

THE FAMILY MAGAZINE.

MARRIAGE CEREMONIES.

NEARLY all nations naturally attach great importance to marriage ceremonies, associated as they generally become, in the memory of almost every individual, with the chief event of his life; and the attendant festivities, sacred and profane, are so variously modified by climate, civilization, and whatever contributes to the formation of national peculiarities, that it may not prove an uninteresting task to compare the nuptial celebrations of other countries with those of our own. They present every variety, and though affected more or less by the indolent or poetic, the energetic or superstitious temperaments of different nations, we think it will generally be found that in proportion as women are revered, and as civilization becomes far advanced, marriage-festivities are conducted with proportionally-increased solemnity and simplicity. Let us see how such matters are arranged in the South-Sea Islands. There, if the union contemplated is between parties of rank, four large piles of plantains, yams, cocoa-nuts, bread-fruit, fish, cakes, bananas, with a baked pig on the top of each, are, early in the morning, arranged in front of the house of the bridegroom, and the spectators assemble round them, decked in new dresses, and their bodies anointed with oil. Then the bride, closely veiled in fine-matting made from the bark of the mulberry tree, is brought to the same place, and her feet, hands and face being first anointed with sandal-wood and tumeric, she takes her seat, and mock duels with clubs are performed in her presence, followed by boxing and wrestling matches; after which the bride and bridegroom, accompanied by their friends, who sing as they walk, enact a sort of procession before the spectators, who greet them with loud acclamations. The bridegroom then commences a dance with

his young men attendants, during which the bride is led into her future habitation; the heaps of provisions are next distributed or scrambled for, succeeded by another boxing match; and the lighting up of the abode of the bridegroom, with singing and dancing in the evening, concludes the somewhat barbaric festivities. Those of the Tarter races are quite dissimilar, yet equally unlike our own; and as each man may possess four wives, it is not surprising that the affair becomes one of barter, and the price of a woman, varying, according to her beauty, from 20 to 500 rubles, is first determined upon between the father and the suitor, after which the latter is permitted to pay his respects in person to his future bride. When the price agreed on has been all disbursed, the young woman's companions come to her father's house the evening before the wedding, and the female ones offer condolence on her quitting the parental roof, which are responded to by two male friends, who sing songs meant to inspire her with happy hopes for the future. The following morning, the young couple stand up in presence of the Mollah, who asks if they will wed one another; he next repeats a prayer, and bestows on them the nuptial benediction; and the bride is then seated on a carpet, and carried to the house of the bridegroom, where festivities are continued for many days, consisting chiefly of dancing and music.

The Russian peasants, though near neighbors to the Tartars, have customs on such occasions peculiar to themselves, and which are believed by some antiquarians to be derived from the Greeks. The lover, accompanied by his bride-man, goes first to the lady's abode, and the friend says to the mother, "Show us your goods; we have money." He is then permitted to enter the bride's apart-