

It will probably be interesting and encouraging, to young husbands and ardent wooers to learn that the mother-in-law is fast losing her ancient despotism. In some of the aboriginal tribes of India the customs were matriarchal. Marriages were arranged altogether by the mothers, and the bridegroom was forced to live with his mother-in-law. I am utterly unable to explain how such a custom ever superseded marriage by purchase, even when prices were high.

In primitive Greece the bride was purchased from her father by presents or services rendered him. Should it happen that no son was born to her, the father could, at his death, leave her by will as a part of the heritage to any friend.

Owing to the fact that death altogether ignores the ties that bind together human hearts, widows and widowers have always been present in society. The demands which custom makes upon these bereft individuals vary greatly in different countries.

In China, the betrothed maiden who had lost her intended husband by death was much praised and esteemed if she buried herself forever in sorrow. No such demand was made of the betrothed man who lost his fiancé. The widow who refused to survive her husband received more honor than the one who remained inconsolable. These suicides of widows were apparently quite common in China, and were performed in public with great pomp and solemnity. The suicides were announced to the public by a procession through the streets. Two executioners headed the procession, followed by musicians, gaily dressed individuals of both sexes, and the heroine of the fete dressed in red and borne in a palanquin.

The Indian law required the widower to burn the body of his faithful wife with consecrated fires and utensils of sacrifice, while the widow was supposed to deny herself for the rest of her life, and never to pronounce the name of any other man.

The Prince of Marava died in 1710 at the age of eighty years, and his forty-seven wives were burnt with his corpse.

In Rome for a long time the widows who refused to marry were particularly honored. In any case they were forbidden to marry until twelve months after the death of their husbands. The widower, however, could marry immediately after his wife's death. It is not possible to say as to whether the female sex as a whole objected to the widower's short period of mourning, for no doubt they were much sought after by discontented maidens. [5]