to the present generation of Hindoos, from remote periods centuries before Christ.

Little more is known about it than this. But many conjectures have been hazarded. It has been suggested by some that the custom was instituted to check an ill habit common among Hindoo wives, who were, it is said, addicted to the vice of poisoning their husbands. Others attribute it, in no small measure, to the selfishness of surviving relatives eager to possess themselves of the widow's share of the inheritance. Then, again, it is said to be only the unhappy result of the degradation to which the Hindoo widow is reduced—a cruel escape from the miseries of a more cruel existence. These are different shapes assumed by the expediency-side of the question. But more tolerant interpretations are not wanting; and charity sometimes assumes that it is an enthusiastic desire to win Heaven for her lord and for herself, that guides the Hindoo widow to the funeral pile of the departed.

Of course it has a traditional origin. Every atrocity and absurdity in Hindooism has some sort of traditional origin. It is said of Suttee, that on the demise of the mortal part of Brahma, his wives, inconsolable in their misery, determined not to survive him, and burnt themselves with his corpse—that the wives of the chief Rajahs and other great personages followed this heroic example—and that the early Brahmins gave currency to

which is from the *Rig-Veda*, and is thus translated—"O Fire, let these women with bodies anointed with clarified butter, eyes colored with stibium and void of tears enter thee, the parent of water, that they may not be separated from their husbands, but may be in union with excellent husbands, be sinless, and jewels among women."

Some high authorities, however, as Rammohun Roy, Colebrooke, and Wilson, deny that this is the correct interpretation of the text. The subject is of so much importance, in its practical relations to the question of Suttee-suppression in the native states, that I shall advert to it again in a note at the end of the chapter.

the doctrine, that the spirits of those heroines, then purged of their guilt, ceased from their transmigrations and entered into Paradise without further probation. Others of less note, encouraged by these promises, sought the privilege of dying in the same heroic style, and Suttee became engrafted on the customs of the Gentoos. But for all this, it can hardly be said that widow-burning was ever a national custom. At no time has the practice been so frequent as to constitute more than an exception to the general rule of self-preservation. Still, even in this exceptional state, it was something very horrible and deplorable in Christian eyes, and something to be suppressed, if suppression were possible, by a Christian government established in a heathen land.

But horrible and deplorable as was the practice, even a Christian writer may say, that there was often an unearthly grandeur in the bearing of the deluded woman, which filled the spectator with scarcely less of admiration than of pity. You saw a young woman—one, in our eyes, perhaps, little more than a child—ascend, with heavenly composure, the funeral pile of her husband, and with an unaltered countenance resign herself to a cruel death. You saw her calmly and gracefully performing the last offices due to the dead, and the last courtesies to the living; serenely decorating her person, as for a bridal, and in an unbroken voice repeating the formulas of prayer dictated by the un pitying priests; then walking with steady tread around the pyre, mounting it without a shudder of fear, and perishing without a murmur. No martyr, in the grand old times of Apostolic Christianity, died with a nobler fortitude, than often did these unhappy women, under the curse of a degrading superstition. But it was not always in this wise. Sometimes the miserable victim went feeble, trembling, in a state of pitiable reluctance, to the funeral pile, was forced upon the sacrificial faggots by the bamboos of the by-standers, and held



down among the flames, while the noise of the surrounding drums and the shouts of the spectators drowned the shrieks of the wretched woman, as the flames gathered closely and destroyingly around her.

There are not many of my readers who have not perused, in some volume of travels, or of ethnological research, a touching narrative of the self-immolation of a Hindoo widow. I have a pile of books before me, from any one of which I might take a fitting illustration; but I do not know any better than the following, which is given in old Mr. Holwell's tracts. The incident here narrated occurred more than a century ago, "at the Company's factory in Cossimbazaar, in the time of Sir Francis Russell's chiefship." The author and several other gentlemen of the factory were present, and the details were written down at the time. "At five of the clock on the morning of the 4th of February, 1742-43," thus runs the story, "died Ram Chund Pundit, of the Mahratta tribe, aged twenty-eight years; his widow (for he had but one wife), aged between seventeen and eighteen, as soon as he expired, disdaining to wait the time allowed her for reflection, immediately declared to the Brahmins and witnesses present her resolution to burn. As the family was of no small consideration in Cossimbazaar, and her relations left no argument to dissuade her from it, Lady Russell, with the tenderest humanity, sent her several messages to the same purpose; the infant state of her children (two girls and a boy, the eldest not four years of age), and the terrors and pain of the death she sought, were painted to her in the strongest and most lively coloring. She was deaf to all. She gratefully thanked Lady Russell, and sent her word she had now nothing to live for, but recommended her children to her protection. When the torments of burning were urged *in terrorem* to her, she, with a resolved and calm countenance, put her finger into the fire, and held it



there a considerable time ; she then with one hand put fire in the palm of the other, sprinkled incense on it, and fumigated the Brahmins. The consideration of her children left destitute was again urged to her. She replied that 'He who made them would take care of them.' She was at last given to understand she should not be permitted to burn ; this for a short space seemed to give her deep affliction, but soon recollecting herself, she told them death was in her power, and that if she was not allowed to burn, according to the principles of her caste, she would starve herself. Her friends, finding her thus peremptory and resolved, were obliged at last to assent. The body of the deceased was carried down to the water's side early the following morning. The widow followed about ten o'clock, accompanied by three very principal Brahmins, her children, parents, and relations, and a numerous concourse of people. The order of leave for her burning did not arrive till after one o'clock, and it was then brought down by one of the Soubah's own officers, who had orders to see that she burnt voluntarily. The time they waited for the order was employed in praying with the Brahmins and washing in the Ganges. As soon as it arrived, she retired and stayed for the space of half an hour in the midst of her female relations, amongst whom was her mother. She then divested herself of her bracelets and other ornaments and tied them in a cloth, which hung like an apron before her, and was conducted by her female relations to one corner of the pile. On the pile was an arched arbor, formed of dry sticks, boughs, and leaves, open only at one end to admit her entrance. In this the body of the deceased was deposited, his head at the end opposite the opening. At the corner of the pile to which she had been conducted, the Brahmins had made a small fire, round which she and the three Brahmins sat for some minutes. One of them gave into



her hand a leaf of the bale-tree (the wood commonly consecrated to form part of the funeral pile), with sundry things on it, which she threw into the fire; one of the others gave her a second leaf, which she held over the flame, while he dropped three times some ghee on it, which melted and fell into the fire (these two operations were preparatory symbols of her approaching dissolution by fire); and whilst they were performing this, the third Brahmin read to her some portions of the *Aughtorrah Bhade*, and asked her some questions, to which she answered with a steady and serene countenance; but the noise was so great we could not understand what she said, although we were within a yard of her. These over, she was led with great solemnity three times round the pile, the Brahmins reading before her; when she came the third time to the small fire, she stopped, took her rings off her toes and fingers and put them to her other ornaments; here she took a solemn majestic leave of her children, parents, and relations; after which one of the Brahmins dipped a large wick of cotton in some ghee, and gave it ready lighted into her hand, and led her to the open side of the arbor. There all the Brahmins fell at her feet. After she had blessed them, they retired weeping. By two steps she ascended the pile and entered the arbor. On her entrance she made a profound reverence at the feet of the deceased, and advanced and seated herself by his head. She looked, in silent meditation, on his face for the space of a minute, then set fire to the arbor in three places. Observing that she had set fire to leeward, and that the flames blew from her; instantly seeing her error, she rose, set fire to windward, and resumed her station. Ensign Daniel, with his cane, separated the grass and leaves on the windward side, by which means we had a distinct view of her as she sat. With what dignity and undaunted a countenance she set fire to the pile the last time and



assumed her seat, can only be conceived, for words cannot convey a just idea of her. The pile being of combustible matters, the supporters of the roof were presently consumed and tumbled in upon her."

Simply and truthfully told, and with an authenticity of detail, abundantly corroborated by other narrators, this story may be taken as a fitting illustration of the unholy practice as it existed under the Mahomedan Governments, and for too many years under our own. But the account is less curious in itself than it is for the comments which accompany it—comments which exhibit the state of feeling among English gentlemen before the conquest of Bengal regarding a practice at once so dreadful and so absurd. "If we view," says Mr. Holwell, "these women in a just light, we shall think more candidly of them, and confess that they act upon heroic as well as upon rational and pious principles;" and then he proceeds to show how their "ideas are raised to a soothing degree of dignity befitting angelic beings." "Although these principles," he adds, "are in general so diametrically contrary to the prevailing spirit and genius of our fair countrywomen, who (from a happy train of education) in captivating amusements and dissipation find charms sufficient in this world to engage their wishes for a perpetual residence in it, yet we will depend upon their natural goodness of heart, generosity, and candor, that they will, in future, look on these, their Gentoo sisters of the creation, in a more favorable and consistent light than probably they have hitherto done; and not deem that action an infatuation which results from principle. Let them also recollect that their own history affords illustrious examples in both sexes of voluntary sacrifices by fire because they would not subscribe even to a different mode of professing the same faith." There was little hope for the suppression of Suttee, whilst the question was argued in this manner by the most intelli-



gent of the Company's servants. The practice, however, was not always so regarded as one based upon angelic principles to be respected by Christian men. Mr. Holwell himself admits that "there have been instances known when the victim has by Europeans been forcibly rescued from the pile. It is currently said and believed (how truly we will not aver) that the wife of Mr. Job Charnock was by him snatched from this sacrifice."

