

BENARES ORDEAL BY FIRE.

Hindus Walk Unharmed Over a Bed of Live Coals Before Mrs. Besant.

A controversy having arisen in some of the papers about the recent performance of the Fire Ceremony at Benares, India, an account of what actually took place, by an English on looker may be of interest. It was during the recent convention of the Theosophical society that, a good many of us who are interested in the life of India below the surface being present, some Hindu friends arranged with a certain sect of Shivaite Hindus, who claim the power of rendering fire harmless, to give an exhibition of their powers. Accordingly a trench was dug in the grounds of the Tagore Villa about 15 feet long by 4, and this was filled with logs of wood, which were left to blaze all day. In the evening the trench was filled by a thick layer of glowing coals giving off a tremendous heat. At 7 p. m. we repaired to the scene of action. Our party consisted of Mrs. Besant, Countess Wachtmeister, Dr. Richardson, late professor of chemistry at University college, Bristol; Dr. Pascal, a French doctor of medicine; Mr. Bertram Keightley, barrister-at-law; Miss Lillian Edger, M. A.; Col. Olcott and others. Chairs were arranged for us on a kind of dais formed of the earth thrown out of the trench and about eight feet from it. This was the nearest point to the big fire at which one could bear the scorching heat. At our back, and surrounding the trench, was a dense but orderly crowd of hundreds of Hindus. All waited with eager expectation. At last a hubbub approaching from the gates of the villa announced the arrival of the procession.

It consisted of a chief priest, who presided, carrying a sword, two others who were going to pass through the flames, and an image in a glass canopy borne along by others. The leader intimated that his two colleagues would pass through the fiery furnace, and afterward anybody who liked of the male persuasion might follow them through unharmed, but no women were permitted to go through. Then ensued a most extraordinary and, in some respects, painful spectacle. It is a doctrine of Hinduism that all the functions of nature, fire, rain, etc., are presided over by nature spirits. This particular sect of Hindus claims to have preserved the secret of being able to control the fire spirits so that for the time they are unable to burn. Whatever may be the explanation, these are the facts.

Certain mystic ceremonies having been performed, and coconuts having been tossed into the flames, the two junior priests apparently became possessed. With frantic shrieks and cries, they passed twice round the blazing trench, preceded by the chief priest with his sword and followed by the brilliantly illuminated canopy. Then, still in a frenzy painful to behold, they plunged up to their ankles in the scorching furnace and passed backward and forward several times, the red-hot coals and sparks scattering about their feet. The crowd followed in their wake first one or two individuals, until the others, gaining confidence and caught by enthusiasm, rushed through in hundreds, even little children of 4 and 5 years old running up and down the trench over the burning coals exactly as if it had been a soft carpet. All were unharmed. Among those who ventured was a brother of one of our party. This gentleman, whose name I am prepared to give privately, walked through the trench twice very slowly, and described the sensation afterwards as having been like walking over hot sand.

A skeptic among us having profounded the theory that the feet of natives were covered by an integument so dense that it was proof even against live coals, Dr. Pascal carefully examined the feet of this witness immediately after his performance, and found the skin of the soles was of the normal thickness of European feet and that they were untouched by the fire. I saw one man deliberately pause in the middle of the trench to pick up a handful of the flaming embers, which he then carried through to the side. A linen turban which fell from some one's head lay on the coals without igniting, as did the coconuts. The priest's remained on the scene for about twenty minutes, during which time the two apparently possessed men were held by others. After they left the crowd was advised to cease experimenting with the fire, and no more passed over. At this stage Dr. Richardson and myself left our seats and attempted to approach to the brink of the fiery gulf, but the heat was so great that we had to turn back.

The Oldest Postal System.

We find the first recorded postal system in the Persian empire, under Cyrus the Elder, but it is clear that Rome, of all the ancient States, possessed the best organized system of transmitting letters through its numerous provinces. All the great Roman roads houses were erected at a distance of five or six miles from each other. At each of these stations forty horses were constantly kept, and by the help of the relays it was easy to travel one hundred miles in a day

These services were intended for the State only, it being imperative to secure the rapid interchange of official communications. In the time of Julius Caesar the system was so well organized that of two letters the great soldier wrote from Britain to Cicero at Rome the one reached its destination in twenty-six and the other in twenty-eight days. Private citizens had to trust to the services of slaves, and it is not till the end of the third century that we hear of the establishment of a postal service for private persons by the emperor Diocletian, but how long this system remained history does not say.

LIFE IN THE BOX.

It Was a Box of Dodd's Kidney Pills.

