

INDIAN NOTES.

It is the boast of Christendom that the ideals of home and family cultivated under Christianity are the great and sure stay of our civilization, and the guarantee of our future progress. It has been claimed for the East that the ideal of the family relation is so much higher under so called pagan systems that we are unable to rise to an appreciation of its exalted spirituality. It seems right in beginning this series of Indian notes, to get a clear idea of what the ideal has been. We know what the western ideal is, with its ritual prayers for the blessings of procreation. We know what the reality of sale and barter for wealth and title has become in "the best society." We are familiar with the exalted ideal—and it is an exalted ideal in spite of nambypamby critics—of "The Woman Who Did." We have despaired with a great despair over Arthur and Lancelot and Guinevere as the Master Singer proclaimed the lesson of our age. But we have yet to learn that our ideal is equal to that of the ancient rite of Aryavarta.

True, the modern practice of India may be debased as our own, and we give direct testimony of the fact, but when we raise again the standard of the marital tie shall we take the noblest or a lowlier type?

My correspondent writes. "You may put anything you like out of my letters in THE LAMP. Of course I know you will not put in things and give them a different meaning to what I intended. That's what the Mission paper of our Church does with my husband's letters to it, so he has given up writing to it entirely. They actually mutilated sentences to give them the proper goody-goody twang."

"I agree with what you say about marriage to a certain extent. 'The natives marry first and the love comes afterwards,' that's what they all tell me. In this country even the Christian girls' marriage is arranged by the parents. The Brahman astrologers can make any proposed union propitious. Of course they consult the horoscopes and stars and all that, but if their palms are properly oiled everything is declared to be auspicious, and the wedding comes off with the usual flourish. You won't like my saying this, but I tell you what is the usual thing. I know there are exceptions. The majority of the natives of all classes and creeds are very happy

in their married lives. The women being uneducated don't require much, and are always complacent, and the men find lots of time to themselves to do exactly what they like without being questioned afterwards."

The ideal of Indian marriage is well defined by Mrs. Annie Besant in one of her Adyar lectures in 1893, addressed to the native delegates. Have we anything better in Christendom to offer for their imitation?

"And so I might take you through much of symbolism, through the symbolism of the household and other fires that ought to be familiar to every thoughtful man amongst you. For why are the twice-born to study the Vedas? Certainly not only that they may be able to repeat shloka after shloka; the daily study of the Veda, which is the duty of every twice-born, surely ought to mean that in the study knowledge shall come; when he reads of the five fires that the household fires symbolise in his house, that he should know something of what they mean and be reminded of some of the hidden facts—for why is the one fire kept lighted always, and from that one others are to be lighted? Why may it only be lighted by the bride and the bridegroom, and never be extinguished so long as they both remain in this earthly life? It is the ancient ideal of the Hindu marriage. It is the recognition of the fact in the spiritual world that when the two become one, when the dual aspects of nature typified in man and woman are to be reunited, they are to form one Spirit, and it is only as they unite that they become Fire, so the outer fire lighted by the two is the symbol of the union of the Spirit that makes them one, not in order that they may find sensual gratification, but in order that they may become that Prajapati, the Creator of the future world. That is the Hindu ideal of marriage—the noblest ideal of marriage that the world has ever known. No matter how much it may have become degraded, how much it may have fallen, that it is which underlies the idea of marriage in youth before the passions are awake, that the body may not have a share in the union of the Souls and Spirits. That was the great truth on which the custom was builded, and the custom has survived where the knowledge has disappeared. For all men's spirits coming into reincarnation come for spiritual growth, and not for mere sensual gratification; and the