

CHILD WIVES OF INDIA.

To give a fair idea of Hindoo women and marriage customs I must go far back to the ancient times and see how and why customs changed, writes a native of India in the Forum. There was a time when the Hindoo lady was educated and when there were no child-marriages. Some of the "Upanishads," speculations on philosophy, were written by ladies. There are books written by ladies also on mathematics and other abstruse subjects. Of course, they did not write sensational novels, but they were taught music and dancing—dancing, not jumping, hopping and skipping round a hall in the arms of strangers. There were no child-marriages at that time, and the young lady had liberty to select a husband herself.

It seems that the system did not prove a good one in the warm climate, where women develop very early, and it was changed, and the giving of the daughter by the father is the prevailing method at present.

The Brahman has to get his daughter married before she attains puberty. This custom has crept into religion. The Hindoo religion strictly forbids single life for woman or man; especially must the woman be married.

Owing to this rule, if a Brahman's daughter attains puberty before marriage the father is disgraced, he loses his caste and no one will marry the girl. Thus, when a poor man has more than one daughter it is a misfortune for him. The Hindoo father himself has to find out a suitable husband for his daughter, so he goes to a gentleman who has a son. He first makes inquiries about the family, the property, the health and education of the boy. Then he asks the father of the boy to marry his son to his daughter. The father of the son asks for dowry, and the amount of this is fixed according to the means of the man who asks for it, and not of the man who gives it; that is to say, if the father of the boy is very rich, he asks thousands of dollars.

The marriage ceremony is conducted like this: The party of the bridegroom comes to the place where the bride lives and stops in a big house or a temple. The bride's father has to arrange for all this. The bride's father has to look to the comforts of the whole party. They are to be treated as guests. On the evening of the appointed day the bridegroom rides on an elephant or a horse, or in a palanquin, and a long procession is formed. Torches and flower gardens made of wax and paper are carried on their shoulders. Nautch girls dance before the bridegroom. Band music is played and fireworks are set off. It is a beautiful sight to see this procession.

The bride's father greets the bridegroom, presents him with a new dress, a cocoanut, and many other things, and returns to his house. Then again the procession moves on. By the side of the bridegroom walks his sister with a silver lamp, and all the ladies lead the procession, the gentlemen following. In some parts of India the ladies sing marriage songs. When the bridegroom comes near the door the father of the bride again comes to receive him. He presents him a cocoanut and promises to give him his daughter in marriage. This promise is the betrothal. Then he takes the hand of the bridegroom, and escorts him to a seat which is raised in the middle of the canopy, and seats him on it. This raised seat is made beautiful, having small ornamental pillars and a charming arch and a small dome overhead. The whole canopy is illuminated. On the right of the groom sit all the ladies; on the left hand all the gentlemen are seated on cushions. The Nautch girls, in two parties, dance before the ladies and gentlemen.

The bands play, and when the appointed time arrives (the time of the marriage must be observed to a second, and, therefore, there is always a great deal of bustle among the ladies to adorn and make the bride ready), the bride is escorted and brought before the bridegroom by her mother and sister. She stands in the presence of the bridegroom, who also stands, and a yellow piece of cloth is held between them. Meanwhile rice (colored red) is distributed in small quantities to all the guests assembled to be ready to throw it on the pair in token of their blessing.

Then the yellow cloth is removed, and the bride and bridegroom stand face to face. Then the father of the bride stands near and repeats the Sanskrit sentences, which mean: "The bridegroom is not deformed, has not lost caste or has not been polluted, and is healthy. To him I give my daughter in the presence of God, fire and the priests." The bride's father says: "My daughter is healthy; she has a brother. She is not of the same family as the bridegroom. This, my daughter, I give to you. Protect her as her father did."