And They Cured Mr. J. H. Ireland of Kidney Disease—He Could Stand his Sufferings no Longer—Then he Resorted to Dodd's Kidney Pills.

HALIFAX, N. S., Jan. 30.—Mr. J. H. Ireland, the well known and popular "Commercial traveller" was reported dead. His friends, and the newspapers said he had died far from home. And all who had known him mourned sincerely for him, for he was a man who had many true friends. But Mr. Ireland wasn't dead. Not by a good deal. And the newspapers were wrong. He had been ill—very ill. He had suffered for years with Kidney Disease, and had not been successful in finding either a doctor or a medicine that could cure him. He became very ill, on one of his long trips away from home. Another man, with an exactly similar name, died and was buried.

But the traveller from Halifax was getting better. He continued to do so, till he was entirely well again, with not the suspicion of a shadow of Kidney Disease in his system. One day he amazed one of his friends by walking into his office and asking: "How are you Jim?" Jim gasped, "I thought you were dead!" "But you see I'm not!" "Yes, I see. But the papers said you were. How did you get better?" "Dodd's Kidney Pills made me better, put me on my feet, made a new man of me. I tell you, my friend, if you ever have any Kidney Disease, let it be Bright's Disease, Rheumatism, Diabetes, Dropsy, Lumbago, or any other Kidney Complaint—use Dodd's Kidney Pills. They'll cure you." Anyone who doubts the truth of this story should write to Mr. Ireland who will corroborate it fully. Anyone who needs Dodd's Kidney Pills can get them at all drugstores, for fifty cents a box, six boxes \$2.50, or by sending price to The Dodd's Medicine Co., Limited, Toronto, Ont.

Lost Opportunities.

"Talking of lost opportunities for riches," remarked the retired capitalist, "I count two against myself, which I will regret until my dying day. One came a number of years ago when a man wanted to buy a small lot of ground from me and offered for it one thousand shares of the Bell Telephone Company, which he valued at one dollar a share. I refused the bid. The stock has since sold at seven hundred and fifty dollars a share. The other lost opportunity was even worse. An old friend, who had been a school companion in my youth, came to me and implored me to help him out with an option he had on a silver mine in Colorado. He had rated eight thousand dollars, and he needed that much more to prevent the expiration of the

option in about a week. I had been bitten in a number of gold and silver mining speculations, and I refused to put up the desired eight thousand dollars. My friend found a man on Market street who had more nerve than I and took up the option with the sixteen thousand dollars. Since that time those two men have cleared seven million dollars on that mine, three million five hundred thousand dollars apiece. The lightning may strike me yet, but I doubt whether I will ever recover those lost millions."

An Elephant's Teeth.

Whoever has looked inside an elephant's mouth has seen a strange sight. Elephants have no front teeth, and they never eat meat or any food that requires tearing apart. Eight teeth are all they have, two above and two below on each side, huge yellow molars as wide as a man's hand, about two inches thick. Over these hay or fodder is sifted by the queerest, ugliest tongue that is literally hung at both ends, having no power or movement except in the middle, where it shifts back and forth from side to side, arching up against the roof of the big mouth like an immense wrinkled pink serpent. There is nothing stranger than the working of an elephant's tongue, unless it be the working of his breathing apparatus when he sleeps. Elephants, like human beings, have two sets of teeth—the milk teeth, which are smaller than the permanent molars, fall out when the animals are about fourteen years old. These baby teeth, which are nevertheless enormous, are occasionally picked up by circus men among the fodder and preserved as curiosities.

The Power of His Eye.

It has been told of Van Amburgh, the great lion tamer, that on one occasion when in a bar-room he was asked how he gained his wonderful power over animals. He said:

"It is by showing them that I am not in the least afraid of them, and by keeping my eye steadily on theirs. I'll give you an example of the power of my eye."

"You see that fellow? He's a regular clown. I'll make him come across the room to me, and I won't say one word to him."

Sitting down, he fixed his keen, steady eye on the man. Presently the fellow straightened himself up, rose from his seat and came slowly across to the lion tamer. When he was close enough he drew back his arm and struck Van Amburgh a tremendous blow over the chin, knocking him clean over the chair, with the remark: "You'll stare at me like that again, won't you?"

Coal Consumption.

It will perhaps interest some readers to know how much fuel a locomotive burns. This, of course, depends upon the quality of fuel, the work done, the speed, and the character of the road. On freight trains the average consumption may be taken at about 1 to 1½ pounds of coal per car per mile. With passenger trains, the cars of which are heavier and the speed higher, the coal consumption is greater. A freight train of thirty cars at a speed of thirty miles per hour would therefore burn from 900 to 1,350 pounds of coal per hour.

