

THE TRAVELLER.

MARRIAGE CUSTOMS.

It is a laudable, and not wholly a useless curiosity, that loves to trace existing social customs to their source. Most civilised nations observe certain rites and ceremonies in marriage, the history of which would be at least amusing. The customs of ancient oriental nations, in this particular, are important to be known, in order to the elucidating of many passages of Scripture: and every intelligent reader of the Bible must know something of these customs. As Christianity was carried forth among the nations first by Jews, it was natural that Christians, for the first generation, should adopt the marriage customs of the Jews. But after Christianity was adopted by many nations, and had reached masses of people, it was natural that the previous customs of those nations should mingle with, and modify the Jewish customs. The nations, under the Roman rule, would be influenced by Roman laws and customs. Before this, one of the Roman marriage rites was that called *confarreatio*, in which a sacrifice was offered, and a cake used, made of corn. This required the presence of witnesses. Another Roman marriage rite was called *coemptio*. This was a farce, in which the parties married pretended to purchase each other with a piece of coin. Though Christians rejected the Roman customs, so far as they embodied rites of pagan worship, yet it might not be difficult to find remnants of these customs in some existing usages; say, for instance, the use of the cake and the ring.

In the early Greek Church, there were two principal forms of celebrating marriage; one by presenting the ring, and the other by coronation of the married pair. The first was on this wise: The persons to be married stood at the door of the chapel. Two rings, one of gold and one of silver, were placed on the table. The priest made the sign of the cross three times on the head of both, and gave them lighted wax candles, in imitation of the nuptial torches of pagans; and then led them into the chapel, where incense was burnt, and a prayer chanted by the choir. Then the deacon uttered a short prayer for the bridegroom and bride, that God would give them children, and peace, and harmony, and all prosperity; the people responding to every petition, *Kurie, eleeson*—Lord, have mercy. Then the priest took the rings and gave the golden one to the bridegroom, and the silver one to the bride, and said, "This servant of God, by this token, espouses this handmaid of God; in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, now and for ever, Amen." Then turning to the woman, he said, "This handmaid of God," &c. Next repeating the sign of the cross upon their heads, he placed the rings on the fingers of their right hands. Then he closed with a prayer, which consists of several perversions of Scripture, to make it give a warrant for such a use of the ring. And after the benediction, the parties were dismissed, unless in cases where the ceremony of crowning was added to this.

The early Russians, being of the Greek Church, had rites somewhat similar, but in some respects different. The bride was presented to the bridegroom at the altar, by the priest. Upon which she prostrated herself, touching her head to his shoe, in token of obedience: and he responded, by throwing his skirt over her, in token of protection. And to the other ceremonies they added that of breaking bread, as a sort of ratification of the covenant. In the midst of songs and dances the priest was wont to approach the bridegroom, and chant one of the Psalms of David, and then take hold of his hair, and thus address him: "Tell me, bridegroom, can you be a husband to this tender woman? Will you not sometimes chastise her with rods? Will you never forsake her when sick or decrepid?" He then solemnly pledges himself to perform these offices of a good husband. Then the priest turns and interrogates the bride—"Whether she will take good care of her husband's family, and be to him a faithful companion, even if he should be blind, or crooked, or decrepid?" As soon as she assents, the priest places upon the head of both a wreath of flowers; and around the circumference of the crown are inserted the words, "INCREASE AND MULTIPLY." At this instant, each of the guests lights a wax candle, and the foaming goblet is presented to the priest: he drinks to the new married pair, and they empty it and return it to him. Then dancing commences, and the ceremony is finished.

The Abyssinians, in their marriages, were wont to practise ceremonies peculiar to themselves; but which, as signs of a mutual contract, supply the place of other ceremonies used by Hebrews. The bride and bridegroom were wont to sit on a couch at the door of the church, when the priest came up, attended with two clerks, or assistants. He held a cross in his left hand, and a censor in his right, and perfumed the couch with incense three times, while his clerks sung a Psalm. Next he cut off a part of the hair of the bridegroom, and then of the bride, and dipped it in wine sweetened with honey. Then he took the hair of the bridegroom, and placed it on the head of the bride; and that of the bride, and put it on the head of the bridegroom, in the place where the lock was cut. Then, having brought water and consecrated it, he placed his hands upon the head of each, admonishing them that they should observe, that God in the Gospel had made them one flesh, no more to be separated. After this the eucharist was celebrated, and the ceremony finished.

The reason for the use of the ring is thus given by Isidorus:—"The giving of a ring by the bridegroom to the bride, may be either a sign of mutual love, or rather that the hearts of both were joined by the same pledge. Whence the ring is placed on the fourth finger. Because it is said, a certain vein in that finger reaches even to the heart." Though the modern anatomist would smile at such a reason, it is doubtless as good as any that can be given. And Appio, an ancient author, speaking of Egyptian observations upon anatomy, says, that the Egyptians "found a very slender nerve, extending from the fourth finger to the heart." And he gives this reason why the ancient Greeks and Romans wore rings upon that finger, and bestowed upon it such honor, to wit, because it contained a connexion with the heart. Thus the use of the ring, and the wearing of it on a particular finger, and the use of it in marriage, originated with pagans. But the practice was early admitted among Christians, as may be shown both from Clement of Alexandria and from Tertullian. And the use of a ring, as a symbol of contracts, became common in other matters, such as the manumission of slaves, the making of a will, &c.

