

# THE CANADA TEMPERANCE ADVOCATE,

DEVOTED TO

TEMPERANCE, EDUCATION, AGRICULTURE AND NEWS.

VOL. X.

APRIL 1, 1844.

No 7.

Extract of a Letter dated Madras, November 23, 1822.

SIR,—Knowing that you are a philanthropist, I beg leave to inform you, that, directly opposite to Fort William, and not above one hundred yards to the southward of the late Mr. William Jones' dwelling-house at Seebpore, on Monday morning, at gun-fire, a widow, the mother of a large family, was put on a pile of combustibles, and burned to death, attended with circumstances of cruelty, at which human nature shudders, and which I shall endeavour to describe, partly as seen by myself, and partly as informed by others.

On Friday, the 11th instant, about noon, an old Brahmin died. At the time of his death, he was possessed of considerable riches, and had two wives, one of whom was many years younger than the other; and by each of these wives he had a large family of children, boys and girls, now living. The moment this man expired, his eldest son, heir to all his property, posted off to Allypore, and applied to C. R. Barwell, Esq., magistrate of the suburbs of Calcutta, for a license to burn his own mother, and his stepmother, with the body of his father; but it appears that Mr. Barwell then granted a license for one wife only, the eldest, to be burned. Confident, however, that, by another application, leave would be obtained to burn the other wife also, the pile was raised, and every preparation made to burn them both the next day at noon; but at the hour of noon on Saturday, no license from Mr. Barwell for the destruction of the youngest woman, had arrived, and no such license was granted through the whole of that day. The news of this rather novel circumstance, soon spread along Seebpore and Hourah; thousands of people of all descriptions were assembled to learn the particulars; and to me the family and Brahmin friends of the deceased voluntarily confessed that either both wives must be burned, or neither of them could, as the one for whom the license was obtained had declared that she would not be burned alone. On Sunday, circumstances remained the same as on Saturday, for Mr. Barwell was inflexible, and no license to burn the youngest woman could they obtain from him, notwithstanding that they used every art, artifice, and invention, which the craft and cunning of a Brahmin could conceive.

On Sunday, as on Saturday, crowds of people were in attendance from morning till night; and to all the Europeans who inquired, the declarations of the deceased's family, and of the attending Brahmins, were the same, that the one wife could not be burned alone, she having dissented therefrom. Great hopes began now to be entertained by the humane, that Mr. Barwell's firmness would save them both; but the poor creatures were all this time, from the moment at which their husband had breathed his last, (on Friday at noon) kept locked up, and not allowed to taste a morsel of victuals of any description; and the hope that had been entertained of their being saved from the flames, was greatly damped by the fear that both would be starved to death by their merciless keepers.

On the following morning, Monday, the 14th instant, at gun-fire, notwithstanding the previous repeated acknowledgment and confessions of the attending Brahmins, and of the family and friends of the deceased, that they would not burn the one wife alone, at that selected period, when they thought few eyes would be open to view their pro-

ceedings, the elder woman was dragged from her prison of starvation, made to mount the pile, and clasp the putrid carcase of her so long deceased husband in her arms, the stench from which at that time was intolerable. Two thick ropes, previously prepared were then passed over the bodies, and two long levers of bamboo, crossing each other, were likewise employed to pinion her down, the unconsumed ends of which are still to be seen on the spot.

All things being thus arranged, the eldest son and heir, who was to succeed to the property, set fire to the pile, which speedily burned and consumed his own mother; and at this act, it is said, he triumphantly exulted.

The other poor woman being still kept in confinement, and no nourishment supplied, is now seized with delirium; and a few hours more will, no doubt, end her existence also, she being actually starved to death.—I am, Sir, Your's, &c.

A FRIEND TO HUMANITY.

[The foregoing account of a murderous practice formerly sanctioned by the British authorities in India, is extracted from an old magazine, for the purpose of contrasting it with the traffic in intoxicating drinks sanctioned by British authorities now. Few readers will justify the magistrate who granted a license to commit the foul and cruel murder above narrated, although that magistrate had all the sanctions of law for his conduct, and was doubtless in other respects a worthy and respectable man; but multitudes will justify magistrates of the present day in granting licenses to sell intoxicating drinks, which are the cause of many murders quite as atrocious. In both cases common sense is sacrificed to the prevailing claims of custom and fashion. In both, certain individuals wish to acquire money, and they seek a license from the civil power to obtain their end, the one by means of an inhuman murder, the other well knowing that inhuman murders will be the result. In both cases that license is granted by those who ought to be the shelter of the oppressed, the protectors of the weak, and the uncompromising enemies of every kind of crime. The difference are that the licenses to burn were more direct and personal, whereas, the licenses to destroy life by intoxicating liquors are more general and wide spreading in their disastrous effects. In the one case it was only the widows of the rich who suffered, in the other, husbands, wives, widows, orphans, rich and poor, are all exposed alike, and fearfully do they suffer for their exposure. In the one case the evil was confined to the actual destruction of life, in the other it extends to every interest of man in time and eternity—usefulness, character, property, industry, religion, health, mental powers—all are ruinously affected even when life is not taken away. Finally, where the practice licensed by the Indian magistrates has slain its tens, the practice licensed by our magistrates has slain its thousands, and yet public opinion is not aroused to look upon them and treat them as aggressors in the best interests of the society for whose welfare they hold office. We trust however, that many years will not elapse until the magistrate who would give a license to sell intoxicating drinks as a beverage, will be looked upon with the same shudder of horror that would greet one who would now give a license to burn a poor defenceless widow.—Ed.]