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THE BLACK HOLE

At Calcutta.

The following affecting account of the cruelties exercised by an Indian Nabob on the gentlemen of the English factory at Calcutta, in 1756, is extracted from the second volume of the history of the Military transactions of the British nation in Indostan, by *Mr. Orme*, historiographer to the East India company, just published, which may be affected to a spirit of retaliation exerted by the creditors of the English practised on the nations of the East.

At five in the afternoon, the Nabob entered the fort, accompanied by his general, Meer Jaffier, and most of the officers of his army. He immediately ordered Omichund and Kisendass to be brought before him, and received them with civility; and having bid some officers go and take possession of the company's treasure, he proceeded to the principal apartment of the factory, where he sat in state, and received the compliments of his court and attendants, in magnificent apparel, and his prowess and good fortune. Soon after, he sent for Mr. Holwell, to whom he expressed much resentment at the presumption of the English in daring to defend the fort, and much dissatisfaction at the smallness of the sum found in the treasury, which did not exceed 50,000 rupees. Mr. Holwell had two other conferences with him on this subject before the fatal clock, when the Nabob dismissed him with repeated assurances, on the word of a soldier, that he should suffer no harm.

Mr. Holwell, returned to his unfortunate companions, found them assembled and surrounded by a strong guard. Several buildings on the north and south side of the fort were already in flames, and approached with so thick a smoke on either hand, that the prisoners imagined their enemies had caused this conflagration, in order to suffocate them between two fires. On each side of the eastern gate of the fort extended a range of chambers, adjoining to the curtain; and before the chambers a veranda, or open gallery; it was of arched masonry, and only served to shelter the soldiers from the sun and rain; but being low, almost totally obstructed the chambers behind from the light: and whilst some of the guards were looking at other parts of the factory for proper places to confine the prisoners during the night, the rest ordered them to assemble in ranks under the veranda, on the right hand of the gate way; when they remained for some time with so fatal suspicion of their impending fate, that they laughed among themselves with confidence, when they should be ordered to die. About eight o'clock those who had been sent to examine the rooms, reported that they found none fit for the purpose. On which the principal officer commanded the prisoners to go into one of the rooms which stood behind them along the veranda. It was the common dungeon of the garrison, who used to call it the black hole. Many of the prisoners, knowing the place, began to expostulate upon which the officer ordered his men to cut down them that hesitated; on which the prisoners obeyed. But before all was within, the room was so thronged, that the last entered with difficulty. The guard immediately shut and locked the door, confining 146 persons in a room not 18 feet square, with only two small windows, and these obstructed by the veranda.

It was the hottest season of the year, and the night uncommonly sultry, even at this climate. The excessive pressure of their bodies against one another, and the intolerable heat which prevailed as soon as the door was shut, convinced the prisoners that it was impossible to live through the night in this horrible confinement; and violent attempts were immediately made to force the door, but without effect for it opened inward; on which many began to give scolds to rage.

Mr. Holwell, who had placed himself at one of the windows, exhorted them to remain composed both in body and mind—the only means of surviving the night; and his remonstrances produced a short interval of quiet; during which, he applied to an old Jemaudar, who bore some marks of humanity in his countenance, promising to give him a thousand rupees in the morning, if he would separate the prisoners in two rooms chambers. The old man went to try; but, returning in a few minutes, said it was impossible; when Mr. Holwell offered him a larger sum—on which he ordered once more, and returned with the fatal sentence that no relief could be expected, because the Nabob was asleep, and no one dared to wake him.

