

## Youth's Department.

### A CHILD-MARRIAGE.

One day about four years ago, and old Christian woman named "Martha" brought her grandson to our Mission Boarding School. She said his parents were both dead, but that she would pay his fees if we could receive him.

"Bathu Yohou," as he was called (or in plain English, John Duck), was a bright lad about fourteen years old, and could read a little, so he was taken in.

Two years later old Martha came again with a little girl about ten years old and said, "This is 'Jemima,' she is to be Yohou's wife; she has left her heathen parents and is living with me, and I want to have her educated too." So Jemima was also received into the Boarding School.

Shortly afterwards the missionary's wife discovered that the head teacher had registered Jemima as "Bathu Jemima," which meant that she was "Mrs. Duck;" and that the rest of the boys and girls were having quite a little fun about "John and his wife."

Now the missionary's wife, not knowing the law of the land, and thinking that there had only been a betrothal while they were heathen, was provoked, and told the teacher to give Jemima her parents' surname and announced to the school that she hoped there would be no more nonsense.

John was told that when the time came for him to marry he could *choose* a wife and needn't ask Jemima unless he wanted her, and Jemima was told that she could say, "Yes" or "No," just as she pleased, if John should ask for her. He would never think of asking *her herself*, but he would get a friend to ask her parents.

Two years more have gone by—John having passed his examination has a teacher's certificate (not equal to our High School entrance), so he thinks he would like to settle down and take unto himself a wife. Jemima is only a girl of twelve, and he does not want to wait for her.

Jemima's heathen parents hear of this and hasten in to see the missionary. They tell him that six or seven years ago when John's relatives were heathen their daughter was *really married* to John, and that since then they have not claimed Jemima, but have allowed her to live with John's grandmother.

The missionary makes enquiries and finds that it was not a betrothal as his wife had supposed, but a real marriage according to the heathen ceremony as performed by the out castes of this

district. Old Martha had given rupees ten, *i.e.*, about \$3.00, to the girl's parents and rupees three to the Mala priest who tied on the wedding token which takes the place of a ring; then the boy aged twelve and the girl of six went for a ride together around the village on a scraggy old horse, and finally the wedding guests dined sumptuously on pig meat and quenched their thirst with an abundance of *toddy*, *i.e.*, the sap of the palmyra palm, somewhat like beer. Therefore, according to the law of India, John and Jemima, who now are Christians, are held by a *heathen ceremony performed when they were little children to be as man and wife*.

But John says, "I don't want Jemima, I want to marry now and I will not wait for her." The old grandmother says, "I don't want Jemima either," but on close questioning we find that she has turned against the girl because John has threatened to run away to Rangoon if she doesn't take his part.

The missionaries sympathize with Jemima. She has always been one of the most faithful and sensible girls in the school. They call her and ask her mind in the matter. With her usual good sense she replies, "John may go if he wishes, but I will hold him responsible for my clothes and fees until I have passed by Lower Secondary examination; for if he goes inside without a reason it will be a stain on my name; but if I pass my examination I can support myself, or readily get a good husband."

Then the missionary tells John he has no alternative, he must either take Jemima, or give her a bill of divorcement and a promise of support until she received her education. All of which will cost him at least \$50.00.

A week goes by and a man returning from John's village brings in a nice quaka (native dress) and some cakes "for Jemima from John." A few days more and Martha, the old grandmother, comes in to see Jemima and brings her all kinds of good things. The missionary's wife says, "Well, has John gone to consult his lawyer?" The old woman's face breaks out in smiles and she says, "No, he didn't go, we are going to keep *our* Jemima."

Sunday Jemima wears her new dress to church and looks quite happy and contented.

May God bless John and Jemima and in the days that are to come may their home be one of the bright spots in this dark land.

AKIDU.