

ST. JOHN



GAZETTE,

AND WEEKLY

ADVERTISER.

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HINDOSTAN.

FEW travellers, who have passed through India, omit mentioning the cruel custom of the women publicly burning themselves at the death of their husbands, which is said to be still practised in some places, though the Mahometans have endeavoured to abolish it, and strictly forbid it ever being performed. A celebrated historian gives the following account of this custom:

The cause commonly assigned for the origin of this sacrifice, (peculiar to the wives of this nation) is, that it was a law constituted to put a period to a wicked practice that the Gentoo wives had of poisoning their husbands; for this assertion we cannot trace the smallest semblance of truth, and indeed the known fact, that the sacrifice must be voluntary in the woman, refutes that common mistake. It has also been a received opinion, that if the wife refuses to burn, she loses her cast (or tribe) and is stamped with disgrace and infamy; an opinion equally void of foundation in fact as the other. The real state of the case is thus circumstanced: the first wife (for the Gentoo laws allow bigamy, although they frequently do not benefit themselves of the indulgence, if they have issue by the first) has it in her choice to burn, but is allowed twenty-four hours in which to form her resolution, after the decease of her husband: if she refuses, the right devolves to the second; if either, after the expiration of twenty-four hours, publicly declare before the Bramins and witnesses, their resolution to burn, they cannot then retreat. If they both refuse at the expiration of that time, the worst consequence that attends their refusal is, lying under the imputation of being wanting to their own honour, purification, and the prosperity of their family; for from their infancy they are instructed by the household Bramin (or priest) to look upon this catastrophe as most glorious to themselves, and beneficial to their children; the truth is, that the children of the wife who burns, become thereby illustrious, and are sought after in marriage by the most opulent and honourable of their cast, and sometimes received into a cast superior to their own.

When people have lived together to an advanced age, in mutual acts of confidence, friendship and affection; the sacrifice a Gentoo widow makes of her person (under such an affecting circumstance as the loss of friend and husband) seems less an object of wonder; but when we see women in the bloom of youth and beauty; in the calm possession of their reason and understanding, with astonishing fortitude set at naught the tender considerations of parents, children, friends, and the horror and torments of the death they court, we cannot resist viewing such an act, and such a victim, with tears of commiseration, awe and reverence.

We have been present at many of these sacrifices; in some of the victims we have observed a pitiable dread, tremor, and reluctance, that strongly spoke repentance for their declared resolution; but it was now too late to retract or retreat. If the self doomed victim discover want of courage and fortitude, she is with gentle force obliged to ascend the pile, where she is held down with long poles, held by men on each side of the pile, until the flames reach her; her screams and cries in the mean time,

being drowned amidst the noise of loud music, and the acclamations of the multitude. Others we have seen go thro' this fiery trial with most amazing, steady, calm resolution, and joyous fortitude.

The following is an instance which happened some years past at the East India company's factory, at Cossimbuzar's, in the time of Sir Francis Ruffel's chiefship; the author and several other gentlemen of the factory were present, some of whom are now living:

At five of the clock, on the morning of the 4th of February 1743, died Rham Chund, a pundit of the Mahaharator tribe, aged 28 years; his widow, for he had but one wife, aged between seventeen and eighteen, as soon as she expired, disdaining to wait the time allowed her for reflection, immediately declared to the Bramins and witnesses present, her resolution to burn; as the family was of no small consideration, all the merchants of Cossimbuzar and her relations, left no arguments untried to dissuade her from it. Lady Ruffel, 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 old, and the terrors and pain of the death she fought, were painted to her in the strongest and most lively colouring—She was deaf to all—the gratefully thanked Lady Ruffel, and lent her word she had now nothing to live for; but recommended her children to her protection. When the torments of burning were urged to shake her resolution, she with a resolved and calm countenance, put her finger in 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 Bramins. The consideration of her children, thus left destitute of both parents, was again urged to her: she replied, he that 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 affection, 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 cast, she would starve herself.