I have said that this practice of Suttee has never been anything more than an exceptional abomination. It never has been universal throughout India—never in any locality has it been general. "It never," says Elphinstone, "occurs to the south of the river Kishna; and under the Bombay presidency, including the former sovereignty of the Brahmin Peishwas, it amounts to thirty-two in a year. In the rest of the Deckan it is probably more rare."* Mr. Forbes, who lived during the greater part of his life in Western India, and mixed largely with the people, says that he never saw a Suttee. In Bengal and Hindostan Proper, it has been more common—I believe, that in no part of the country has the abomination flourished more than in the immediate neighbourhood of Calcutta.

Under the Mahomedan Governments the practice of Suttee seems at least to have been tolerated. Akbar, it is true, discountenanced it, and by something more effectual than empty words. His abhorrence of the cruel rite was expressed by an act of personal interference. On one occasion when other means had failed to save a doomed widow from the funeral pile, he rode out to the place of cremation and carried her off on his horse. But it does not seem that his successors exhibited any like noble in-

* Mr. Orme in one of the notes of his *Historical Fragments*, says:—"The Jesuits in Jarrie say that three hundred and seventy-five women burnt with the Naique of Tanjore, who died in 1602—

which we suppose to be the honest but enthusiastic credulity of missionaries lamenting the infernal state of the heathens they wished to convert."

stances of humanity. The Hindoos were compelled to obtain the permission of the Mahomedan officers before a widow proceeded to the sacrifice; but this permission was never withheld. It seems, indeed, to have been a source of profit to the local authorities. The Mussulman governors had their pickings before the Brahmins came in for their share. It seems, however, that some compunctions bubbled up in the midst of their cupidity, or that they made a pretence of endeavouring to dissuade the wretched creature from burning herself, for Tavernier says, "The governor, finding that no persuasion will alter the woman's resolution, but more especially perceiving by the signs which his secretary makes him that he has received the coin, in a surly manner gives the woman leave, bidding the devil take her and all her kindred."

And, practically, for a great many years, it must be admitted, this was our own mode of dealing with the evil. We let the women burn according to their pleasure—or according to the pleasure of their friends—or according to the pleasure of the priesthood. Indeed, we officially recognised the right of these poor people to destroy themselves by issuing regulations against the compulsory performance of the ceremony. A circular order of the Nizamut Adawlut* of Bengal set forth the particular circumstances under which the performance of Suttee would be illegal in the British provinces, and so recognised its general legality. The result, as might be expected, was that the abomination steadily increased.†

* April 10, 1810. Mr. Harrington, in a minute, dated Feb. 18, 1827, says that Mr. H. Colebrooke prepared this order—but Mr. Colebrooke denied the charge, alleging that he was at the Cape when the order was issued.

† The Bombay Government, however, claimed credit for having acted with greater wisdom in this matter. "There is a marked difference," wrote Mr. Warden, in a council minute, "in

the policy pursued by the two Governments for the purpose of checking Suttee. The supreme Government has promulgated circular orders, containing as well a recognition of the ceremony as a prohibition against its compulsory performance. The Bombay Government has, on the contrary (except in the instance of the form in which the pile was to be constructed, and in respect to which I now regret



It appears by the Bengal returns for 1819, that 650 cases of Suttee were reported, of which 421 were said to have occurred in the Calcutta division alone. The latter number was 43 in excess of the gross amount reported throughout all the Bengal provinces in 1815. The reported increase, it was alleged, might be partly attributable to the greater vigilance of our officers. It might not have been, it was said, so much that more cases had occurred as that more cases had been detected. But making all due allowance for the result of the more energetic inquiries that were instituted, I fear it must still be admitted that the circular orders which had been issued in 1810,* with the humane intention of diminishing the extent of the evil, in reality tended to increase it. Mr. Courtenay Smith, one of the ablest and best judges who ever sat on the Indian bench, officially declared that these orders had "spread and confirmed the execrable usage." It is true that many offenders had been tried and punished for abetting the illegal, or irregular performance of the rite, but it was of little use to strike at accidental symptoms—to prune the offshoots and excrescences, whilst we were laying manure to the very root of the evil itself.

That it was a very grievous and intolerable evil—that the abomination was one to be deplored and execrated by all Christian men, need hardly be asserted in this place; but the Company's servants although, with one consent, they deplored and execrated, were not all of

that we interfered at all), kept the recognitionary principle of the law entirely in the background and prominently brought forward and enforced its prohibitory provisions. . . . The effects have been equally remarkable. It has gradually declined in the old and new provinces dependent on Bombay, but seems stationary under Bengal." It appears to me, however, that in prescribing a regulation pattern of funeral pile, the Bombay Government recognised the legality of the practice in the

clearest and most unmistakeable manner. Would they not have legalised murder if they had issued an order decreeing that the people should thenceforth only kill each other with regulation swords?

* April 10, 1810. See also circular orders of 29th April, 1813, January, 1815, 25th of June and 11th September, 1817. The police were instructed to ascertain that the ceremony was performed in conformity with the rules of the Shastre.

one opinion regarding the duty or the expediency of authoritative interference with a custom hallowed at least by time. Many doubted and wavered—were timid and irresolute—unwilling to take the initiative and recommend the withdrawal of the constructive sanction which had been given to the ceremonial murder of Hindoo women. But the Court of Directors had for some time been brooding over this painful subject—"the killing," as they described it, "the killing (and that in the most horrid mode) of an individual at the desire of the party slain;" a great movement had taken place among them and clearly perceiving their duty, as a Christian Government, they did not hesitate to declare their righteous convictions, and to endeavour to secure their practical enforcement. "It is undeniable," they wrote, "that in tolerating the practice, under any regulations or restrictions whatsoever, you tolerate what you have virtually forbidden in those regulations, and afford the natives grounds for concluding that the practice of Suttee was to be excepted from their operation."

They then proceeded to state the ground on which they believed that the toleration of the practice might be withdrawn. They urged—1stly. That Suttee is not founded on or enjoined by any Hindoo law, and is only recommended, not enjoined, by the Shastres; and as to the law, it is, on the contrary, continually discouraged by their most eminent and venerated lawgiver, Menu, whose decree for the guidance of widows is thus translated by Sir W. Jones. "Let a widow emaciate her body by living voluntarily upon pine-flowers, roots, and fruits, and let her not when her lord is deceased even pronounce the name of another man. Let her continue until death forgetting all injuries, performing harsh duties, avoiding all sensual pleasure, and cheerfully practising the incomparable rules of virtue, which have been followed by such women as were devoted to one only husband," &c.



2ndly. That other barbarous customs and unknown Hindoo practices had been prohibited without dangerous consequences—without even exciting disaffection or murmur. 3rdly. That the British Government having ceased to recognise the impunity of Brahmins without any evil consequences, there could be no ground for supposing that the abolition of Suttee would have an ill effect. 4thly. That there is a great difference of opinion on the subject of Suttee among the Hindoos—that it is discountenanced among the upper and educated classes—that in some districts it is unknown, and in others of rare occurrence. 5thly. That the practice was not permitted by the Foreign States when they held power and territory in India.

And lastly, say the Court, “which we think in itself conclusive of the practicability of abolishing the practice, or, at least, of the safety with which it might be prohibited, that in many instances it has been actually and effectually prevented from taking place, without exciting even a murmur, by either direct interference on the part of the local authority, or by refusal of permission, or by a procedure similar to that which was adopted by the criminal judge of the Zillah of Masulipatam as we have recently noticed.”

This was written in 1824. Lord Amherst was then Governor-General of India. There were some very able men around him, and there were, too, some very able men on the Sudder bench. The question now to be submitted to them, and to all the leading civil and political officers in the three presidencies, was one of the deepest interest and the most pressing importance. Called upon to express freely their opinions, they enunciated their views upon all its religious and legal, its social and political bearings; and never, perhaps before or since, has any question of Indian policy been so thoroughly sifted and so minutely explored. I can only afford to

give a few illustrations of the varied opinions which were recorded in response to the inquiries then instituted by the supreme Government.

Foremost among those who recorded a strong opinion in favor of the withdrawal of all authoritative sanction of the cruel rite was Mr. Courtenay Smith, one of the judges of the Sudder. "There would be no discontent," he wrote,* "no disturbance—no general disturbance, certainly, anywhere; and if any local and partial disturbance occurred it might be put down as easily as any breach of the peace. Our native military, were it necessary to call them in, would assist as readily on this as on any other occasion. . . . I sincerely hope that this foul stain will be removed from the Company's Government before its final expiration, supposed to be near at hand. . . . So long as having the power we want the will, or having the power and the will, we want the energy to abolish it, it may be fairly doubted whether we are *de jure* rulers of the country."

Mr. Alexander Ross, another judge of the Sudder—a man of a benevolent and thoughtful nature, whose quiet manner and retiring habits were the outer teguments of moral courage and resolution of a very high order, thus wrote with reference to the report which had been called for from the Nizamut Adawlut—"In the report on Suttee now to be submitted to Government, I think the Court should again urge its total abolition. . . . My opinion is that an enactment prohibiting the sacrifice of Suttee would be regarded by the native army with nearly total indifference, as the civil enactments of the Government generally are."

Another judge of the Sudder, Mr. R. H. Rattray, when called upon for his opinion, boldly declared that he recommended the authoritative suppression of Suttee, and was prepared personally to give effect to his recom-

* Nov. 1, 1826.



mendation. "I would have," he wrote,* "a regulation prepared with a studied perspicuity, explaining in simple but forcible language the religious, the moral, and the legal grounds upon which this rite, abhorrent to God and man, could no longer be tolerated; and by this enactment I would abolish the sacrifice at once and for ever. I would not recommend for execution by others what I should shrink from or evade myself. If this danger be apprehended, and as an executive officer my personal services can aid this consummation so devoutly to be wished, I am as ready to support it as I am to urge the measure; but I maintain that nothing is necessary to its accomplishment but the expressed fiat of the ruling power."