In the mean time, every minute had increased their sufferings. The first effect of their confinement was a profuse and continued sweat, which soon produced intolerable thirst, succeeded by excruciating pains in the breast, with difficulty of breathing, little short of suffocation. Various means were tried to have more room and air—every one stripped off his clothes—every but one pair of pantaloons—Various methods affording no relief, it was proposed that they should all sit down on their hams at the lame time, and, after remaining a little while in that posture, rise together. This fatal expedient was thrice repeated before they had been confined an hour; and every time several, unable to bear slumbers up against them, fell, and were trampled to death by their companions. Attempts were again made to force the door, which, failing as before, redoubled their rages—but the thirst increasing, nothing but water! water! became from the general cry. The good Jemaudar immediately ordered some skins of water to be brought to the windows; but instead of relief it but brought fresh rage and fury of destruction, for the sight of the water threw every one into such excessive agitations and ravings; that unable to retrift this object, multitudes of them could wait to be regularly served—but each, with the utmost frenzity, fell bad against those who were likely to get it before him; and in the confusion many were either pressed to death by the efforts of others, or suffocated by their own.

This scene, instead of producing compassion in the guards without, only excited their mirth; and they kept bringing water, he bore, in order to have the diabolical satisfaction of seeing the deplorable condition of the sufferers within; who fancied it impossible to be even water while it was thus furiously disputed, at length desired those who were nearest to the windows, to convey it in their hats to those behind them. It proved no relief to these parts, or other sufferings; for the thirst increased every moment with the encreasing depravity of the air in the dungeon, which had been so often relieved, and was contrasted with the hot and deleterious effluvia of putrifying bodies, of which the touch was little less than mortal.

Before midnight all who were alive, and could not reach the air at the grate of the windows, were either in a lethargic disposition, or raging with delirium. Every kind of invective and abuse was uttered, in hopes of provoking the guard to put an end to their sufferings. Many died in lethargy, and whilst some were blasphuming their Creator with the frantic excessives of torment in delirium, heaven was insensible to others with wild and incoherent prayers; until the weather, exhausted by these agitations, at length lay down quietly, and expired on the bodies of their dead or groaning friends.

Those who still survived in the inner part of the dungeon, thinking that the water afforded no relief, made a last effort to obtain air, by endeavouring to force the outer side, which was the floor between them and the windows; where the small strength of every one was empty. For two hours, either in maintaining its own ground, or in endeavouring to get that of which others were in possession. All regards of compassion and affection were lost, and no one would regale or give way for the relief of another; although sometimes gave way to the cries of quiet; but the full motion of one renewed the struggle through all, after which ever and anon some one fell to rise no more. At two o'clock no more than about fifty remained alive—but even this number were too many to partake of the saving air, the scanty of which, and life continued until the morning employed, began to break—and, with the hope of relief, gave the few survivors the view of the dead.

The survivors then at the windows, finding that their entreaties could not prevail on the guard to open the door, to acquaint Mr. Coote, the Secretary of the council, that Mr. Holwell if alive, might have more influence to obtain their relief; and two of the company undertaking the fatrefy, discovered him, having still some signs of life—but when they brought him towards the window, every one refused to quit the place, excepting captain Mills, who, with rare generosity offered to resign his; on which the rest likewise agreed to make room. He had scarcely begun to recover his senses, before an officer sent by the Nabob came to the door of the English chief factory and called for Mr. Holwell; on which the rest with an order to open the prison. The dead were to be thronged, and the survivors lifted to the strength necessary, that they were employed for near half an hour in removing the bodies which lay against the door, before they could clear a passage to go out one at a time; when, out of 146 who went in, no more than 23 came out alive, the ghastliest forms that ever were seen. The Nabob's troops beheld them, and the hawck of death from which they had fled, with the greatest horror, but did not prevent them removing to addiance, who were employed from the intolerable stench, to clear the dungeon, whilst others dun a pitch to the outside of the fort, into which all the dead bodies were promiscuously thrown.

Ledgerman.

LONDON, October 8.

Ceremony of swearing the new Sheriffs.

The lord mayor, several Aldermen, the two Sheriffs, and the late Sheriffs, with the city officers went in state to Westminster hall in the court of Common Pleas, with courts of affidavit of the Clothworkers and Stationers companies, in their state barges up the Thames, and landed at Wedminster. About three, his lordship and the whole procession from the Exchequer chamber where they were received by Baron Maseres.—The lord mayor being paramount of the fore, stood covered. The recorder then addressed the gentlemen in place of the late Sheriffs, and then proceeded to expatiate on the high characters of the present gentlemen. The Baron shortly replied, that his majesty could not have any objections to the choice of the faithful citizens of London.