In the ancient laws of the Visigoths, a ring given and received in pledge, with a statement of the contract before witnesses, was equal to a writing, as giving validity to a contract. And some ancient liturgies contain this form of nuptial benediction:—"Bless, O Lord, this ring, and this crown; that as the ring surrounds the finger of a man, and the crown the head, so the grace of the Holy Spirit may surround the bridegroom and bride, that they may see sons and daughters, even to the third and fourth generation."—*N. E. Puritan*.

THE FAMILY CIRCLE.

A MOTHER'S AFFECTION.

Would you know what maternal affection is?—listen to me, and I will tell you.

Did you ever notice any thing with its young, and not observe a token of joy and happiness in its eyes? Have you not seen the hen gather her chickens together? She seemed delighted to see them pick up the grain which she refrained from eating. Did you ever see the young chick ride upon its mother's back, or behold the whole brood nestle beneath her wing? If you have, you may know something of a mother's love.

Did you ever see a cat play with its kitten? How full of love and joy she looks; how she will fondle and caress it; how she will suffer it to tease, and tire, and worry her in its wild sports, and yet not harm it in the least! Have you not seen her take it up in her mouth, and carry it gently away, that it should not be injured; and with what trembling caution would she take it up, in fear that she might hurt it?

Did you ever see a bird building its nest? Day by day, and hour by hour, they labor at their work, and all so merrily; then they line it with soft feathers, and will even pluck their own down, rather than their young should suffer.

A sheep is the meekest, the most timid and gentle of animals—the least sound will startle it, the least noise will make it flee; but, when it has a lamb by its side, it will turn upon the fiercest dog, and dare the combat with him; it will run between its lamb and danger, and rather die than its young one should be harmed.

The bird will battle with the serpent; the timid deer will turn and meet the wolf; the ant will turn on the worm; and the little bee will sheath its sting in any intruder that dares to molest its young.

Many beasts are fierce and wild, and prowl about for blood; but the fiercest of beasts—the tiger, the hyena, the lion, the bear—all love their young; yes, the most cruel natures are not utterly cruel. The snake opens her mouth, and suffers her young to enter her bosom, when they are in danger: this is maternal love.

If, then, the beasts and reptiles of the earth, who are so full of love for their offspring—if they will care for them, provide for them, die for them—how great do you suppose must be the love of a mother for her child? Greater than these, be assured: aye, far greater, for the mother looks forward for the time when the child shall become like a flower in full blossom. A mother's love is the most powerful thing on earth!

All other things are subject to change; all other hearts may grow cold; all other things may be lost or forgotten—but a mother's love lasts forever! It is akin to that love with which God loves his creatures, and never faileth.

Love thy mother, then, my little child. When she is gone, there is no eye can brighten upon thee, no heart can melt for thee, like hers; then wilt thou find a void, a vacancy, a loss, that all the wealth or grandeur of the world can never fill up.

Thy mother may grow old, but her love decays not; she may grow sear at heart, and gray upon her brow, but her love for thee will be green. Think, then, in the time of her decline, of what she has suffered, felt, and known for thee; think of her devotion, her cares, her anxiety, her hopes her fears—think, and do not aught that may bring her gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.—*Merry's Museum*.

"THE MOTHER AND CHILD."—[Goethe relates that he met, in the Campagna of Rome, a young woman nursing her child, seated on the remains of an ancient column. He questioned her on the ruins with which her dwelling was surrounded. She was ignorant of every thing concerning them, being wholly devoted to the affection which filled her soul: she loved, and to her the present moment was the whole of existence.]

"Temples and monuments, and crumbling fane,
Altars, and broken shafts, are scattered round:
Ages long past have sanctified these plains,
And stamped this sacred spot as classic ground,
While Art and Genius here their home have found!
But see! where these old sculptured marbles rest,
A mother clasps her infant to her breast;
She seeks not here to learn what minds unknown
Carved these immortal forms in breathing stone;
She smiles in joy upon her infant fair,
And that sweet babe to her glad spirit seems
Hollier than sculptured forms or poet's dreams;
And in such bliss, Oh! wherefore should she care
Who reared those shafts—by whom those towers were
piled?
The present fills her soul—her heart is with her child

ENCOURAGEMENT TO PIOUS WIVES.—A short time ago as I was conversing with a pious old man, I inquired what were the means of his conversion. For a moment he paused—I perceived I had touched a tender string: Tears rushed from his eyes, while, with deep emotion, he replied, "My wife was brought to God some years before myself. I persecuted and abused her, because of her religion. She however, returned nothing but kindness; constantly manifesting an anxiety to promote my comfort and happiness; and it was amiable conduct, when snuffing ill-treatment from me, that first sent the arrows of conviction to my soul: 'temper,' added he, 'is everything.'"
A Correspondent.

A GREAT WORK.—"The education of our children," said Jo'n Adams to his wife, "is never out of my mind. Train them to virtue. Habituate them to industry, activity, and spirit. Make them consider every vice shameful and unmanly. Fire them with ambition to be useful. Make them disdain to be destitute of any useful or ornamental knowledge."—*Zion's Herald*.

THE very passage of an impure thought through the mind, leaves pollution behind it; and a momentary indulgence of badings guilt, condemnation, and remorse.—*Anon*.