But there were able and conscientious men in the Company's service at this time, who doubted the expediency of any comprehensive measure for the authoritative extinction of Suttee in the Company's domains. At the beginning of 1827, Mr. Butterworth Bayley, one of the most distinguished and experienced administrators in the country, drew up an elaborate minute, in which he recommended that experiments should be made in the first instance in the Non-Regulation Provinces. About the same time Mr. Harrington, who fully concurred in this suggestion, drew up a Regulation, declaring the inhuman practice of burning or burying alive the widows of deceased Hindoos, to be illegal and punishable by our criminal courts. He did not believe that the time had yet come when publicity could be given to such an order, but he submitted it for future consideration. About the same time Mr. C. B. Elliott, after expressing a very strong opinion regarding the iniquity and illegality of the custom, recommended that the experi-

* August 26, 1828.



ment of abolition should be made in the Ceded and Conquered Provinces, because the practice was comparatively rare in that part of the country, whilst it was rife in Bengal.

Upon a review of all the opinions that had been laid before him, Lord Amherst came to the mortifying conclusion that it would not be wise to authorise any direct interference with a hoary custom which the priesthood had an immediate interest in maintaining inviolate. It appeared to him that the wisest course would be to trust to the progress of education, and to leave Suttee to die a natural death. "I am not prepared," he wrote, in March, 1827, "to recommend an enactment prohibiting Suttees altogether. . . . I must frankly confess, though at the risk of being considered insensible to the enormity of the evil, that I am inclined to recommend our trusting to the progress now making in the diffusion of knowledge among the natives, for the gradual suppression of this detestable superstition. I cannot believe it possible that the burning or burying alive of widows will long survive the advancement which every year brings with it in useful and rational learning."

Nor did further consideration and further information induce him to modify this opinion. "The reports of our different officers," he wrote in the following year, "do not appear to me to point out any specific course short of absolute prohibition, by which this barbarous practice could be suddenly checked, or the number of victims very suddenly reduced. But I think there is reason to believe and expect that, except on the occurrence of some very general sickness, such as that which prevailed in the lower parts of Bengal in 1825, the progress of general instruction and the unostentatious exertions of our local officers



will produce the happy effect of a gradual diminution, and at no very distant period the final extinction of the barbarous rite of Suttee.”*

But the period of Lord Amherst's tenure of office was fast drawing to a close. Before the year in which this minute was written had expired, his successor was occupying the vice-regal chair. The high moral courage of Lord William Bentinck faced the abomination without shrinking. He knew that it was his duty, as a Christian statesman, to incur some risk with so great an object before him as the emancipation of the country from the cruel slavery which an interested priesthood had long riveted upon it. But he did not fling himself hastily and heedlessly into the good work. He advanced with energy, but with caution. He sought the opinions of all qualified to declare themselves with authority on the subject; and having weighed these opinions—many they were and most conflicting—he deliberately formed his own. One thing he knew, which greatly encouraged and sustained him. The Court of Directors had, some time before, spoken out in plain, unmistakeable language, clearly enunciating their views of this great question, and combating all the arguments that could be adduced against the abolition of the rite. The Governor-General, therefore, if he had not before leaving England received the instructions of the Court, or listened to their recommendations, knew that he would be supported by the home authorities if he struck a blow at the abomination. He did not needlessly protract his investigations, or hesitate when once he was in a position to decide. So before the year 1829 had worn to a close, an act was passed in the Council Chamber, prohibiting, under stringent penal enactments, the

* *Minute of Lord Amherst, April 10, 1828. Published Papers.*



practice of Suttee throughout the provinces subject to our rule. The importance of the measure induces me to give the Regulation entire :

A Regulation for declaring the practice of Suttee, or of burning or burying alive the widows of Hindoos, illegal, and punishable by the Criminal Courts. Passed by the Governor-General in Council on the 4th December, 1829.

The practice of Suttee, or of burning or burying alive the widows of Hindoos, is revolting to the feelings of human nature. It is nowhere enjoined by the religion of the Hindoos as an imperative duty; on the contrary, a life of piety and retirement on the part of the widow is more especially and preferably inculcated, and by a vast majority of people throughout India the practice is not kept up or observed. In some extensive districts it does not exist; in those in which it has been most frequent, it is notorious that in many instances acts of atrocity have been perpetrated which have been shocking to the Hindoos themselves, and in their eyes unlawful and wicked. The measures hitherto adopted to discourage and prevent such acts have failed of success, and the Governor-General in Council is deeply impressed with the conviction that the abuses in question cannot be effectually put an end to without abolishing the practice altogether. Actuated by these considerations, the Governor-General in Council—without intending to depart from one of the first and most important principles of the system of British government in India, that all classes of the people be secure in the observance of their religious usages, so long as that system can be adhered to without violation of the paramount dictates of justice and humanity—has deemed it right to establish the following rules, which are hereby enacted to be in force from the time of their promulgation throughout the territories immediately subject to the Presidency of Fort William.

I. The practice of Suttee, or of burning or burying alive the widows of Hindoos, is hereby declared illegal, and punishable by the Criminal Court.

II. First. All Zemindars, Talookdars, or other proprietors of land, whether Malguzaree or Lakheraj; all Sudder farmers and under-renters of land of every description; all dependent Talookdars: all Naibs, and other local agents; all native officers em-



played in the collection of the revenue and rents of lands on the part of the Government or the Courts of Wards; and all Munduls and other head men of villages, are hereby declared especially accountable for the immediate communication to the officers of the nearest police-station of any intended sacrifice of the nature described in the foregoing section, and any Zemindars, or other description of persons above noticed, to whom such responsibility is declared to attach, who may be convicted of wilfully neglecting or delaying to furnish the information above required, shall be liable to be fined by the magistrate in any sum not exceeding two hundred rupees, and in default of payment, to be confined for any period of imprisonment not exceeding six months.

Second. Immediately on receiving intelligence that the sacrifice declared illegal by this Regulation is likely to occur, the police Darogah shall either repair in person to the spot, or depute his Mohurrir or Jemadar, accompanied by one or more Burkundazes of the Hindoo religion; and it shall be the duty of the police-officers to announce to the persons assembled for the performance of the ceremony, that it is illegal, and to endeavour to prevail on them to disperse, explaining to them that in the event of their persisting in it, they will involve themselves in a crime, and become subject to punishment by the criminal courts. Should the parties assembled proceed, in defiance of these remonstrances, to carry the ceremony into effect, it shall be the duty of the police-officers to use all lawful means in their power to prevent the sacrifice taking place, and to apprehend the principal persons aiding and abetting in the performance of it; and in the event of the peace-officers being unable to apprehend them, they shall endeavour to ascertain their names and places of abode, and shall immediately communicate the whole of the particulars to the magistrate, or the joint magistrates, for his orders.

III. Should intelligence of a sacrifice, declared illegal by this Regulation, not reach the police-officers until after it shall have actually taken place, or should the sacrifice have been carried into effect before their arrival at the spot, they will nevertheless institute a full inquiry into the circumstances of the case, in like manner as on all other occasions of unnatural death, and report them for the information and orders of the magistrate to whom they may be subordinate.

IV. First. On the receipt of the reports required to be made



by the police Darogahs, under the provision of the foregoing section, the magistrate, or joint magistrates, of the jurisdiction in which the sacrifice may have taken place, shall inquire into the circumstances of the case, and shall adopt the necessary measures for bringing the parties concerned in promoting it to trial before the Court of Circuit.

Second. It is hereby declared, that after the promulgation of this regulation, all persons convicted of aiding and abetting in the sacrifice of a Hindoo widow, by burning or burying her alive, whether the sacrifice be voluntary on her part or not, shall be deemed guilty of culpable homicide, and shall be liable to punishment by fine or by imprisonment, or by both fine and imprisonment, at the discretion of the Court of Circuit, according to the nature and circumstances of the case, and the degree of guilt established against the offender; nor shall it be held to be any plea of justification that he or she was desired by the party sacrificed to assist in putting her to death.

Third. Persons committed to take their trial before the Court of Circuit for the offence above mentioned, shall be admitted to bail, or not, at the discretion of the magistrate, subject to the general rules in force in regard to the admission of bail.

V. It is further deemed necessary to declare, that nothing contained in this Regulation shall be construed to preclude the Court of Nizamut Adawlut from passing sentence of death on persons convicted of using violence or compulsion, or of having assisted in burning or burying alive a Hindoo widow, while laboring under a state of intoxication or stupefaction, or other cause impeding the exercise of her free will, when, from the aggravated nature of the offence proved against the prisoner, the Court may see no circumstances to render him or her a proper object of mercy.

The event justified the expectations of those who believed that no danger would result from the publication of this prohibitory enactment. It was a great experiment, and a successful one. Its success was fraught with a great lesson. The prime want of human governments is a want of faith. A bold policy is generally a successful one. It is always successful



when the boldness is the result of a strong determination to do what is right, and to leave secondary considerations to themselves. We have been continually conjuring up bugbears in the distance only to discover, upon a nearer approach, that they are the merest conceptions of the brain. If we could only believe the great truth, that a righteous policy is sure, in the end, to be a successful one, how much groundless alarm and unnecessary anxiety we should be spared in all our dealings with our fellows.

