

MARRIAGE CUSTOMS.

MODERN EGYPT.—MARRIAGE PROCESSION OF THE BRIDE.

The bride and her party, after breakfasting together, set out, a little after midday, in procession to the house of the bridegroom. The ceremony usually occupies three or more hours. The first persons among the bride's party are several of her married female relations and friends, and next a number of young virgins. Then follows the bride, walking under a canopy of silk, of some gay colour or of two colours in wide stripes. The dress of the bride entirely conceals her person. She is generally covered with a red cashmere shawl, or with a white and yellow shawl. Upon her head is placed a small pasteboard cap or crown. The shawl covers this, and conceals the richer articles of her dress, her face, and her jewels, &c., except certain ornaments, generally of diamonds and emeralds, attached to that part of the shawl which covers her forehead. The procession is headed by a party of musicians, and a second party brings up the rear.

HINDOSTAN.—NIGHT PROCESSION OF THE BRIDEGROOM.

In the marriages of persons of distinction the business is conducted with much pomp. In the night, and at a fortunate hour, the bridegroom, superbly dressed, proceeds in a gilded palanquin to the dwelling of the bride. The so-called "lamps" which the attendants carry are bundles of rags tied to copper handles and steeped in oil. The torch-bearers are each provided with a narrow-spouted pot containing oil to pour over the lamps and so keep the flame burning.

SERVIA.—WEDDING PROCESSION AND FESTIVITIES.

The inhabitants of Rizano, who live by trading with the neighbouring Turkish provinces, belong almost entirely to the Greek Church, and have retained their national costume, together with the language and customs of their forefathers, in their entirety, to the present day. Our Engraving represents a bridal procession returning the customary and complimentary small mortar salutes with their fire-arms, on the road leading from the church.

CHINA.—BOWING TO ANCESTRAL PICTURES.

The bridegroom was a man of thirty-five, one of the agents of the firm at Hakodadi; the bride was twenty years of age, and daughter of a wealthy Shanghai native merchant. The dining-room, in which the ceremony was to take place, had been cleared and garnished. The chair in which the bride was carried having been borne into the room with a stately procession, the curtains around the chair were drawn aside by the bride's nurse, who at once led her forth—a bird of the most gorgeous plumage, quite a bundle of embroidery, in scarlet, black, and gold, with a belt of pink silk and ivory round her waist, and her head crowned with a tiara of false jewels, and further decorated with crimson flowers upon a chignon, and with a crimson silk veil, two feet in length, entirely hiding her face. The bridegroom had meantime come in from an adjoining room, preceded by a master of the ceremonies, with a lighted candle in each hand. Standing near one of the tables, he took three burning joss-sticks in his hands, and responded to the questions put to him by a priest, bowing repeatedly at the shrine of the joss or idol, some pictures of whom hung on the walls. The bride, having been placed beside him, supported by the old nurse, who had a little scarlet flag in her hand, was similarly addressed, and made the proper responses.

PERSIA.—BRIDE CONDUCTED HOME.

A day having been fixed for fetching home the bride, a crowd of people collect at both houses—the gentlemen at the bridegroom's, the ladies at that of the bride. As soon as it is dark, the latter, decked in her finest attire, is brought by the bridegroom's party to her new habitation, wrapped in a shawl provided by the husband, and accompanied by musicians, drummers, and lantern-bearers. On the cavalcade meeting the bridegroom, who comes a certain distance in advance, he throws an orange, or some other fruit, at the bride, and runs towards his house. This is a signal for a general scamper after him, and whosoever can catch him is entitled to his horse and clothes, or a ransom in lieu of them. When the bride arrives at the door, a man of either party jumps up behind her, and, seizing her by the waist, carries her within. Should this be done by one of the bridegroom's attendants, it is an omen of his maintaining a due authority; should one of her friends succeed in performing the duty, it augurs that she will in future "keep her own side of the house."

JAPAN.—DRINKING THE WEDDING SAKI.

The bride is attired in white, and covered from head to foot with a white veil. In this garb she is seated in a palanquin and carried forth, escorted by the marriage brokers, by his family, and by the friends bidden to the wedding feast; the men in their dress of ceremony, the women in their gayest gold bordered robes. Upon reaching the bridegroom's house the bride is accompanied by two playfellows of her girlhood into the state room, where in the post of honour sits the bridegroom, with his parents and nearest relations. In the centre of the apartment stands a table, with miniature representations of a fir-tree, &c. Upon another stands all the apparatus for saki-drinking. Beside this last the bride takes her position; and now begins a drinking of saki, in which the bridesmaids bear an important part. This drinking finished in due form, the ceremonial is completed.

CALMUCK, STEPPES OF THE CASPIAN SEA.—SCRAMBLING FOR THE BRIDE'S HANDKERCHIEF.

The preliminaries consist in stipulating the amount, in horses, camels, and money, which the bridegroom is to pay to the bride's father; this being settled, the young man sets out on horseback, accompanied by the chief nobles of his tribe, to carry off his bride. A sham resistance is always made by the people of her camp, in spite of which she fails not to be borne away on a richly caparisoned horse. When the party arrive at the spot where the kibitka of the new couple is to stand, the bride and bridegroom dismount, kneel on carpets, and receive the benediction of their priests; then they rise, and, turning towards the sun, address their invocations aloud to the four elements. At this moment the horse on which the bride has been brought home is stripped of saddle and bridle, and turned loose for anyone to catch and keep who can. This practice is observed only among the rich. The setting up of the kibitka concludes the whole ceremony. The bride chooses a bridesmaid, who accompanies her in her abduction; and when they come to the place for the kibitka the bride throws her handkerchief among the men: whoever catches it must marry the bridesmaid.

JAVA.—EXTINGUISHING THE HYMENEAL TORCH.

At a Javanese marriage we usually see the grown people sitting on one side, and about a hundred little brown cupids, bare-backed and painted, on the other. In the midst sits the band, with their instruments of different metals and skins—a hideous discord—while a child dressed as an old woman, with long hair and horrid mask, gesticulates up and down, to the great delight of the other children. In some parts of Java, when a man marries a second or third time he is made to advance with an ignited brand in his hand, on which the bride pours water from a vase to extinguish it.

BORNEO.—DYAK MARRIAGE CEREMONY.

The bride and bridegroom are made to sit upon two bars of iron. The priest waves two fowls over them, and then knocks their heads together. The bridegroom puts a cheroot and some betel-leaf into the bride's mouth. The fowls are then killed, &c.

NEW ZEALAND.—DECIDING BETWEEN RIVAL SUITORS.

Sometimes a girl is sought by two men of tolerably equal pretensions. When this is the case they are told by the father to settle the matter by a pulling-match. This is a very simple process. Each suitor seizes the girl and tries to drag her away to his own house. This is a very exciting business for everyone except the girl herself, who is always much injured by the contest, her arms being sometimes dislocated.

SOUTH AMERICA.—ARAUCANIAN INDIAN COURTSHIP.

Every bride is carried off bodily by the bridegroom and his friends. A sham resistance is made by the bride and her female friends, and a tolerably vigorous scuffle ensues, when the suitor is approved. When he is disapproved, the male members of the family turn out and the resistance is much more stubborn and serious.

SOUTH AFRICA.—MARRIAGE AMONG THE KAFFIRS.

The intended bridegroom is required to exhibit himself for approval before his lady love, whilst some member of the family, whose friendship and good offices he has secured, expatiates on his fine qualities. He is required to exhibit himself from various points of view, and to be put through his paces, much after the manner of a horse, in order to satisfy the lady's critical taste.