

## CHAPTER II.

## HISTORICALLY CONSIDERED.

THERE can be no doubt that polygamy was universal in the first stages of man's advancement from barbarism to civilization. And it is also certain that polygamy was practised to a much greater extent in the eastern than in the western hemisphere. As far as the Bible gives us any information regarding the early history of man, plurality of wives is stamped upon it, as a characteristic of the people whose acts are recorded on the sacred page. And, not only is this true of the nations of Western Asia, for the Hindoos and other nations of the south and east of Asia are still notorious polygamists. In Europe, with the single exception of Turkey, polygamy is now unlawful. The Germanic and Sarmatian races were in the earliest times notorious for their chivalrous nature, their love of freedom, their devotion to woman, their hatred of wrong and their sympathy for the weak and defenceless. This magnanimous nature developed into the knight and the cavalier, whose mission was to protect woman, respect home and foster literature. The Germania of Tacitus was occupied by tribes who were so virtuous in their marital relations that they excited the admiration of the Roman historian. Monogamy was a distinctive characteristic of the wild men of the German forests who cut to pieces the legions of Varus. And it should ever be remembered that the English people are the lineal descendants of the early German monogamists. But monogamy was not confined to Germany among the ancients, for it was the practice in Egypt, long before history takes any notice of it on the banks of the Rhine. However, the Egyptian marriage law placed the wife on probation for one year, at the end of which time the husband possessed the right to ratify or repudiate the marriage contract. This Egyptian marriage law is another illustration of the degradation of woman, peculiar to all eastern countries. It is worthy of notice that polygamy has always been confined, to a great extent, within the tropical and torrid regions. This fact is suggestive; for it proves how difficult it is to elevate man morally, when the laws of nature tend to degrade him. If monogamy were the law of marriage in tropical countries, would the population rapidly decrease, and the race in a few generations become extinct? Woman, in a torrid climate, ceases to

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