In our own provinces the work was now complete. The promulgation of the Act gave the death-blow to Suttee throughout the Company's dominions. But it still was a living reality in other parts of India, and had many homes in the Native States. The British Government knew well the existence of the evil under the rule of the native princes, but at first they rather desired its suppression than sought to suppress it by any direct exercise of their influence or authority. In these Native States we have always a staff of British political or diplomatic officers. In the internal administration of the country, they are expressly prohibited from interfering; but the influence of these representatives of the paramount power at the native Courts, though it may differ according to the personal character of the functionary himself, is in all cases very considerable. It is the influence partly of superior intelligence, partly of the weight of authority derived from the accident of his position. Without any direct interference, any open attempt to dictate or to control, he may, by friendly intercourse with the native officials, and a gentle insinuation of serviceable truths, quietly instil sound opinions, and bring about great reforms. To what extent this influence was exercised, during the few first years after the suppression of Suttee in the British

provinces, to induce our native allies to follow our example, I do not pretend to know. I believe, however, that little was done until about the year 1840, when a great movement seems to have been made in Western India and the Guicowar, and several princes of less note, prompted by our British officers, issued proclamations to their subjects prohibitory of Suttee.

But of all the efforts made in the Native States, that made in Rajpootana is the most noticeable, both on account of the obstacles to success, and the energy and adroitness with which they were overcome. In that part of India nothing of the kind had ever been attempted before. Colonel Sutherland, Political Agent in Rajpootana, one of the most distinguished Oriental diplomatists, a man of equal courage and humanity, had never conceived the idea of interfering with an ancient custom held in such high esteem by these sensitive people. It was supposed to be "against the principles of Government" to interfere with such things.

But there was one of his assistants, at that time in charge of our relations with the Jyepore state, who had long been brooding over the great iniquity, and thinking whether something could not be done at least to mitigate the evil. Major Ludlow had achieved great success in an effort to induce the states to co-operate in a measure tending to check the crime of female infanticide; and it occurred to him that, perhaps, his influence might be exerted with the same result to check the kindred abomination of Suttee. But he was obliged to tread warily in such a work—warily but very firmly. First of all, he won over the Finance Minister to his cause—and, through the Finance Minister he contrived to enlist the sympathies and stir the convictions of the High Priest. The arguments of the British officer told upon the sacerdotal mind, and in less than



six months he put forth a document, publicly declaring that the right of Suttee had no warrant in the Hindoo Scriptures.* Such a manifesto as this was not without its due effect on the minds of the Jyepore chiefs. The Council of Regency began to waver. Some of the small tributary states actually abjured the rite; then the Jyepore Government, on the 23rd of April, 1846, publicly declared the act illegal; and before the end of the year eleven out of the eighteen Rajpoot states had publicly renounced the rite. Other states subsequently gave in their adhesion. The most important recent adhesion is that of the Rajah of Joudhpore. Of the same clan (Rhatore) are the chiefs of Bekaneer and Kishengurh, who may be expected very soon to follow the example of Joudhpore.

* There is a very interesting record of Colonel Ludlow's measures in Rajpootana, in a recent article in the *Quarterly Review*, which has doubtless rendered them familiar to the public. I give the account of Ludlow's first step: "As an essential condition to success, and on pain of having his operations summarily suspended, Major Ludlow was compelled to work unseen. He determined, if possible, to induce two or three trustworthy and influential natives to undertake the cause; to ply them with the critical objection drawn from the older Scriptures; and by declaring his own resolution to remain neutral till public opinion had declared itself, to excite in them the ambition of taking the lead. He found a person admirably adapted to his purpose in the Financial Minister of the Court at which he was accredited. Seth Manick Chund belonged to a sect whose distaste for destruction in all its forms is singular even in the East. The Oswal tribe do not wilfully slay the meanest animal. . . . One result of this tenderness for life in every form is, that they disapprove of Suttee. To the Financial Minister, therefore, and to his own head Moonshee, Major Ludlow communicated all the arguments he thought likely to be of use; and thus charged, they betook themselves to the High Priest of Jyepore. . . . Warily,

and as if on their own account, they pressed this important dignity with the omission of all mention of Suttee in the Code of Menu; with the inferential prohibition of the rite in the denunciations contained in that work against suicide; and with its promise to widows living chastely of eternal felicity with their husbands—whereas even the writings which countenanced the sacrifice, limited the duration of its recompense to the comparative bagatelle of forty-five millions of years. . . . Major Ludlow wound up these arguments by a shrewd appeal to national pride. Suttee (urged his emissaries), unwarranted by Menu, was the evident invention of some degenerate race, whose women were worthless, and whose widows, if they survived, would bring reproach on the memory of their lords. To such it might be left. The honor of Rajpoot husbands was in safer keeping, and the fair fame of their daughters was aspersed by the mere retention of so disgraceful a security. The High Priest received these representations with surprising candor. In less than six months he was induced to put forth a document, in which he adopted all the theological arguments, and declared authoritatively that the self-immolation of widows was less meritorious than their practising 'the living Suttee of chastity and devotion.'



With the exception of Oodepore, the Rajpoot states, which are not yet ranged among the abolitionists, are, as regards position and influence, comparatively unimportant.

In distant parts of India, the good example was largely followed ; and before the end of 1847, the Governor-General, Lord Hardinge, announced that " Suttee, Infanticide, and Slavery, are prohibited throughout the territory* forming the remotest Hindoo principality of India."†

* Cashmere. A proclamation was issued by Golab Singh, declaring that Suttee, Slavery, and Infanticide, were " hateful to God and man," and setting forth that if any persons were convicted of these crimes, the whole of their property should be confiscated, and they themselves imprisoned. Lord Hardinge published in the *Gazette* an abstract translation of this proclamation, and recited at the same time the names of other native chiefs who had pursued the same righteous line of policy. The members of the Bombay Government considered whether it would be expedient also to publish the names of the principal chiefs under that presidency who had suppressed the atrocities mentioned ; but Sir George Clerk declared his opinion that they did not like to be gazetted.

† In a note at the commencement of the chapter I said that I should refer

again to the alleged sanction given by the Rig Veda to the practice of Suttee. I had collected some authorities, from the writings of Colebrooke, Rammohun Roy, &c., but the attention of Professor Wilson has recently been drawn to the subject, and he has examined the doubtful texts. At all events, in a lecture delivered in January to the Asiatic Society, he thus settled the question, and I am quite satisfied with the settlement:—" It was scarcely to be expected that any warrant should be found for the burning of widows, as that practice is not enjoined by the lawgiver Menu, a later authority. One passage in the Rig, cited as authority, has been verified, but with a very unexpected result ; for the only passage relating to widowhood inculcates the very reverse of self-immolation. In fact, it seems almost certain that they did not burn but bury their dead."



CHAPTER V.

Infanticide—Varieties of the Crime—Love of Offspring among the Hindoos—
—Rajpoot Honor—Its Excesses—Causes of the prevalence of the Evil—Our
First Remedial Efforts—Jonathan Duncan—Colonel Walker—Failure of our
First Endeavours—Disparity of the Sexes—Renewed Attempts—Mr. Wil-
loughby—Major Ludlow—Increased Success—Present State of Infanticide in
India.

IN this Christian country it is to be feared that the dark crime of infanticide is painfully increasing amongst us. This much at least has been said of late by wise judges on the bench, and by earnest writers in the public journals; and the records of our criminal courts unhappily show that this is no imaginary complaint.* It is a grave fact, wretchedly significant of the state of morals amongst us. Still it is only a crime—incidental, exceptional. In some parts of India it has been, for many generations, a *custom*.

It is curious to contrast the causes of the crime in the two countries. A sagacious Rajpoot arguing the question with us, might, perhaps, point triumphantly to the circumstances which engender the crime in England, in justification of the custom which obtains among his own people. It is, he might say, in anticipation and prevention of those very circumstances that the dreadful practice has been instituted. But to demonstrate the fact is not to prove the justification.

* Mr. Raikes, in his very interesting volume of "Notes on the North-Western Provinces of India," says: "Infanticide is a world-wide crime. Except the land

of our own Saxon forefathers, we can scarce name a country unstained by the blood of its infant children." Would to God that we were free from the stain!



In England infant life is secretly destroyed by unmarried females. In an agony of shame and terror a poor girl who has become a mother, but is not a wife, strangles or suffocates her illegitimate babe. In all probability she has been betrayed and deserted, and there is a male offender, of whom the law takes no cognizance, more guilty than the actual murderess. Still, it is the unchastity of the female that is the proximate cause of the crime. The Rajpoot assumes that unchastity is the necessary condition of unmarried life. And to preserve the purity of his daughters, and the honor of his family, he murders his female children a few hours after their birth.

Marriage, in both cases, is the remedy; but the difficulties in the way of its application are diametrically the reverse. In England, marriage is honorable; but celibacy is not disgraceful. In India, celibacy *is* disgraceful. An unmarried daughter is a reproach to her parents, and a reproach to herself.* Indeed, more or less, the birth of a daughter is always a calamity. It is a disappointment in the first instance, because to beget sons is glorious in the estimation of a Hindoo, and there cannot be too many born into his house. And it is a care to him afterwards, because marriage is a necessity, and the circle of suitability is narrowed by the exclusiveness of caste. The higher the social degree of the family, the greater the difficulty. In England infanticide is peculiar to the lower orders; in India it is peculiar to the higher. In England it is the activity of degradation; in India the activity of pride. In England male and female infants are murdered with equal recklessness. In India the destroying hand is laid only on the latter. But in both cases, it is the non-attainment

* "So great a disgrace," says Ward, in his account of the Hindoos, "is incurred by remaining unmarried, that on one occasion a number of old maids

were married to an aged Koolin Brahmin, as his friends were carrying him to the river to die."



of honorable marriage in *esse*, or in *posse*, which impels to the commission of the crime.

