THE WEDDINGS OF THE WORLD.

By A. H. WALL.

A WEDDING IN CHINA.

"When a son is born he sleeps upon a bed; he is clothed with rich robes, and plays with pearls; everyone obeys his princely voice. When a girl is born she is cast upon the gaily-lit, in which she is wrapped in a cloth, and plays with a tile."  Thus wrote Pan-houpi of her own sex, in her own country, China, adding, "She can be neither vicious nor virtuous; she has only to prepare the food, make the wine, and attend on fragments."  Pan-houpi wrote with neither regret nor indignation of this strange contrast. In her opinion it was both proper and wise to mark by neglect and indifference the inferiority of a creature born without a soul, even in the helpless days of its infancy. In her still popular works she is continually reminding women that they have no purpose in creation beyond that of being useful and pleasing to the superior sex.

The birth of such a being as a woman is a thing to be ashamed of—a sure sign of heaven's disfavour, in the estimation of Pan-houpi, and in that of all her countrymen and women.

A well-known traveller, Mr. Hue, describing his adventures in China, says on one occasion when leaving Leang-cham, his Chinese companion, speaking of women being Christians, claimed laughingly, "Isn't that nonsense!" And being told that it was not, and that, moreover, certain Chinese women were Christians, he asked, with an air of being completely puzzled, "What can women become Christians for?"

"What for?" was the reply; "to save them from the solemn and weighty duty for which no thanks are fairly due."

The Chinese girl who has poor parents leads the degraded life of a slave; no out-door labour is too hard for her, no treatment too bad, no punishment too severe. If her parents are lowly and not so poor, she is regarded as the household drudge, whom no kind of work can injure or degrade. In either case she stagnates in ignorance, unable either to read or write; but, strange to say, she does not groan, neither droll, brutal, or apathetic. A kind word moves her, but in her heartfelt gratitude is a very easy task. The daughter of wealth fears a little better. She is not so active, and, therefore, not perhaps so happy, but her domestic work is light, and she can read and write a little, and she has amusements. She is taught music and针线, and earns what the poor crippled creature calls dancing. She, too, goes to the theatre, receives occasional visitors, and now and then is taken to the temple in a sedan chair, or in a kind of wheeled barrow with curtains.

But she keeps to her family, and while she may be married, a time for which she has been longing with all her heart. Amongst those whom the law of China compels to marry, and according to their own rank, her charms are duty but indirectly magnified, and they all know that she will be the bride of the highest bidder. Her features are sufficiently short, her lips delightfully thin, her lashes disfigure her charming black eyes. The length of her finger-nails is surprising! Her averted face, no dissembler, and no bidder appears, the discommodate father says that she was a mistake, regrets that she was not drowned directly after her baptism, as the daughters of other female infants are every year, and mournfully contemplates the cost of her living.

If a good offer comes, and no more bidders are likely to appear, immediate preparations are made for the wedding. At last the girl will be somebody; she is delighted to find herself for once an object of general regard, and her rather pitifully short, her lips delightfully thin, a nasıl disfigure her charming black eyes. The length of her finger-nails is surprising! Her averted face, no dissembler, and no bidder appears, the discommodate father says that she was a mistake, regrets that she was not drowned directly after her baptism, as the daughters of other female infants are every year, and mournfully contemplates the cost of her living.

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thing it will be if when the bridegroom first sees her he should express disappointment; say that those who described her deceived him, and wind up by declaring that rather than have her he will sacrifice all the dowry money he has paid, and submit to the usual fine in a like amount. When the procession is ready to escort her, the lattice work of her cage is closed and locked, and the bearers raise and carry her in triumph to the home of her purchaser. Musicians playing fife, drums, and hautboys, precede her; torch-bearers and flambeau bearers surround her; her family march in solemn state behind; and everything comprising her portion, clothes, furniture, &c., follows, each article displayed by one person, male or female.

Shut up alone she hears the music and the joyous shouts and the trampling feet; sees the red light of the torches and flambeaus, falling flickeringly upon her gold and jewelry; thinks of her new home amongst strangers whom she has never seen; dreads the little sound to come, that of the unknown bridegroom's key in the lock of her gilded cage; wonders what he will be like, in what words he will first address her; trembles with intense anxiety.

Meanwhile the bridegroom, in another fever of anxiety, stands in holiday attire within his outer door. The feast is spread, the guests have arrived, he only waits his bride. What will she be like? How will he be pleased? Will the blind bargain really prove a good one? At last he hears the approaching music and shouting; at last the procession halts before his house; her gay and gilded bridal cage—the palanquin—before him. The trusty domestic who bears his key gives it to him with a lowly obeisance, and then, amidst sudden and profound silence, he turns it in the lock. The gilded lattice work swings open; he looks for a moment upon the girl he has purchased—does not suddenly shut the door and turn away, as she tremblingly fears he may, but gravely assists her to alight, while the merry music bursts forth afresh, and the shouting is louder than ever.

Entering the house, the ceremony which unites them as firmly as the most ceremonious one can, is thus performed. For the first time she sits down to eat and drink with a strange man—perhaps she does not even know his name—and having previously prostrated themselves before their parents, and saluted the Tiers, or idol, in the hall four times, they feed together, drink each from the other's cup, and they are then man and wife, united as completely as Chinese law can unite them. The bride is then given into the hands of her new female relatives, who entertain her and her family for the rest of the day at a feast in their own section of the dwelling.

FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH.

A STORY OF TWO ENGLISH GIRLS.

By Ada K. Wing.

CHAPTER IV.

Ruby had thought life a hard, difficult thing that first evening when she sat at dinner at Larcome Priory, and though her lively nature and busy fancy brought her many a radiant gleam of sunshine which none of her surroundings could dim, she continued to find it a hard and difficult matter throughout all the early days of her sojourn in her own home. Miss Lindhurst's narrow views and confirmed habit of bringing everything and every one about her under one standard of her own setting up, made her look with distrust and dislike on whatever was new and different from her own limited experiences. She had known nothing of girls since she was a girl herself, and like many other people she only used the memories of those distant days as a text to discourse about the faults of the present time, forgetting that every era has its share of good and evil. Besides this, Ruby Stanton was no common girl to deal with, and Miss Nancy entirely mistook and misunderstood her character. Ruby was eager and enthusiastic about everything that she liked; Miss Nancy carefully damped the girl's warmth, and called her actions unbecoming and unladylike. It was Ruby's way to speak out all she thought and felt; Miss Nancy was forced to declare this mere im pertinence and forwardness, and deemed it her solemn duty to set her down. Ruby, like many a girl before and since, was inclined to hold extreme opinions on different points and to rush headlong into conclusions;