The body of the deceased was carried down to the water side early the following morning, the widow followed about 10 o'clock, accompanied by three very principal Bramins, her children, parents, and relations, and a numerous concourse of people. The order of leave for her burning, did not arrive until after one, and it was then brought 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 Bramins 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; she was then conducted by her female relations to one corner of the pile, on which was an arched arbour 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 to the opening. At the corner of the pile,

to which she had been conducted, the Bramin had made a small fire, round which she and the three Bramins 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 he held over the flame, whilst 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 Bramin read to her some portions of the Aughtoriah 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 Bramins reading before her; when she came the third time to the small fire, here she 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 Bramins dipped a large wick of cotton in some ghee, gave it ready lighted into her hand, and led her to the open side of the arbour; there all the Bramins fell at her feet, after she had blessed them, they retired weeping; by two steps, she ascended the pile, and entered the arbour; 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 arbour in three places; observing that she had set fire to the leeward, and that the flames blew from her, instantly seeing her error, she rose and set fire to the 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 countenance she sat fire to the pile the last time, and assumed her seat, can only be conceived, for word cannot convey a just idea of her. The pile being of combustible materials, the roof was presently consumed, and it tumbled upon her.

FOR SALE,

AN Excellent Tract of Land lying on the Northwesterly branch of the River Oromocto, in the County of Sunbury; containing four hundred and fifty acres of good Intervale and Upland, being one half of a Tract formerly belonging to Doctor Ambrose Sharman—on which is the most commodious place for erecting Mills of any now unoccupied in the Province, with a sufficiency of water at all seasons, and plenty of fine Timber adjacent—Also, a very valuable Herring Fishery, where thousands of barrels may be taken in a season.

For particulars enquire of ISRAEL PERLEY, Esquire, at Maugerville, or of WILLIAM BUCHANAN the proprietor, near Saint Andrews.

N. B. The above Land will be sold entire, or one half only, as may best accommodate the Purchaser.

BLANKS of various kinds may be had at this Office.

Will be Sold Low,
By the PIECE or PACKAGE,

A handsome assortment of

Dry Goods & Groceries,

Imported for account of the late EBERNEZER PUTNAM, Esq.—Apply to
JAMES CODNER, or
ANDREW CROOKSHANK,
June 15. Administrators.

James Codner,

Has received by the Ship CROW-ISLE, and Brig SMYRNA from London,

A VARIETY OF
MERCHANDIZE,

Consisting of

PRINTED calicoes & chintzes,	Window glafs and nails,
Shawls and handkerchiefs,	Paints and oil,
Copper plate and chintz furniture,	Spicery,
4-4 & 7-8 Irish linens,	Salt petre,
Russia and English sheetings,	Loaf sugar,
Raven's duck and oznaburghs,	Hylon,
Table cloths and towelling,	Souchong,
Checks & stripes,	Green and Bohea,
Bandanna & printed handkerchiefs,	Pimento,
British and India muslins,	Pepper,
Cambries & lawns,	Mustard,
Ladies' Morocco shoes and sandals,	Ginger,
Sadlery,	Figs, almonds and raisins,
Ironmongery,	Caraway seed,
Hardware and cutlery,	Capers,
Powder and shot,	Florence oil in flasks,
	Vinegar,
	Soap, starch and blue,
	Madeira, Sherry, Lisbon and Port,
	Wines in pipes and quarter-casks, and by the gallon.

JUST ARRIVED

IN the Sloop SUSANNA, from Jamaica, and for Sale on the most reasonable Terms—a Cargo of RUM, SUGAR, PIMENTO, GINGER, and a small quantity of TAMARICK. Enquire of

James Codner, or
Andrew Crookshank.

Saint John, Sept. 14. [t.c.]

TO BE SOLD,

A HOUSE and Lot of Land, consisting of 500 Acres, situate on the River St. John, and about five miles below the Presque Isle Garrison.—There is 25 acres of excellent intervale, several acres of which are cleared and fit for ploughing.—Immediate possession will be given, and six months credit.—Apply to
JAMES H. LAMB.
Fredericton, May 10, 1798.

NOTICE.

ALL Persons having Demands against the Estate of the late GERHARDUS CLOWES, Esquire, of Maugerville, deceased, are desired to exhibit them properly attested to within Twelve Months—and all those indebted to the said Estate are requested to make immediate payment to

THOMAS HORSFIELD,
RICHARD CARMAN,
EXECUTORS.

Saint John, 26th October, 1798.