In a country where polygamy is common, and concubinage not dishonorable—where an unconnected man, indeed, is rarely to be found—it might seem that women would be too much in demand to warrant, at any stage of existence, the destruction of female life. And, in truth, the customs of the country are such that any widely-diffused system of female infanticide must be wholly incompatible with them. Their co-existence would be a physical impossibility. The number of child-murders, committed in the worst of times, has never been sufficiently great to have any general effect upon the population. But confined as it has been to certain localities, and to certain tribes, the sacrifice of life, viewed in connexion with those limits, has been something terrible to contemplate. It has amounted, indeed, to an almost total annihilation of female life in a large number of high-caste families.

The infanticide of which I am now writing is, the systematic female infanticide of Central and Western India. Child-murder among the Hindoos has assumed other forms, but the evil has been less extensive, and more easily repressible when it has been the growth of religious superstition, and has taken a more overt and violent shape. In the latter case, it has been an open sacrifice, with the intent of propitiating one of the bloody deities of the Hindoo mythology. In Southern and Eastern Bengal, children of both sexes have been offered up by their parents sacrifices to Gunga. Here, however, the object that is sought to be attained by the commission of the atrocity, is the very opposite of that which the Rajpoot of Malwah, Jusselmere, or Goojrat sets before him when he commits, or decrees the commission of the crime. In Bengal and Orissa these sacrifices have been consummated in fulfilment of a vow, and are



thank-offerings in return for a favorable response to the prayers for offspring with which childless women have wearied their gods, when the curse of barrenness has seemed to press heavily upon them. Slaves to a dreadful superstition, they vow to offer up their firstborn to Gunga if the deity will answer their prayers. In the fulness of time the vow is consummated. The child, doomed from the hour of its birth, is suffered to live long enough to root itself deeply in the affections of its parents, and then, on a given day, is deliberately thrust into the cruel stream.* These, however, are exceptional cases—accidental crimes. The law can reach them, and has reached them; and it may be said that they are now almost blotted out from the catalogue of Pagan atrocities. The love of offspring—the desire to surround themselves with children—has driven these wretched people to offer up these dreadful sacrifices to their false gods. But among the Rajpoots of Central and Western India, it is the desire to lessen the number of their children that impels them to destroy the infant life of their female offspring. There is nothing of a religious sacrifice about it. It is simply a matter of convenience. In very many parts of the world infanticide is a common thing—a rite, a custom. But I believe that in no part of the world is there anything nearly resembling the female infanticide of which I am now writing.

In all parts of India the desire for offspring is very strong. A childless woman is a miserable woman—a

* "The people in some parts of India, particularly the inhabitants of Orissa, and of the eastern parts of Bengal, frequently offer their children to the Goddess Gunga. The following reason is assigned for the practice: When a woman has been long married, and has no children, it is common for the man, or his wife, or both of them, to make a vow to the Goddess Gunga, that if she will bestow the blessing of children upon them, they will devote their firstborn to her. If after this vow they have

children, the eldest is nourished till a proper age, which may be three, four, or nine years, according to circumstances, when, on a particular day, appointed for bathing in a holy part of the river, they take the child with them and offer it to this goddess; the child is encouraged to go further and further into the water till it is carried away by the stream, or is pushed off by its inhuman parents."—[*Ward on the Hindoos.*]



hissing, a reproach. She believes that a curse is upon her. She is despised by herself, and scorned by her husband. She thinks—and if she gives birth to children who are taken away from her by death, the same thought comes upon her—that she is thus afflicted for some grievous sin committed in a pre-existent state. The parental instinct is as strong among these people as among any in the world. And even where the parental instinct is not, the tenderness with which strong bearded men devote themselves to the care of young children, is as touching as it is remarkable. It is not indifference, therefore, to infant life, out of which this horrid practice emanates. It is simply the existence among these “chivalrous” Rajpoots of a strong delusion, which some call honor, some pride of birth, and others grossness of ignorance, deadness of conscience—barbarism—devilry—what you will.

It is hard to designate the feeling aright. I shall not attempt to provide the fitting nomenclature. It would be better to illustrate than to define. A score of examples of the strange working of Rajpoot honor readily suggest themselves; but I know not one more striking than the following, which Mr. Forbes, an old Bombay civilian, has set down in his “Oriental Memoirs:”—“About four years before my appointment to Baroche,” he writes, of the last quarter of the eighteenth century, “some Mahomedans, walking through a village where a family of Rajpoots resided, approached their house, and accidentally looked into a room where an elderly woman was eating. They intended no insult; they saw her at her meal, and immediately retired. But this accident occasioned a disgrace on the Rajpoot lady for which, on her part, there could be no expiation. She at that time lived with her grandson, a fine young man, who was absent when the Mahomedans committed their trespass;

on his return home she related the circumstance, and her determination not to survive it. She therefore entreated him earnestly to put her to death—a step which she had only deferred that she might fall by his hand. The youth's affection and good sense induced him to remonstrate with his venerable parent, whom he endeavoured to dissuade from her purpose, by alleging that none but her own family knew of the disgrace, the very men who were the innocent cause of it being unconscious of the offence. Persevering, however, in her resolution, but unable to persuade either her grandson or any other person to perform the sacrifice, she calmly waited until he next went from home, and then beat her head against the wall with dreadful violence. On his return he found his venerable parent in this agonising and shocking state. She again entreated he would finish the sacrifice, and release her from misery; he then stabbed her to the heart.*

This is Rajpoot honor—Rajpoot chivalry. It may be called by ennobling names, but, in reality, it is nothing but the densest barbarism. It is easy to understand, and even to admire, the feeling which impels the Tartar warrior, at the approach of a victorious enemy, to slaughter his wives and children. All nations, more or less, comprehend the great aphorism, "Death is better than dishonor." We know what is that dishonor which follows the assault and capture of a hostile town. But the dishonor incurred by an old woman seen by a

* *Forbes' Oriental Memoirs*, vol. i., p. 490.—The sequel of this story is worth telling, if only as a proof that in those days such atrocities were not sheltered, under any plea of religion or custom, from the just vengeance of the law. "By the English laws," says Mr. Forbes, "he was secured as a murderer, sent to Bombay for trial, and confined in the common prison until the ensuing sessions. The grand jury found a bill for murder; the petty jury, composed half of Europeans and half of natives, found him guilty; and the judges condemned him to death. The Rajpoots in general have a noble mien and dignified character; their high caste is stamped on their countenance; this young man possessed them all. I saw him receive his sentence, not only with composure, but with a mingled look of disdain and delight not easy to de-



passing stranger, in the act of eating her dinner, is not very readily appreciable. The only thing that is very clear about the matter, is that, if a woman is so easily dishonored, it were better that she should eat her dinner in a place where curious travellers cannot see her.

But such being the turgid sense of honor which inflates these chivalrous Rajpoots, it is not strange that the disgrace of unmarried daughters—a disgrace of which all Hindoos are more or less sensible—should be keenly appreciated by them. An overweening idea of the necessities of caste and the suitability of matrimonial alliances renders marriage a matter of difficult achievement. A husband is to be found for the Rajpootnee damsel among the members of her own caste. On no account must she ally herself with one of inferior rank. Within this narrow circle she must find a husband, or the family is disgraced. Nor does the difficulty end with the attainment of the husband. Among the Hindoos there is always a wretched waste of money, varying, of course, according to the rank of the parties, on occasion of marriage ceremonies. Among the people of whom I am speaking, it is a point of honor that these festivals should be celebrated at a cost which must press heavily upon the financial resources of men with whom poverty and pride are too often yoke-fellows. It is not

scribe. Unconscious of the crime laid to his charge, he said that he had nothing to accuse himself of except disobedience to his parent, by permitting humanity and filial affection to supersede his duty and the honor of his caste; that life was no longer desirable; nor, if acquitted by the English laws, would he survive the ignominy of having been confined with European culprits and prisoners of the lowest castes, with whom he had been compelled to eat and associate in a com-

mon prison—acts so contrary to everything which he esteemed right and honorable, that the sooner he was transferred to another state of existence the better. However inclined the Government might be to clemency, it would evidently have been fruitless; the noble Rajpoot would not survive the disgrace, and the sentence of the law was executed, in the hope that it might prevent others from following his example."



convenient, therefore, that daughters should grow up in the house. They must be *sarf-kard*, or cleared away.

Such are the causes of female infanticide as it exists in certain parts of Hindostan. There is no religious warrant for it. The Hindoo Shastres are sufficiently clear on the subject of the enormity of child-murder. Indeed, it is almost the one exceptional case of a barbarous custom, that has not the sanction expressed or implied, by precept or example, of the monstrous faith which these people profess. There are, doubtless, some obscure fables, some dim traditions, among them, in which it is pretended that the origin of the enormity is to be found; but even these do not impute to it a divine origin. No god commanded the horrid rite, or set the example of its perpetration. The patron saint of female infanticide is at best no better than "a powerful Rajah."*

It was not likely that on such an iniquity as this the English in India would look with passive unconcern. It was an evil very palpable to the understandings of men, but the proper remedy was not equally apparent. It was, indeed, something very difficult to deal with—an abomination propped up and sustained by feelings deeply implanted in men's hearts, and not to be eradicated without such rendings and revulsions of the whole social and domestic system as might be fraught with the most dangerous results. Still the effort was to be

* Colonel Walker says: "The Jharigahs relate that a powerful Rajah of their caste, who had a daughter of singular beauty and accomplishments, desired his Raj-goor, or family priest, to affiance her to a prince of rank and descent equal to her own. The Raj-goor travelled over many countries without discovering a chief possessed of the requisite qualities. In this dilemma the Rajah consulted the Raj-goor, and he advised him to avoid the disgrace which would attend the prin-

cess's remaining unmarried, by having recourse to the desperate expedient of putting his daughter to death. The Rajah was long averse to this expedient. The Raj-goor at length removed his scruples by consenting to load himself with the guilt, and to become in his own person responsible for all the consequence of the sin. Accordingly the princess was put to death, and female infanticide was from that time practised by the Jharigahs."



made—made, wheresoever British influence extended, not merely in districts under our immediate administration, but in parts of the country where the native princes held dominion; and we could only exercise indirect control over the acts of the people through the agency of the British Residents at the foreign Durbars. And it is to the honor of the Company and their officers, that, in spite of all discouragements and denials, all difficulties and all obstacles, they have now for half a century been engaged in this good work, and have achieved an amount of success which, if not full and entire, is at least meet reward and glorious compensation for all the painful labor it has cost.