It takes two to make a reputation.

"Mr. Slowboy tells me that Miss Scintilla is very bright."

"I should be more inclined to believe it if Mr. Slowboy were brighter."

FLASHES OF FUN.

"How long do you want them?" asked the clerk.

"I don't want to borrow 'em," replied Tommy; "I want to buy 'em for keeps."

Quizzer—So he shuts his eyes to his wife's temper fits, does he?

Guy—Yes, she's deaf and dumb and talks on her hands, you know.

Brown—What sort of a man is Spriggin?

Smith—Well, you can't get an idea into his head, and you can't get an idea out of his head.

Architect (looking at new foundation)—"How is this?" Your foundation is only half the size my plans call for."

Experienced Builder—"The owner told me to keep the cost within your estimate."

Johnny—Pa, do people read the newspapers to get the news?

Pa—No, my son; they merely read them so they won't have to listen to other folks who have read them.

City Boarder—"I notice you keep a big bar of soap outside by the pump. It is for the farm hands, I presume?"

Rural Hostess—"Yes, farm hands and faces."

"I hate to believe that he discharged his bookkeeper for playing golf. How tyrannical!"

"Now, not for playing golf, for talking it."

"Why is it," they asked, "that you let your husband have his own way in everything?"

"Because," she replied, "I like to have some one to blame when things go wrong."

"Papa, it speaks here of a burst of confidence. What does it mean?"

"Failure of a trusted bank," growled the old gentleman, who had just been hit by that sort of a calamity.

Little Nephew—"Uncle, what makes cynics of people?"

Old Uncle Grout—"When a man is a cynic it is because he has had experience; when a woman is a cynic it is because she hasn't."

"The railroad engineer," said the smart boarder, "must be a happy man. He whistles at his work."

"Beggings your pardon," said the Cheerful idiot, "prompt to crush all possible rivalry," he works at his whistle."

"It's all foolishness to talk about any one getting the worst of it in the matrimonial game," declared the big man with a silk hat and loud suit of clothes.

"How's that?"

"Marriage is always a tie."

Aunt Hatty—"That thing that Sue Harkins is playin' on the pianer is 'Home sweet home' with variations. Couldn't yer tell her it?"

Uncle Hiram—I ken only tell the variations.

She—Oh, just look at that policeman! Isn't he just too lovely for anything?

He—Really, I fail to see anything attractive about him.

She—Why, just look at his badge—98. He's just marked down from \$1, I'm sure.

First Burglar—Did you see de 'ad' uv dat big jewelry house? I wish I could break in dere some night.

Second Burglar—Well, if you do, you might leave some word mentionin' de name uv de paper where you saw de 'ad.'

"Muggins called up his first wife at the seance last night, and what do you think he said to her?"

"Goodness knows."

"He told her he wished she would give his second wife her recipe for mincemeat."

Her Father—And if I consent to your marriage with my daughter, what do you propose to do for a living?

Mr. Spooner—I'll demonstrate that two can live as cheaply as one. We won't ask for a cent more than you allow her now.

"That motor you are interested in never worked, did it?"

"Of course it worked," was the indignant reply. It never pulled any cars or moved any machinery. But it made money for its owners, and that's more than most inventions do."

"Is Miss Binks in?"

"Be yer Mr. Brown or Mr. Jones? If yer Mr. Brown, she's out; if yer Mr. Jones, she's home."

"I'm neither Brown nor Jones."

"Well, then, ye'll have to wait till I go and ask her whether she is home."

Moralist—Think of the fleeting nature of your popularity. You are notorious for a short time, then some man defeats you, and you are thrown aside and forgotten. What have you ever done that will live, my friend?

Pugilist—Well, pard, I put a broken nose on a literary gent once that has out-lived anything he ever wrote.

Polite Old Gentleman—"I perceive, madam, that I need not inquire about your health."

Nice Old Lady—"Thank you, sir. I confess that I feel ten years younger than I am."

Polite Old Gentleman—"Possibly, madam, but you cannot feel a day younger than you look."

A burglar who was doing a neat job on a large safe was horrified on looking up to see a man standing quietly beside him. He was about to retire, when the gentleman said:

"Go ahead; I am interested in this job."

"Why?" asked the astonished burglar.

"Because I have lost the key. If you can get the safe open, I will make it worth your while."

