

HEATHENISM.

The following extracts from the Evangelical Rambler are well calculated to awaken Christian sympathy for the wretched slaves of Heathenism:

"The custom of burning widows on the funeral piles of their deceased husbands, is very generally known, but I fear that it has not excited all that intense anxiety for its suppression which it ought to inspire in every Christian bosom. After the widow has declared her resolution to burn, she leaves her house for the last time, with her children, relations and a few neighbors. She proceeds to a river where a priest attends upon her, and where certain ceremonies are performed, accompanied by ablution. When these are over, she comes up to the pile, walks slowly round it several times, and at length, lays herself down by the dead body, placing her arm over it. Two cords are now

thrown over the pile, with which the dead and the living are bound together; a large quantity of fagots are laid upon them, and two levers are used to press down the widow, to prevent her from making her escape when the flames begin to scorch her! Now, mark the pure demoniac cruelty of their system. The high priest of death advances, with an averted face, bearing the lighted torch in his hand with which he sets fire to the pile. Who is he? Her eldest son! hapless mother! doomed to suckle at thy tender bosom thy fell murderer!—Ill fated son! doomed to imbrue thy hand in the blood of her who bore thee! But on some occasions the strength of the maternal feeling will suspend, at least for a season the power of superstition; as the following fact will attest:—A widow, when seated on the pile, heard the cries of her lovely infant;—she arose, took her child, suckled it, and returned it to a friend.

"True, 'twas hard to part,
While it unconscious laugh'd, and stretch'd its arms

For one more weeping kiss; and knew not why
The mother sobb'd with bursting agony.
Now her firm soul hath overcome the struggle!
'Twas natural she should weep, but she hath done

With earthly things,
—She remounts the pile;
One moment stands there as in agony.

Lifting her eyes the last time to the sun;
The next—she drops! The demon priests are up,

Savage at work: with might and main they pull

And bind the victims,—dead and living lock'd
In firm embrace!—'Tis done—the blasting flame!

Burns rapidly; while the undulating smoke,
Like damned clouds, east from the mouth of hell,

Black hovers round. The hideous death-song wails

From howling fiends. The roar of multitudes,
The voice of filthy drum, and every shriek,
Shout, yell, and moan, proclaim the horrid triumph,

And she is gone for ever!"

"There is one whole tribe in India which destroys every female child that is born amongst them, so that they are obliged to take their wives from the tribes next in rank to them. On one occasion a father's heart recoiled when the ministers of vengeance demanded his daughter; he repelled them from his presence, spared her life, and she grew up tenderly beloved by her parents.—But the sight of a girl rising to maturity, in the house of a Rajpoot, was so novel and so contrary to the customs of the tribe, that no parent sought her in marriage for his son. The grief-worn father suffering under the frowns of his own tribe, and trembling for the chastity of his daughter, and honor of his family, bore her off—Where? to some orphan asylum, where she was secure from the ministers of death? Alas, no! Hindooism never erected such a sacred retreat for human misery.—He took her off to some pathless desert, where he slew her, leaving her body the food for worms, or to be devoured by the wild beasts of prey!"

"In Christian countries the aged and infirm are generally placed under the benign care of others, who feel a high gratification in administering the last draught of human consolation. But beneath the awful frown of paganism, benevolence is not permitted to sympathize or extend relief. Persons supposed to be dying, particularly if they are aged, are removed from their beds, and carried to the brink of the Sacred River; where amidst the agonies of departing nature, they are half immersed, while torrents of water are poured on them, till life becomes extinguished.

"An European, some time since, on passing along the streets of Calcutta observed a miserable creature wasting with sickness, laid out on a couch at the front of a house. To his inquiry concerning the wretched object, and why he was in that situation without one attendant to care for him, a native replied, "He is dying." "Dying," said the European, "he must die if he is thus neglected." To which the native again replied, with equal indifference as at first, "Oh! he is dying." How different the conduct of those who live in this country, where the Gospel of Christ has brought the sympathies and sensibilities of our nature to such a high degree of refinement!

"While by the bed of languishment they set,
And o'er their dying friends in arrish hang,
Wipe the cold dew, or stay the sick'ning head."

Ashley Vaughn, ed., *South-western Religious Luminary*, 2/3 (1838):24.

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