In the van of those active and benevolent British officers, who have endeavoured to suppress this inhuman practice, stands Jonathan Duncan, many years Resident of Benares, and afterwards Governor of Bombay. He was a simple-minded man, of enlarged benevolence, who, wheresoever his lot was cast in the East, made for himself a place in the affections of the people by whom he was surrounded. Mackintosh said of him that he had been *Brahmanised* by long residence in India; but the word, coined for the purpose by the accomplished Recorder of Bombay, conveys but a half-truth. Inasmuch as that Duncan knew the people of India well, conversed with them as freely as though they had been his own countrymen, and from long intercourse with them, had contracted some Oriental rust, which, in the eyes of one fresh from the literary coteries of the English capital, was something new and strange, he had been *Brahmanised*. But the word unfitly describes the character of one who regarded the people around him, from the highest to the lowest, with deep paternal interest, and whose enlarged toleration and extended sympathies partook not at all of the cruel exclusiveness of the priestly aristocracy of Hindostan. He had been Indianised in-

deed, but not Brahmanised. He had no toleration of things, which Brahmanism not only tolerates, but encourages; and he set himself against the iniquities which were done in the name of the religion, and sanctioned by the priesthood of the country. And foremost among these iniquities was the female infanticide of Central and Western India. He had first been made acquainted with the existence of the evil in the neighbourhood of Juanpore,* about the year 1789; and had subsequently, on his removal to Western India, clearly traced the extension of the cruel system to the provinces of Cutch and Kattywar. "I am well assured," he wrote, with respect to the former, "and it is, indeed, here generally believed (and being so, it is my duty not to keep such enormities, however sanctioned by usage, from the knowledge of Government), that it is no unfrequent practice among the tribe of Rajkoomar to destroy their daughters, by causing the mothers to refuse them nurture; whence this race of men do often, from necessity, marry into other Rajpoot families. The greatest exception to this melancholy truth that I can find is, that men—and these the more wealthy Rajkoomars—will sometimes spare and bring up their female issue, especially when they happen to have none of the male line. This horrid custom is said to exist also among some other tribes, more especially in the Vizier's dominions, and it is thought to be founded in the extravagant desire of independency enter-

* Sir John Shore, in 1794, speaks of this in a communication to the Asiatic Society:—"That the practice of infanticide," he says, "should ever be so general as to become a custom with any sect or race of people, requires the most unexceptionable evidence to gain belief; and I am sorry to say that the general practice, as far as regards female infants, is fully substantiated with respect to a particular tribe on the frontiers of Juanpur, a district of the province of Benares, adjoining to the country of Oude. A race of Hindoos called Rajkoomars reside here; and it was dis-

covered in 1789 only that the custom of putting to death their female offspring had long subsisted, and did actually then very generally prevail among them. The Resident at Benares (Mr. Duncan, afterwards Governor of Bombay), in a circuit which he made through the country where the Rajkoomars dwell, had an opportunity of authenticating the existence of the custom from their own confessions; he conversed with several; all unequivocally admitted it, though all did not fully admit its atrocity."



tained by this race of men, joined, perhaps, to the supposed necessity of procuring a suitable settlement in marriage for those devoted females were they allowed to grow up, and the disgrace which would ensue from any omission in that respect. Nor is this species of atrocity of recent institution ; for a similar prejudice, as existing among the Indians, was known by the ancient Greeks and Romans, as is found in the relations they have left of this quarter of the world.”*

This was written in October, 1789, and is remarkable as containing the first official notice of the subject of female infanticide in India. In less than three months from the day on which Jonathan Duncan announced his discovery of the horrid custom, he wrote to Lord Cornwallis that he had taken measures for its suppression. “I have prevailed on those situated within our frontier,” he wrote, “to agree to renounce in future this horrid practice, to which effect they have entered into the engagement which will be found translated in the accompanying extract of my proceedings.” The words of the covenant are worth quoting:—“Whereas,” proceeds this curious document, “it hath become known to the Government of the Honorable East India Company, that we of the tribe of *Rajkumar* do not suffer our female children to live ; and whereas, this is a great crime, as mentioned in the *Brehma Bywant Purana*, where it is said that killing even a foetus is as criminal as killing a Brahman ; and that for killing a female or woman, the punishment is to suffer in the *Naraka*, or Hell called *Kat Shutala*, for as many years as there are hairs on the female’s body, and that afterwards such person shall be born again, and successively become a leper and afflicted with the *jakhima* ; and whereas, the British Government in India, whose subjects we are, hold in detestation such mur-

* Jonathan Duncan to Lord Cornwallis, October 2, 1789. *Moore’s Hindoo Infanticide.*

derous practices, and we do ourselves acknowledge that although customary among us, they are highly sinful; we do therefore hereby agree not to commit any longer such detestable acts, and any among us who shall (which God forbid!) be hereafter guilty thereof, or who shall not bring up and get our daughters married to the best of our abilities among those of our own caste, shall be expelled from our tribe, and shall neither eat nor keep society with us, besides suffering hereafter the punishments denounced in the above Purana and Shashtra. We have therefore entered into this engagement.—(*Dated 17th December, 1789.*)”

For many years it was believed that this engagement had been observed, and that the Rajkoomars had ceased to murder their female infants. But excellent as was the intention of the covenant, and undeniable as were the truths set forth in its preamble, this great measure had everything in the world to recommend it but practical success.

Meanwhile, happy in the belief of the beneficent issue of his ameliorative efforts in Central India, Jonathan Duncan, now appointed Governor of Bombay, was endeavouring, in like manner, to suppress the barbarous custom as he found it to exist among the Jareejah Rajpoots of Cutch and Kattywar. He was fortunate in the agency he employed. In Major Walker he found an officer combined in whom were the purest philanthropic zeal, sound intelligence, and unfailing perseverance. The difficulties to be encountered were many and formidable. The natives around him declared that the custom would never be suppressed until the Company should take possession of the country in their own name. But, in spite of these discouragements, Walker entered on the great undertaking with sanguine expectations of success. “I conceived,” he said, “that reason and feeling would effect the relinquishment of a barbarous custom uncon-



nected with the principles of society, and which all the passions of the human mind, and all the forms and maxims of religion were combined to destroy. As it was evident, also, that the most disinterested humanity had led the Honorable Company to interfere for the abolition of female infanticide, I conceived that this reflection, and the respect due to their mediation, would have disposed the Jareejahs to comply with a request which it was scarcely to be supposed could be at variance with their own sentiments." All this, however, was a mere amiable delusion, and Major Walker was compelled presently to acknowledge that "sentiments of nature and humanity have no influence with the Jareejahs," and reluctantly to abandon his favorable expectations of success.

Undaunted, however, by the discovery that nothing was to be hoped for from the good feelings of the Jareejahs, Walker began now to turn his thoughts towards a new course of action. It was a distasteful—a sickening game that he was called upon to play. The amount of selfishness and bigotry—of falsehood and avarice—of cowardice and chicanery—that he had to encounter, can hardly be over-estimated. But the English officer looked it all steadily in the face. He made this great matter of Female Infanticide the subject of continual discussion, oral and written, with the Jareejah chiefs. He believed that it would be no small thing to familiarise their minds with the idea that the practice of female infanticide, so long unquestioned, was something at least of questionable propriety—something which other nations, and especially that great nation from which springs the paramount power in India, regarded with horror and detestation. And, at all events, from this constant obtrusion of the subject there came this amount of good—that the chiefs seeing how extreme was the eagerness of the British Government to carry this point of the abolition



of Female Infanticide, bethought themselves of turning our solicitude to profitable account, and trading upon our humanity. These chivalrous Rajpoots seemed not unwilling to yield, for a consideration, at least an outward assent to the proposals of the British officer. And it seems to have been mainly in expectation of some advantage to themselves that at last they consented, in a cowardly reluctant manner, each endeavouring to push the other forward, to become parties to an engagement similar to that which Mr. Duncan had extracted from the Rajkoomars in the neighbourhood of Juanpore. They *did* sign the covenant at last; and Major Walker saw many good reasons for believing that they would fulfil the promises they had made. And so it came to be considered that, both in Central and in Western India, Infanticide had been suppressed by Duncan and Walker; and learned writers in Encyclopædias, and in brave independent quartos of their own, set forth the gratifying announcement without a doubt of its truth.