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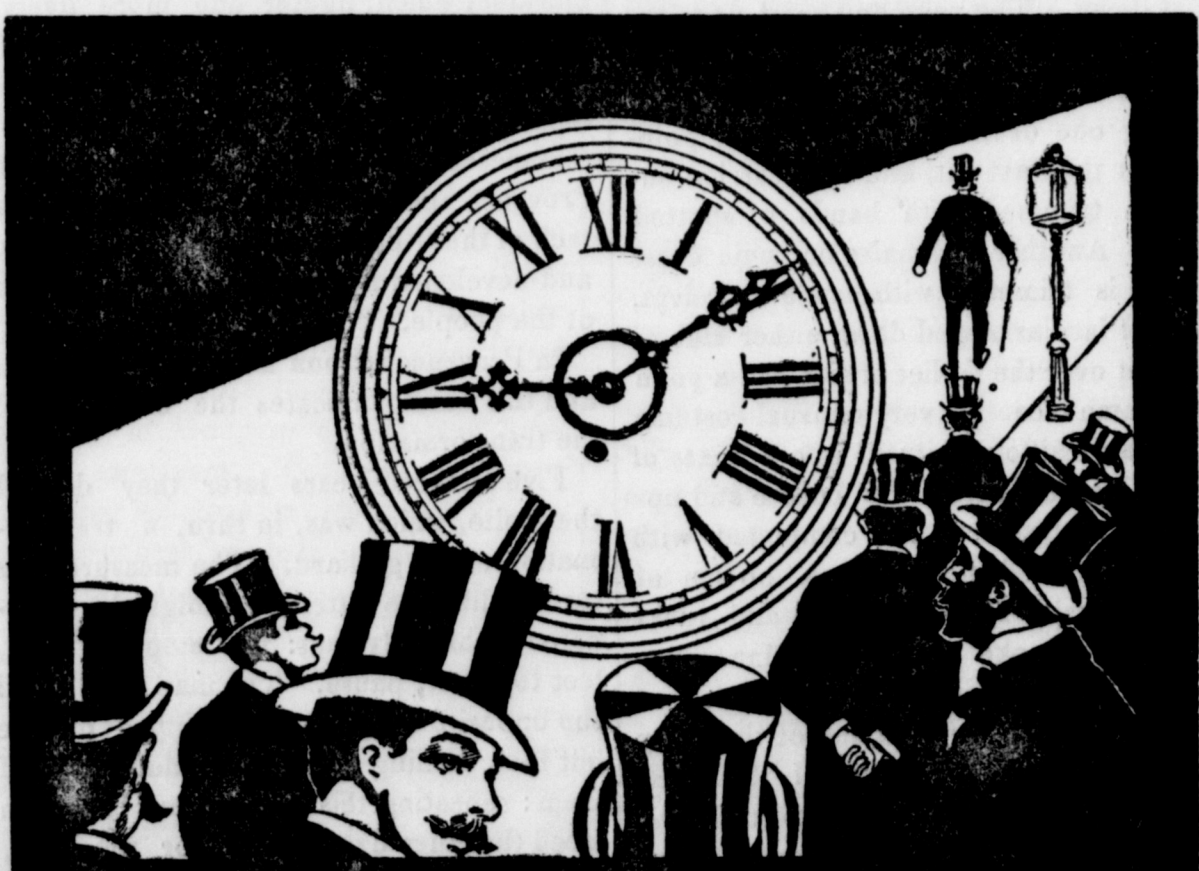
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DR. AGNEW'S CATARRHAL POWDER.

This wonderful remedy never fails if taken before catarrh has developed into other necessarily fatal diseases. Don't put it off—go at once to your druggist and get a bottle. It will relieve you in 10 minutes—it will place you on the road to full recovery immediately. It cures cold in the head, sore throat, tonsillitis, asthma, hay fever, loss of smell and deafness. Here is an interesting letter from the Rev. James Murdoch, of Harrisburg, Pa.:

"When I know anything is worthy of recommendation, I consider it my duty to let my friends know it. I have used Dr. Agnew's Catarrhal Powder for the last two months and am now completely cured of catarrh of five years standing. It is certainly magical in its effect. The first application benefited me within five minutes. I would not be without it in the house if it cost \$5 a bottle, as it will cure any slight cold I may have, almost instantly." At all druggists.

Dr. Agnew's Cure for the Heart relieves heart disease in 30 minutes. Dr. Agnew's Liver Pills—20c. for 40 doses—are the best. Dr. Agnew's Ointment relieves in a day eczema, tetter and all skin diseases. Cures piles in 2 to 3 nights. 35c.