

it appears, was an appellative given him for his constant sombre and melancholy appearance. It was this miscreant who superintended the murder of the English gentlemen of the factory at Patna, in 1763. Flying from the resentment of the British, who shortly afterwards re-captured Patna, Sumroo bent his course for Upper India, and entered the service of the Rajah of Bhurtpore, and subsequently of other native chiefs, until, from favourable circumstances, which were taken advantage of by his abilities, he became possessed of a large space of country to the north-east of Delhi. He died in full possession of his power. The Begum subsequently married a Frenchman; but by neither of these unions had she any children, at least none are now alive."—*Tour i.*, p. 170.

It appears that her second husband, Le Vassu, having tired of his barbaric dignity, meditated a return to Europe, and collected all the jewels, money and valuables which he could amass, to carry off along with them. The Begum had discernment enough to foresee that in Europe her consequence was gone, and that she must be at her husband's discretion. She dissembled her dislike, but resolved to frustrate the plan. She privately communicated to some of the officers of her troops her husband's intentions:

"To her husband she spoke of false fears of detection, and pointed out the dishonour that must attach itself to their act of desertion; and, for her own part, vehemently protested, that she would die by her own hand, rather than be compelled to return by force."—"It was solemnly agreed between them, that, in case of being interrupted, they should both die by their own hands."—"At the dead of night he mounted his elephant, and she got into her palankeen. At the appointed spot the ambush was ready, and all things answered the Begum's intentions. The opposing party soon made the escort of the Begum and her husband fly. The attendants ran to inform him that the Begum had shot herself. In the noise and confusion many matchlocks had been let off, so that he could not tell if her having been molested was probable or not. On rushing to her palankeen to ascertain the truth, he was alarmed by the clamour and apparent affliction of those who surrounded it; and, upon a towel, saturated with blood, being shown him, as confirmation of the Begum's having destroyed herself, he placed a pistol to his head and shot himself. The Begum, who till then had never appeared in male society, threw open the blinds of her palankeen and mounted an elephant. She harangued the troops upon her attachment to them, and her opposition to the commands of her husband; she professed no other desire than to be at their head, and to share her wealth with them. The novelty of the situation lent energy to her action, and eloquence to her language; and, amid the acclamations of the soldiers, she was led back in triumph to the camp."

From this time she assumed the personal command of the army, and directed the whole affairs of her territories.

"Colonel Skinner, we are told, during his service with the Mahrattas, has often seen her, then a beautiful young woman, leading on her troops in person, and displaying, in the midst of carnage, the greatest intrepidity and presence of mind."—*Sketches i.*, p. 371.

"Since she has grown old, she has turned her attention to the agricultural improvement of her country. Her fields look greener and more flourishing, and the population of her villages appear happier and more prosperous than those of the Company's provinces. Her care is unremitting, and her protection sure. Formerly a Mahometan, she is now a Roman Catholic, and has, in her service many priests and officers of that persuasion. At her metropolis she has erected a very beautiful church, on the model of St. Peter's; it is almost finished; little remains to be done, and that is on the outside. The altar is remarkably handsome; it is of white marble from Jypoor, and inlaid with various-coloured stones."—*Tour, i.*, p. 142.

"During her long life many acts of inhuman cruelty towards her dependents have transpired, one of which is here narrated. The Begum having discovered a slave-girl in an intrigue, condemned her to be buried alive. This cruel sentence was carried into execution; and the fate of the beautiful victim having excited strong feelings of compassion, the old tigress, to preclude all chance of a rescue, ordered her carpet to be spread over the vault, and smoked her houkah, and slept on the spot; thus making assurance doubly sure."—*Sketches, i.*, p. 774.

At Meerut, the Commander-in-chief, Lord Combermere, and his party, were invited to dine with her. As he entered the gates of her palace, he was received with presented arms by her body-guard, and on the steps of the portico by the old lady herself. In person, she is described as very short, and rather *embonpoint*; her complexion is unusually fair; her features large and prominent; her expression sagacious, but artful. Of her hands, arms, and feet, the octogenarian beauty is said to be still justly proud. The dinner was served in the European style. The party consisted of sixty persons, the Begum being the only lady at table. She seemed in excellent humour, and, we are told, bandied jokes and compliments with his Excellency, through the medium of an interpreter.—*Tours in Upper India, and in part of the Himalaya Mountains; with an account of the native Princes.* By Major Archer, late Aide-de-camp to Lord Combermere.

The following piece, entitled *La Pauvre Femme*, by Beranger, is a picture, in a few stanzas, of the life of an actress—its thoughtless gaiety and prodigality in prosperity, its misery and destitution when misfortune and disease have taken place. It is drawn from real life.

It snows, it snows—but on the pavement still

She kneels and prays, nor lifts her head;

Beneath these rags, through which the blast blows shrill,
Shivering she kneels, and waits for bread.

Hither each morn she gropes her weary way,
Winter and summer, there is she.

Blind is the wretched creature! well-a-day!—
Ah! give the blind one charity!

Ah! once far different did that form appear;

That sunken cheek, that colour wan,

The pride of thronged theatres, to hear

Her voice, enraptured Paris ran;

In smiles or tears, before her beauty's shrine,

Which of us has not bowed the knee?—

Who owes not to her charms some dreams divine?

Ah! give the blind one charity!

How oft, when from the crowded spectacle

Homeward her rapid coursers flew;

Adoring crowds would on her footsteps dwell,

And loud huzzas her path pursue.

To hand her from the glittering car, that bore

Her home to scenes of mirth and glee,

How many rivals throng'd around her door?

Ah! give the blind one charity!

When all the arts to her their homage paid,

How splendid was her gay abode;

What mirrors, marbles, bronzes were displayed,

Tributes by love on love bestow'd:

How duly did the muse her banquets gild,

Faithful to her prosperity:

In every place will the swallow build!—

Ah! give the poor one charity!

But sad reverse—sudden disease appears;

Her eyes are quenched, her voice is gone—

And here, forlorn and poor, for twenty years,

The blind one kneels and begs alone.