But though Duncan and Walker deserved success, it was not in their power to command it. They were the pioneers of humanity and civilisation in that direction, and bravely they labored with axe and hatchet to clear away the dense jungle of barbarism that lay before them; but they did not apply the fire to the root, and the noxious wilderness soon sprung up again above the delusive clearings they had made. For a while it was believed that the horrid custom had been suppressed, alike in the East and the West; little or nothing was heard of the abomination, and no new efforts were made to suppress it. But about the year 1816 it was officially announced that the Rajkoomars were murdering their children after the old fashion. Mr. Shakespear, then acting as Superintendent of Police, reported that though the Regulations of 1795 and 1804 "contain provisions for the prevention and punishment of the inhuman prac-



tice prevalent among the tribe of Rajkoomars of causing the female infants to be strangled to death, there is reason to believe that this practice still obtains among them to nearly the same extent as formerly, though a greater degree of caution is preserved to prevent detection ;” and the Governor-General in Council expressed his regret that “the measures adopted by Mr. Duncan whilst Resident at Benares, and the provisions of the Regulations, had failed to prevent the inhuman practice.” The same lamentable tidings came also from Western India. Major Carnac, Resident at Baroda, officially reported to the Bombay Government that “the abolition of the inhuman practice in Cutch had not been accomplished.” And in the following year Captain Ballantine reported, with reference to the Rajpoots of Goozrat, that “the object of our interference for the suppression of this singular custom has too generally failed to select any individual party for the just vengeance of Government and offended nature.” To make the extent of the evil, as then existing, more apparent, this energetic officer drew up a statistical report, containing a register of all the Jareejah families known in Kattywar, with “the age and number of their female offspring saved, or now living, since the introduction of the Infanticide arrangement by Colonel Walker in 1808 ;” and from this census it appeared that during the space of ten years only sixty-three female Jareejah children had been preserved in the whole of Kattywar ; that in none of the large *talooks*, or estates, of the Jareejah chiefs, was there more than one female child to be found, and in some not even one, though containing four hundred families.* Such, in spite of the laudable efforts of Duncan and Walker, was the result of our first humane efforts to suppress this dreadful abomination.

But this mortifying discovery moved the Company's

* Parliamentary Papers, quoted in the *Calcutta Review*, whose admirable summary I have mainly followed.



Government and the Company's servants to order, and to prosecute new efforts for the suppression of the great crime. The Court of Directors wrote out to the Bombay Government, "enjoining them in the most serious and earnest manner to be unremitting in their endeavours to accomplish this humane object in the countries where British influence can be felt and exerted." But it was not very clear, even to the most humane and energetic servants of the Company, how these unremitting endeavours were to be prosecuted, so as to accomplish the great object. The difficulty, indeed, was very great, and, seemingly, insurmountable. Some of the most large-minded men, believing that we could make an impression on the evil only by the adoption of measures so objectionable that it might be questioned whether the remedy were not worse than the disease, seemed, in spite of the strong instincts of humanity which urged them forward, almost inclined to counsel an adherence for the future to the old measures of moral discouragement, which had proved so abortive in the past. The great standing difficulty was this. The general prevalence of the crime was acknowledged. Its results were sufficiently apparent in the fact, that the number of female children to be found among the Jareejahs was only *one-sixth* of the number of males. But it was difficult—indeed, impossible—to bring to light specific acts of infanticide without such an intrusion into the domestic privacy of high-caste Rajpoot families as would be regarded with horror, and resented with indignation. This systematic child-murder, indeed, was altogether an affair of the Zenana. The mother was herself the executioner. She rubbed the nipples of her breasts with opium, and the babe sucked in poison with its first milk.* Every-

* A significant hint from the fathers, not conveyed in words, generally sealed the fate of the child. "Simtook Ram, minister of Amjherra," writes Sir John Malcolm in his *Central India*,

"told me he was sitting with Predum Singh, the present Thakoor, when he heard the birth of a female child whispered in his ear. He saw him preparing between his fingers the



thing was done so secretly behind the *purdah*—even the very birth of the child was so little noised abroad, that the disappearance of whole families of female children, one after another, in individual succession, could not be clearly traced. Public notoriety pointed vaguely to the general fact. But the lips of all who were competent to speak to individual offences were closed. No man willingly bore witness against his neighbour. How, then, were we to penetrate the obscurity, and break down the exclusiveness of domestic life—an exclusiveness so jealously guarded, so religiously maintained, that it almost seemed as though dishonor would enter the female apartments with the sunbeams or the west wind? It was proposed that hired informers should be employed; but the proposal did not find favor in the eyes of authority. Mount-Stuart Elphinstone—a statesman of equal wisdom and humanity—set his face steadfastly against it. “No effectual check,” he wrote, “can be imposed on this atrocious practice, so long as it is so completely congenial to the general feelings of the people, unless by employing hired agents, as proposed by Major Ballantine, whose duty it should be to detect offenders of this description; and such a measure would lead to so much intrusion into the most private and domestic proceedings of the superior castes (among whom alone infanticide prevails), and would be open to so many abuses on the part of the informers, that I do not think the chance of success would compensate for the disaffection which it would create. It may also be doubted how far we have a right to interfere to such an extraordinary pitch with the private life of a people, with whose civil government and internal policy we do not pretend to have any concern. We must therefore be content to follow the foot-

fatal pill of opium (the usual signal), little girl (added Simtook Ram), now but he implored that the child might eight years of age, is always called my live: his request was granted, and this daughter.”

steps of our predecessors (without attempting to go beyond them) in their most meritorious endeavours to discountenance this enormity; and we may safely flatter ourselves, that as the manners of the people become softened by a continuance of tranquillity and good order, they will gradually discontinue a practice which is not more inconsistent with reason than repugnant to natural instinct."

This was written in 1821. There was, seemingly, nothing very hopeful in it. The *laissez-faire* system was to be tried again. Moral discouragements were to be left to work out their slow results. "In speaking to those natives," writes Sir John Malcolm, with reference to the Rajpoots of Central India, "who enjoyed superior rank and station under the authority or control of the British Government, I have always expressed my horror at self-immolation (Suttee), and my hope that through their influence in society, and their desire not to outrage the feelings of their European superiors, it would in time be abolished. But with regard to infanticide I have ever, when it was mentioned, stated my abhorrence of the murders that were committed under the plea of this usage, and refused to see those who practiced it. Such sentiments," he added, "were never known to give offence." In Western India the same discouragements were at work; and they were not wholly without success. Many good and able European officers, among whom may be especially named Colonel Miles, Major Barnewell, and Mr. Blaine; and, subsequently, in the regions of Cutch, Henry Pottinger and Alexander Burnes exerted themselves to put down the abomination by such gentle, moral force as they conceived themselves justified in applying, and the result was not wholly a blank. It is officially reported, that whilst the number of female children belonging to the murderous tribes in Kattywar, preserved from destruction in 1808, only



amounted to 32, it had risen, in 1817, to 63; and in 1824, to 266. In Cutch, the numbers had increased from 93, in 1823, to 143 in 1826; and, a few years later, Captain Burnes reported that the number had risen to 211. This last calculation was made from a census of more than a hundred villages, in which it was ascertained that there were, at the same time, 1167 male children; the girls being thus shown, in proportion to the boys, to be little more than as one to six. These returns, however, must be received with some caution. It is difficult to obtain a correct census of the people in these Rajpoot villages; and the returns, therefore, must be regarded rather as approximations, than as accurately ascertained results.

In the interval, however, of which I am now writing, between the years 1820 and 1830, there is one successful episode in the history of this great war against infanticide, which is worthy of especial recital. Among the rude people of Mairwarra, Colonel Hall had exerted himself to some purpose; for in a report dated July 31st, 1827, he reported "the complete and voluntary abolition of the two revolting customs—female infanticide and the sale of women." "Both crimes," he wrote, "were closely connected, having had their origin in the heavy expense attending marriage contracts. The sums were payable by the male side, were unalterable, equal for the rich and the poor, without any abatement whatever in favor of the latter. What first established the payment is unknown; but it was so sacred and inviolable, and even a partial deviation so disgraceful, that the most necessitous of the tribe would not incur the imputation. . . . Hence arose Infanticide. The sums payable were beyond the means of so many, that daughters necessarily remained on hand after maturity, entailed immortal disgrace, and thus imposed a necessity for all female progeny becoming victims to their family honor. On the establishment of



British rule, both evils gradually diminished. Female Infanticide was at once prohibited, and though many, no doubt, still fell secret sacrifices from the great facility of undetected destruction, yet the danger, aided by improved feeling, increased the survivors so considerably, as to force upon the Mairs a due sense of the root of the evil, and a general wish for its removal by a reduction of the regulated sum of contract; but they were averse—indeed, declared their inability—to alter their long-established sacred custom themselves, and earnestly entreated that it might be done by an order of authority, binding all to obedience by heavy penalties. This was promised in a general way in case of necessity; but as there were many points to be settled, and it was advisable to ascertain the general feeling with accuracy, as well as to avoid interference, if possible, a general *punchayat* was strongly urged either to decide the matter, or, at all events, aid in the framing of appropriate regulations. After the lapse of a few months allowed for consideration, the whole was settled in public *punchayat*, and its resolutions were confirmed without the slightest alteration; so that the proceeding originated with, and has been carried through by, the inhabitants themselves; nor has there been a single petition against it, either pending or subsequent to adjustment. They have lowered the sum payable on marriage contracts, abolished all right of subsequent sale, and fixed a year's imprisonment, or 200 rupees fine, with exclusion from caste, as the punishment for deviation.”* The result seems to have justified the sanguine expectations of Colonel Hall. Writing more than twenty years afterwards, his successor, Colonel Dixon, says: “Thus Infanticide received its death-blow through the diminution of the expenses attending on marriage, which was now brought within the reach of all sections of society. For many years