John Perring, esq. Clothworker, and Thomas Cadell, esq. Stationer, were then sworn into office. Thomas Perring, esq. the head under Sheriff was also sworn. Warrants of attorney were recorded, and then came the merthful part of this ceremonious solemnity, which, although it may have been propagated; the truth being that the Sheriffs have not the most distant share in the business.

Usher of the Court. "Senior Alderman below the chair stand forth, and perform fitt and service for a certain manor and tenement, called the manor, in Com. Chester"—Alderman Newman accordingly quitted the table, and in the Usher's presence bind him with a bill-hook himself holding a bundle, by the two ends, of white rod with both hands; after which the alderman cut the bundle with the hook.

Remembrancer. "How many are here?"

Usher. "Twelve."—A. "A very good number."

Then a hatchet was delivered to the Alderman, and another bundle of flick was cut in like manner; but the Alderman missed his aim and cut one of his fingers.

Usher (again) "Senior Alderman come forth, and perform *fitt and service* for a certain tenement, called the *Forge* with one fide Temple-bar, in Com. Middlesex,—A long wit, fixed upon the table, and the Usher affisted the Aldermen in counting out six large horse nails.

Remembrancer.—"How many are there?"

Usher.—Six shoes and fifty-four nails!"

A.—"A very good number;" and accordingly they were registered."

The ceremony being ended, the lord mayor asked the baron to honor them with his company to dinner at Clothworker's Hall, which was politely declined.

FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE.

BELFAST, October 10.

On Sunday, relief was administered to eight hundred and ninety seven poor people at the public kitchen in Smithfield, when this useful institution was closed for the present. Since the commencement of this charity on the 20th of December, 1799, to 5th of October 1800, the sum of 15471. 1s. 10d. 1-2 has been expended.

The weekly pound loaf this day is increased 14 ounces, the assize being four pounds one quarter; it will in all probability exceed five pounds next week.

Application has, we hear, been made to government, for permission to resume the malting of beer and barley, in consequence of the happy fall in every denomination of corn.

We are enabled to state the following as a fact, which has powerfully tended to lower the price of flour in our market.

The fashionable supply of 2s. 2d. per stone which the industrious and necessitous are favored with, through the unceasing bounty and benevolence of marquis Cornwallis to substantially relieves the poor working claffes of this metropolis, and which we are warranted to publish, averages with Dublin, the ordinary consumption of flour, as appears by the weekly returns as follows;

The city of Dublin usually consumed 3400 bags of flour per week, and the present consumption of the rice above mentioned, is returned to be about 2500 bags a week—in consequence of this cheap supply there has been a drawback to that amount to bring down the price of flour, which flour moreover at market must have felt a more material depreciation from the demand that it being left, and the monopolist finding it necessary in his own defence to fell, as the counteraction of forestalling, must oblige him to argue that the abundant produce of the harvest will soon cause a proportionate price sufficient to make his stock in hand a mean of loss, instead of all gotten gains to him.

BELFAST, October 17.

Copy of a letter from a House of the first respectability in the Corn Trade, Liling dated 12th September, to their correspondents in Alnwick.

"We have felt no experienced such favorable harvest weather, as we have seldom seen in this country; and, notwithstanding the backwardness of the crops of grain in latter, every thing is now in safety in this quarter. Wheat cannot be expected to be abundant crop in this country, but we have reason to expect the quality for the most part will prove much better and heavier than for several years past; and accounts from Austrian Poland, Galicia, are equally favourable for quality as of quantity.—Barley and oats are every where in their province, abundant, and of such good quality in general as to afford very flattering hopes of the gitting relatains on their exportation hedge removed very soon. Peafe are also much more abundant and of better quality than was expected. With regard to the low impeda en wheat will fit incum to about 100 per lith, we have reason to conclude, it will be entirely taken off or greatly modified in the course of the winter from foreign."