

# ASSOCIATIVE HUMOUR

By

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Some commonplace expressions tickle us, when they conjure up similar expressions used in a humourous context. Here are some instances of such associative humour.

To set aside an *ex parte* decree, the Limitation Act prescribes a period of thirty days which starts from the date of the decree or the date of knowledge of the impugned decree. In this connection, I am reminded of the story of a sailor who was belabouring a Jew. When asked the reason, he said “Because the Jews had crucified Jesus”. When he was told that it happened two thousand years ago, the sailor coolly said “I heard it only now”. This is nothing but the date (or rather the time) of knowledge. Probably the authors of the Limitation Act had this story in their mind when they laid down that the prescribed period of limitation starts from the date of knowledge in some cases like those covered by Articles 56, 57, 59, 61(b), 71 and 92 to 95.

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To buttress their contentions, lawyers cite decisions of High Courts or the Supreme Court. They may cite a decision of a puisne Judge of a High Court who later on became a Judge of the Supreme Court or the Chief Justice of the same or another High Court. The Judge before whom the decision is cited writes in his judgment “The learned Counsel for ..... relied upon a decision of Justice.....(as he then was) reported in .....”. This brings to my mind the following incident. The celebrated scholar-

writer *Nirad C. Chaudhuri* visited England along with his wife in the fifties on an invitation from the B.B.C. When Mrs. *Chaudhuri* referred to her husband as a writer, an English lady wanted to know what he was before he was a writer.

Remembering the fact that there is no word or phrase in the English language which was not used by *Shakespeare*, I was racking my brains whether this expression “as he then was” was used by Him. My joy knew no bounds when I found it in Henry VIII.

His promises were, as he then was mighty

But his performance, as he is now, nothing.

Lesser mortals like me shine in the reflected glory of this immortal and peerless poetic genius of world renown.

x x x x

When a matter is posted for arguments, the concerned advocates may represent “Your Honour (Your Lordship) may treat it as heard”, when they feel that there is not much to argue. The learned Judge may then decide the matter on the basis of the material available on record. The above representation reminds me of this incident. When the British ruled our country, an Indian went to the Madras Secretariat to meet the Chief Secretary. When asked to state the reason, he wrote on the chit “To pay my respects”. The Chief Secretary, an Englishman, wrote back “Treated as paid”.