

AMONG THE ABYSSINIANS.

Their Civil and Religious Marriage Rites.

Curious Superstitions Which Prevail Among the People.

Romance is rare in Abyssinia, writes O. A. Bierstadt. When a girl has reached the discreet age of 8 or 9 she is considered to be in the matrimonial market. If she owns a few cattle or some other desirable property, a boy with half her wealth generally proposes to her father for her, and a bargain is driven over her quite as if she had no more sentiment in her than a cow, which doubtless is often the case. The engagement last usually three or four months. Though the groom often sees his prospective father-in-law, he never lays eyes upon the bride unless he can bribe some female friend to allow him a stolen glance. The bride-to-be may previously have romped with her intended for years, but she would run screaming away if he were now to appear before her.

As the wedding-day draws near, the girl is washed, an event so rare as to call for special note, in a pond where a certain saint's day is celebrated for being the epoch of the sole annual absolution of most of the inhabitants and a dass or bower of green branches over a frame of stakes is erected. In this a great feast is given on the day before the marriage. All the hungry idlers round about strive by hook or crook to get in, and, squatting down on the ground, they gorge themselves with the quivering raw meat of the cow that has just been killed, and with other Abyssinian delicacies. The distinguished guests bless the bride, putting their hands upon her head and getting them well greased for their pains.

Meanwhile a similar feast is given in the groom's abode, and next morning he starts out with his friends, and from six to twelve arkees or bridesmen. They rig themselves up in all the plumage they can possibly borrow and, on approaching the bride's house, fire their guns and have a sort of sham fight with a view, perhaps to allay the groom's nervousness. When the happy man has taken the seat of honor in the bridal bower his bride is brought in, wrapped up in a cloth almost like a mummy, and placed upon a stool. Then the groom is asked whether he wishes to marry the woman before him; they crook their fingers together under the cloth, or, perhaps, kiss one another, and, after any priest or elder present has given some sage advice, the marriage settlement of what each is to bring is finally entered upon, the last, but not the least important, part of the ceremony.

Such are the civil marriages lightly entered into and as lightly broken. On the shortest notice and for the slightest cause a couple will separate, the property being usually divided, the men taking the boys, the woman the girls. Church marriages are more rare and are regarded as indissoluble; once husband and wife have partaken of the holy sacrament together they are united until death.

Women often call each other such names as "my heart," "my mirror," "my enchantment," and men address women as "soft lips," "pretty friend," "man-slayer." There seems to be a desire to conceal the real names, and this is due to singular superstition. The Abyssinians believe, as did the ancient Jews, that the devil often takes possession of individuals. Curiously enough, blacksmiths are regarded with peculiar awe; they are supposed on occasions to change themselves into hyenas; moreover, as a sort of devil they enter into any human being whose true name they can discover and play all manner of antics, hence it is desirable to remain anonymous. The devil possessing a person is usually called Bouda, and he does such an extensive business that many people have found it worth while to claim the power of exorcising him.

Generally women are the ones to be cursed with the Bouda, and any traveler in Abyssinia will have some such story as the following to relate: One of his female servants—never does a man make a journey in the country without a little host of them—complains of faintness and soon after sunset she lapses into unconsciousness. The natives declare she is possessed, and by the weird light of flickering fagots their dusky figures may be seen crouching around her rigid body. The traveler holds liquid ammonia under her nose without effect; nothing short of vivisection seems likely to move her, and, as the case is beyond him, he gives it up to the amateur or professional exorcist.

Though this possession by the Bouda is probably often only feigned, there have been cases which have puzzled the most intelligent of observers. It has been thought to resemble hysteria or

epilepsy, but, whatever it may be, it is well adapted to investing Abyssinian women with additional interest, to giving man one more motive for that incessant study of woman's complex nature, everywhere necessary and desirable.

A Vaccine Factory.
A Greenwich, Conn., correspondent writes: In a cow-house at the side of the old turnpike road, in the quaint village of Cos Cob, two calves can be seen on almost any day strapped to a bench, their feet sticking up in the air and lots of quills protruding from their bodies. Around the room are razors, knives, bundles of quills and ropes. A man is usually in attendance. This is a vaccine factory, one of the first established in this country. The quills remain for a short time in the flesh of the calves. As soon as they become filled with mucus—vaccine, as it is called—they are pulled out, sealed up air tight, and in time do duty all over the world, finding their way to Germany and Australia. Some people imagine that the calves are killed by the process, or are so injured as to be unfit for use. This is not the case, but it is claimed that they are made more healthy by having these sores, for that is all the harm done to them. They seem to suffer very little, and after a few days frisk about as lively as ever. Calves of two colors are preferred at the factory, white and red, and only strong and healthy ones are selected. "Often-times people come to the factory to be vaccinated," said the attendant. "They are afraid they won't get the right stuff—pure calf vaccine. I am not a doctor, and the doctors don't like it very well. I just take this knife that I cut the calves with; so I cut the arm as I cut the calf. I pull a quill from the calf and put it in the cut or scratch. They smile, take a look at the calf, and go home, sure that it's took." There is more demand for vaccine at the present time than at any previous time during the five years past.

The Church of the President.
For a great many years St. John's Church, at Washington, has been known as the church home of the presidents. It is a quaint little structure on H street, directly opposite Lafayette square and the White House. Ever since the church was built a pew was reserved for the Chief Magistrate. In cases where the Presidents happened to be of some other religious faith it has been customary for the president to pay the pew rent as though he attended. Grant did it, although he was a Methodist. Hayes was also a Methodist, but he did not burden the financial officers of the church with the trouble of cashing any of his checks while he was the occupant of the White House. Garfield was one of the old-fashioned Campbellites, but he kept up the good old custom. Arthur is a member of the Episcopal Church, and he was a regular attendant at St. John's. Mr. Cleveland hires a pew in Dr. Sunderland's Presbyterian Church, but it is said that he, too, has notified the officers at St. John's that he will be responsible for the rent of the President's pew. While Mr. Cleveland sits under the ministrations of a Presbyterian, three of his Cabinet, Messrs. Manning, Endicott and Vilas, have rented pews at St. John's and attend the services regularly.—*Boston Traveller.*

Humility.
Humility has this consolation: It finds that the greatest minds have had the least conceit; that Shakespeare bent down from the imperial height of his intellect to be taught by a clown, to be informed by a milkmaid; that Socrates, in his celebrated voyage in search of knowledge with his perpetual question concerning the cause of things, found that knowledge in a workman's shop which he could not find amongst the school of the professors or philosophers; that Newton compared himself to a child who, playing on the seashore, had picked up a shell here and a stone there, and knew no more of them. The bullet of steel is worn smooth and polished when it has passed through the gizzard of an ostrich. The most conceited young prig who ever lived will find his level when brought to the rude experience of the whole world.

The Hen and the Swan.
A Farmer one day came upon a Hen and a Swan which were having a Fierce Dispute, and when he inquired the cause of it the Hen exclaimed: "Why, I expressed my Belief that the Swan's neck was too long."
"Oh, as to that," replied the Farmer, "I was about to suggest that your own neck was Altogether too short, and that you are Sadly in Need of new Tail-Feathers!"
Moral:—Don't criticise a man who who Toes in when you run your Own Boots over at the Heels.—*Free Press.*

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