* *Report of Colonel Hall, July, 1827, quoted in Dixon's Mairwarra.*



past no female children have been put to death. The practice has fallen altogether into desuetude. Indeed, so greatly have the ideas of the people changed on this and other usages since the introduction of our rule, that the commission of such an act would now be viewed as a most heinous crime.”*

Thus the first unequivocal success resulted from the establishment of sumptuary regulations. But it was easier to deal with these rugged Mairs, just rescued from a state of extreme barbarism, than with the “chivalrous” Rajpoots of Central and Western India. It is not improbable that if the British, or any other Government, had undertaken to portion the Jharijah girls, the dreadful custom would have been annihilated. The plan was, indeed, proposed, and negatived by the higher authorities. And the extreme alternative of putting down the abomination by force was rejected upon the ground that the Rajpoots of Western India were not our subjects, but our allies, and that such a mode of procedure would be inconsistent with the terms of our treaties. In 1831 Sir John Malcolm, then Governor of Bombay, went down to Booj and addressed the assembled Jharijah chiefs on the enormity of the crime so prevalent among them. He told them that so strong in England was the feeling against such abominations, that the nation would call upon the East India Company to sever their connexion with a people so polluted. The chiefs, seemingly abashed, falsely denied their participation in the prevailing guilt—and promises and pledges were not wanting. Indeed, the “chivalrous” Rajpoots were at no time chary of their promises and pledges—and now, as our English officers became more and more energetic in their efforts to put down the abomination, these promises and pledges became more and more plentiful.

In Central India, promises were as readily made and

* *Dixon's Mairwarra.*



as readily broken as in the West. Many earnest-minded men were exerting themselves, about this time, in Rajpootana, to push forward the good work. Distinguished among these was Mr. Wilkinson, whose name is ever to be held in remembrance by those who would record the good deeds of the Company's servants. He was a man of the kindest and the most catholic sympathies, of large intelligence, and unwearying perseverance. He lived and toiled for the people, and he died, at his post, amongst them, warmly loved and deeply deplored. All that earnest desire and energetic action could do to wean the Rajpoots of Central India from the accursed practice of Infanticide, was now done by this full-hearted civilian. He assembled the chiefs; he addressed them; he reasoned with them; he expostulated with them; and at last he persuaded them to adopt certain resolutions, by an adherence to which it seemed probable that the iniquity might be suppressed. And many of the petty sovereigns of Rajpootana not only undertook to prohibit the practice, but issued proclamations declaring it illegal. Other officers in Central India, as Colonel Sutherland, Captain Richards, Captain Ludlow, and others, had been exerting themselves in the same good cause, and there were many encouraging promises and seemingly genuine renunciations to reward their labors.

The Rana of Oudipore, the chief of the independent sovereigns of Rajpootana, was forward to set the example—a potential one—of prohibition; and in January, 1834, Lord William Bentinck wrote to express the “pure and unmixed satisfaction” which he felt, and to utter words of further encouragement; but all these promises and renunciations were mere unmeaning words. The princes and chiefs had not been convinced, or they feared to reduce their convictions to practice. At all events, Wilkinson, who had labored so long and so diligently, and whose heart was so thoroughly in his work, was



forced back upon the mortifying conclusion that no real impression had been made upon the minds of the magnates of the land. Only two months after he had explained to the chief people the enormity of the crime of infanticide and received their assurances of renunciation, he ascertained that two of their number had since put their daughters to death. The promised proclamations might have been issued; but no pains were taken to circulate them. He found, in the course of his circuits, that some of the States had not even heard of the prohibitory edict; and, under the government of that very Rana of Oudipore whom Lord William Bentinck had so commended, some of the people told Mr. Wilkinson that it was true they had heard it whispered "that female infanticide had been prohibited some time before along with the killing of peacocks."

All this was very discouraging—but still Mr. Wilkinson did not despair of the effect of moral influence. He secured the services of some learned Brahmins to write pamphlets condemnatory of the crime, which he circulated among the people. He bethought himself, too, of the effect upon their minds of pictorial representations; but all this was of no avail. "It has been my object," he wrote, "to excite such a genuine and general feeling of execration as should lead to a voluntary abandonment of the practice. Still, when we reflect on the inveteracy of habit, and the extreme tardiness with which new ideas are spread in the world, it would be idle to hope that the abandonment of the practice will be effected by the measures already taken."

In the mean while a great experiment was being initiated in Western India. In 1831, Mr. J. P. Willoughby, of the Bombay Civil Service, was appointed Political Agent in Kattywar. He soon began to give his thoughts to the painful subject of Female Infanticide, and collected all the information he could acquire



regarding the dreadful practice and all that had been done towards its suppression. Reviewing the labors of his predecessors, and deriving wisdom from the past, he sent in an elaborate report to Government, in which he took a comprehensive view of the results of our bygone efforts, and then sketched out a plan of future proceedings.

The measures suggested by Mr. Willoughby were these. *First*, that steps should be taken to obtain a complete census of the Jharijah population, as without it no data could exist for computing the number of female infants who were born, and thence deducing an approximation to the number actually destroyed. *Second*, that every Jharijah chief should be called upon to furnish a half-yearly register of all the marriages, betrothals, births, and deaths occurring among his tribe residing in his district; and that, if he failed in this obligation, or furnished a false return, he should be severely punished.* *Third*, that the Political Agent should furnish an annual report on the subject of Infanticide, together with a register of all marriages, betrothals, births, and deaths that have occurred among the tribe within the year reported on. *Fourth*, that a proclamation should be issued by the British Government throughout Kattywar, requiring the Jharijah chiefs to enforce the observance of their Infanticide engagements, and noticing in terms of approbation or condemnation their adherence to or departure from these engagements, and guaranteeing to all able or willing to supply information relating to the commission of the crime, a reward in proportion to the rank of the

* Mr. Willoughby, in the admirable Report which contains these suggestions, shows that this important matter had not escaped the attention of the Court of Directors. "This is no new suggestion," he says, "on my part, for in the correspondence on my records I find allusion made to instructions issued many years ago by the Honorable Court of Directors, that in addition to such intermediate reports as might become necessary, one general statement should be submitted at the end of each year, showing how far the amended system had been acted on and observed, what deviations are known or suspected to have been made from its rules, and what measures pursued for their enforcement, with an estimate of the number of lives saved."



party convicted, and the protection of the British Government. *Fifth*, that every Rajpoot in Kattywar should be enjoined to make it an express stipulation in every marriage contract on giving his daughter to a Jharajah chief that the issue of the union should be preserved. *Sixth*, that presents of cloth, money, &c., should be made, out of the *Infanticide Fund*, to the chiefs and inferior members of the Jharajah tribes who preserved their female children.*

These measures, approved and sanctioned by the higher authorities, were pushed forward with promptitude and energy. The vigilance of the British officers was not without its results. In the course of eighteen months, it was reported that seventy-three female infants were preserved by the Jharajah tribes; of these, forty, it was said, would have perished but for our humane intervention. Still, in spite of all our efforts, there remained the lamentable fact, that at least one-half of the female infants born were murdered by their remorseless parents. It was, however, no small thing to convict certain offenders of specific acts of infanticide; and charges were now brought and fully established against the chief of Rajkote. "The barbarous insensibility evinced by him on the occasion, proved him to have little claim to forgiveness." He was fined 12,000 rupees, to be paid to the Infanticide Fund; and his estate was attached as security for its payment. This conviction produced the most salutary effect throughout Kattywar, and was soon followed by other cases. Another petty chief, convicted on the clearest evidence of

* "The Infanticide Fund was established in 1825. It is composed of all fines, under 20,000 rupees, imposed upon the tributaries for breaches of the peace or other misconduct, and of realisation under the head of Mohsullee. The British Government set the example. His Highness the Guicowar, being subsequently induced to consent that all fines imposed upon his tributaries should be similarly appropriated.

From this source occasional remissions of tribute, presents to the chiefs, and pecuniary assistance on the marriage of their daughters, have been granted to those who have practically renounced the custom; and another mode of testifying approbation to those who have preserved their daughters, is by postponing the payment of the tribute to suit their convenience." — [Mr. Willoughby's Report.]



the same offence, was sentenced to suffer twelve months' imprisonment, and to pay a fine of 3000 rupees. These were followed by other cases of detection and punishment. But though the evil sensibly diminished under these influences, it was not entirely suppressed. Here and there a case was brought struggling into light, but scores of cases of cruel child-murder, behind the sanctity of the purdah, escaped detection and exposure.

Perhaps, it would have been unreasonable to expect in such a case anything more than progressive improvement. It was, indeed, the hardest task that we had ever set ourselves—the hardest we have ever set ourselves since. I believe that in this country, where we all of us live comparatively out of doors — *coram populo*—an extensive system of Female Infanticide might be carried on without detection. I believe that married women in England might murder their sucklings by hundreds without suspicion. A little seemingly accidental neglect—a little want of active care at particular periods, will snap the thread of infant life, and give no sign of premeditated crime. But the nursery of the Hindoo woman, even of the poorest, is surrounded by social screens and fences which, however flimsy may be their material structure, are morally so impassable, so impenetrable, that the vigilance and activity of authority is utterly baffled and repelled by them. It was this that rendered the task so difficult—that rendered success, even under the best and most encouraging circumstances, so vague and uncertain. With such formidable obstructions before us it was a great thing to make any progress. It was a great thing that the Bombay Government should be enabled to write: "The complete suspension of the crime, originating in ignorance, prejudice, and false pride, must doubtless be the work of time; yet, looking back to the past, and seeing how much had been accomplished within the last few years, they were encouraged strongly to hope that a