

recover her, and to punish the villain who robbed them of their child?"

"Not they," said Betha, (for that was the old woman's name,) "they got presents of gold and camels, and they thought the child lucky."

As the old woman finished, the people began leaving the pagoda, and observed the same order of march as on entering. I pressed closely to them to try to catch a look at the three devoted females, and an opening in the crowd soon placed me near them. They were, as I have said, all dressed in white, with garlands of flowers round their necks; they had a thin muslin scarf fastened on the top of their heads, and hanging down so as almost to conceal their features. They wore no ornaments. The two who were nearest to me were evidently old, while their eyes bespoke the most perfect indifference to their fate. Not so the third; her sobs were those of a breaking heart; her hands were clasped, and her eyes were turned to where the sun had gone down, as if to take a last farewell of the departing light. I crossed in the rear of the procession, and went to the side where she was: her agitation and her movements had been such, as to throw the veil quite down on her neck, and to display to my view one of the most lovely faces I ever beheld, for her skin was fairer than that of the fairest Indian. Her black hair was braided across a fine open brow, which gave a generous character to her face, while the large tears rolled down her cheeks from a soft black eye and long lash. I ventured closer, and softly whispered, "Can I serve you?" She turned her head quickly towards me, and rested her eye for a moment on my face; then suddenly clasped her hands as if imploring protection. These motions were observed, for the circle of Brahmins closed quickly round her, and the noise of the tom-toms and horns soon overpowered every other sound, although I fancied I could hear a cry for assistance. I hastily untied my horse, and with the bridle hanging over my arm, still followed the procession. I noticed that the old woman, Betha, to whom I had before spoken, had joined the centre of the group, and was evidently close to the object in whom I felt so deeply interested. They all entered the village, and then disappeared within the walls of a court in which was a large and handsome native house. They had to enter two by two, the gate being very narrow, and I again caught the eye of the lovely victim.— But there was now a gleam of hope in it. They had all passed in except the crowd, who merely attended as spectators of the sad scene.—

Among them I discovered Betha, whom beckoned to follow me. It was now dark, with the exception of a faint light from a moon in the first quarter: we passed through several streets till we came outside the village, when I placed a few rupees in her hand, and said,

"Can you not assist me, my good Betha; rescue that lovely girl from so cruel a fate? will convey her to her parents, or wherever she chooses, so that I can only place her safety. I will give you ten pagodas† if you manage to introduce me into the house she has entered; or to get her brought to this spot. I would give double the sum, but I have it not with me at present."

Betha shook her head: "I fear," replied she, "it will be impossible; she is guarded so closely by the other women; but I will do all I can. Come with me."

Accordingly, she led me round to the back of the bazaar, which was now lighted up with torches at the different shops, and entered a low mud shed, bidding me bring my horse also. "Here you will not be seen," said she, "rest till I return, and for your life's sake, whatever you hear, do not leave this place. I promised to obey her, and she then left me."

I waited long and anxiously; the noisy turmoil of the bazaar lasted some time, and the different vendors wrangling and extolling their goods amused me for a while. When this ceased, shop after shop was shut, and light after light was extinguished, till at length all was quiet. I ventured to look from my humble shelter, but the darkness of the night could make but a few things visible at any distance. I again sat down on the mat laid for me, and began to think of the probable conjectures of my servants as to what had become of me. For the last two or three weeks, I had not been later than sunset on my halting-ground, as I generally travelled five or six miles early in the morning, and the same number in the latter part of the day; therefore it was probable my people would think I had been waylaid by Thugs, strangled, and by this time buried; that I had been devoured by a tiger, or some other wild beast. I thought of what they might do. They might perhaps rob me of my baggage, or if their honesty was proof against touching the property of a man merely supposed to be dead, they might start off and give the alarm to some of the neighbouring villages, and thus bring me publicity when I required

† One pagoda is about the value of seven shillings.