Then the bridegroom promises: "In religion, in money, conjugal rights and in salvation I will never leave her." This promise is made three times and he knows that he now has a wife, and that he must love and take care of her. And he does this sacredly when, later, he lives with her. After this the sacred fire is kindled, and the bridegroom's and the bride's scarfs are tied together with a knot. The bridegroom takes the hand of the bride and walks seven times around the fire. This is called "the seven steps." All the while the priests chant the Vedic mantras. There are many minor ceremonies after this, and they continue for four days. On the fourth day the bridegroom takes the bride to his house with the same pomp as when he came for her. The young pair ride together, the wife sitting on his left side. The bride stays there one night with her mother-in-law, and returns to her parents. After some months she is sent back to her husband's house for a few months. While living there she occupies her mother-in-law's or sister-in-law's room. She does not even speak to her husband. The utmost modesty is to be observed by a Hindoo woman. She must not talk loudly or giggle and laugh in the streets. The young pair thus religiously married, love each other from childhood, and that love becomes stronger when developed and is everlasting.

When the girl becomes of age the wife and husband live together.

In India the woman is brought up from childhood in the mildest way possible, and is taught the home duties—to love her husband and to obey him. Sometime—I will say in one case out of a million—there is a disagreement, and the wife goes to live with her parents; but such cases are very, very few; I might almost say there is no such case. Of course the widow has not the privilege of remarrying, except in the lowest classes, but the man can marry again.

Another Pole Hunter.

To reach the north pole an architect, M. Hauin, has proposed to the Geographical Society of Paris the construction of wooden huts one or two days' journey apart. He considers Greenland the most favorable locality for an experiment of this kind. Each of the huts would become in its turn a base of supplies for the construction of the next. As the distance to be covered is about 900 miles, a score of huts would be necessary to establish a route to the pole.

THE LITTLE MOTHER.

And Some of the Amusing Things She Does.

It is very amusing to notice the maternal air a girl of four or five summers will assume toward another of two years. In the northwest part of the city lives a little girl named Annie, who puts on such a maternal look when taking care of a neighbor's baby that everybody has to laugh.

Annie's chief weakness was an unconscious yearning to spoil this baby. She was crowding its little inside with cake the other day when its mother came upon the scene.

"Don't give Helen any more cake," said the mother, "I'm afraid it will make her sick."

Notwithstanding this request, Annie thought she knew better, and went in the house for more cake.

A moment or two afterward Helen's mother discovered her child still swallowing cake.

"Annie, didn't I tell you not to give her any more cake? I'll take her in the house if I see you give her another crumb."

So Annie kept the rest of the cake to herself. Little Helen stuck up her mouth invitingly and it almost broke Annie's heart to refuse the child. Helen begged for more cake and not getting it, burst into tears.

Then Annie took her in the arms and said:

"Never mind, Helen. I'll be your mother. You come with me. You can have all the cake you want." And if the mother hadn't stepped in with a slipper, the two might have wandered away to start housekeeping far from her sway.

Girl Cricketers.

Philadelphia girls play cricket, and play it well, too. Just at present the Tioga C. C. of that city has an eleven of sturdy, sun-browned maids hard at work practicing for a game with the masculine eleven, in which the latter are to be handicapped by being restricted to left hand batting and single stump bowling. The girls, who are confident of victory, even wear leg pads—underneath their skirts.

It's a Fact.

If all the devils were cast out of some folks there wouldn't be hardly enough left to look at.

FINANCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL.

As eleven years is said to be the life of the average steel rail, the 10,000,000 tons now in use in the United States must sooner or later make way for others. These renewals involve an annual replacement of not less than 1,727,272 tons.

The Carrara marble quarries are practically inexhaustible. The entire mass of Monte Sagro, 5,600 feet high, which dominates Carrara, is solid marble. About 160,000 tons of marble are annually exported, most of which comes to America.

All the car-building companies in St. Louis—the Laclede, the St. Louis, the American, the Brownell and the St. Charles—have combined. There will be \$5,000,000 of bonds and \$15,000,000 of stock issued to represent the combined properties.

Mr. Samuel E. Morse, the consul general at Paris, has sent to the state department an abstract of the official report on the wheat crop in France for 1894. It is estimated by the French statisticians, says Mr. Morse, that the crops of 1894 throughout the world will be 85 per cent. in excess of the world's demands for consumption and seed.