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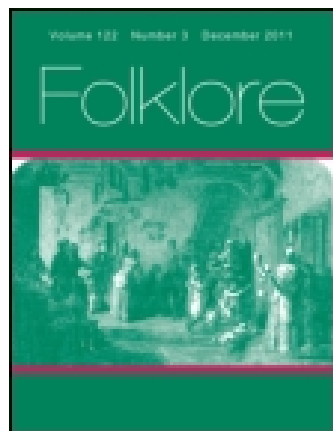
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MARRIAGE CUSTOMS OF THE MORDVINS.¹

CELIBACY is almost unknown among the Mordvins; when it occurs it is almost always the result of a vow, and in places where Russian influence is strong. Sometimes a girl is not married in consequence of a vow to a deity—if hail, for instance, has ruined the crops, or some misfortune has befallen the family. Such a girl is termed the “wife of the hail-king”.

Mr. Mainoff was of opinion that formerly kinship, with one exception, was no bar to marriage. He arrived at this conclusion from the fact that the more the people have come under Russian and Christian influence, the more they avoid marriages between relations. In spite of all his efforts he was unable to discover why unions between closely related couples are illicit. He was simply assured that the prohibition was taken from the Russians; and in the government of Penza he found a general impression that the children born of a marriage between near relations were sickly. He believed himself that the only old national taboo was, on a union between brother and sister, such as is recorded in the following Erza folk-tale narrated to him in the village of Arzamas:—

“Once upon a time there was a brother and sister.

¹ I have taken the facts relating to the Mordvins from the late W. Mainoff's *Mordvankansan häätöpoja*, pp. 114, Helsingfors, 1883.

Their father took the brother to a certain town, where they lived for ten years. The sister came to the town and worked in the same house as the brother. They fell in love, slept together at night, and the sister gave birth to a dog. They had slept together like dogs, and therefore a dog was born."

With this may be compared the Kalmuk proverb quoted by McLennan,¹ "The great folk and dogs know no relationship." The fact of being a fellow-villager, or bearing the same family name, is no impediment to marriage, as there is no necessary relationship. Names, in fact, are generally the result of accident, for immediately after birth the child is taken out of doors by the midwife, who looks round, and gives it the name of the first object that catches her eye. Hence such names as *Potkai* (Horseshoe), *Pinai* (Dog), *Shi* (Sun), *Vatse* (Excrement).² An adopted child can also marry a member of the family of its adoption, as there is no necessary kinship.

There is no fixed age for entering the married state. Among the Erza it is sufficient if the bridegroom be nineteen years of age, but the bride must not be under seventeen. Among the Moksha, on the contrary, the bride must be older than the bridegroom. A lad may marry at the age of eighteen or nineteen, but his wife must be twenty or twenty-one. The betrothal of children under age is scarcely known, though Pallas (*Voyages en Russie*, i, p. 107), in the year 1768, mentions that they were betrothed at a very tender age, as if it were then usual. The Moksha under no circumstances will allow a younger sister to be married before an elder one; but parents do not object to a younger daughter falling in love with a lad and getting children before they can marry in consequence of this social rule.

¹ *Primitive Marriage*, p. 78 (1876).

² The Ostiaks also give names from accidental circumstances. O. Finsch, *Reise n. West Siberien*, p. 540; the Samoyedes, Le Brun's *Travels*, Eng. edit., p. 14; the Kalmuks, Pallas's *Voyages en Russie*, p. 571.

Among the Erza marriages are generally arranged by the parents, sometimes without the knowledge of their children, who have no voice in the matter; but this is not the case with the Moksha; with them some mutual inclination is necessary, and the young couple agree to marry before informing their parents.

Neither the Erza nor the Moksha lay much stress on the virginity of the bride, and it is certainly not a *sine quâ non*. No disgrace attaches to a girl for giving birth to a child; it only proves she has the great merit of being able to bear children. Her child belongs to her father. The Moksha have a saying which alludes to this: "A cow is at the pasture; the proprietor gets the calf." The Erza have borrowed from the Russians an adage of similar import: "The bull may be anybody's, but the calf is ours." Another proverb, common to both branches of the Mordvins, refers to the same thing: "A girl makes a child for her father, a wife for her husband, but a man for a stranger." In some places¹ the wedding-guests break the dishes and smash everything before them if the bridegroom has remarked that the bride is a virgin, and this procedure is regarded by her parents as a special mark of honour. Mainoff opined that this practice was due to Russian influence, but exactly the same custom is reported of the Ostiaks (Ahlqvist, *Unter Wogulen u. Ostjaken*, p. 161), among whom the virginity of the bride seems to be rarely preserved.

In the last century polygamy, though sanctioned, was of rare occurrence, and now, of course, is prohibited.

§ 1. Marriage with capture,² *lises*, is still in force. A young man falls in love with a girl who reciprocates his feelings, and they agree to marry. Sometimes, though rarely, she refuses to make a runaway marriage, *lises*; but if she is willing, the lad communicates their intention to his father,

¹ Sarlei (Nizhegorod); Semeikino (Simbirsk).

² At the end of this paper I have explained the difference between marriage with capture and marriage by capture.

otherwise as he would have no home to go to, and bargains with an easy-going priest to marry them. The reckless bridegroom, "who has plunged into the stream without knowing the ford," in other words, who has brought his bride to church without stipulating beforehand concerning the priest's fee, has to pay heavily for his want of foresight. The young man has also called upon his male friends to assist him in his enterprise. On a given night, about 11 P.M., some ten or twelve of these, in three or four troikas, assemble in the courtyard of his father's house, and, on hearing the first cockcrow, they whip the horses and dash off at full speed. On reaching the bride's village the young man goes alone to fetch his sweetheart, seizes her by the waist, and carries her back to where he had left his friends. She scratches and pinches him the whole time, but the more she resists the better pleased is her abductor. With the help of his friends he throws a cloth over her head, packs her into a carriage, and then they all drive off in hot haste.

Meanwhile the bride's people have perhaps remarked that something is amiss, and that she has been abducted. The alarm is given, the men of the village are summoned, and a pursuit begins. The pursuers have eventually either to return empty-handed, or they overtake the abductors. In the latter case a tussle ensues, resulting in broken teeth, bruised heads, and sometimes broken legs. If the young man's party is successful it carries off the girl to church, where the priest performs the marriage ceremony according to the Russian rite.

Marriages of this kind end in a huge carouse given at the house of the bridegroom to the parents and relations of the bride. Her father pretends at first not to wish to enter the gate, makes an uproar, and demands his daughter back; but after a glass or two of spirits he relents, and is led by the arm into the common room. Custom requires that the bride's mother should resist all efforts to appease her, and she has to be carried in by force. An outraged

parent never dreams of making a formal complaint about the abduction of his daughter, as it would only be heard before the old men of the village, who look upon these marriages as quite natural. However, among the Erza they are becoming more and more rare, and it is only among the Moksha that marriage with abduction is a prevalent custom.

In the last three paragraphs Mainoff, who believed that marriage by capture or elopement, *lises*, was the old and sole mode of taking a wife formerly among the Mordvins, has, I think, put the matter too strongly; for elsewhere he incidentally mentions that, though the taking of a wife should have originated by *lises*, the wedding is held in the same manner as if it had happened with the consent of the parents, with the sole difference that the bride's parents and relations must be appeased with a larger quantity of spirits and *pure*,¹ and Lepekhin² states that if the lad is overtaken he must pay for it with a fearful thrashing, or even with his life; but if he escaped he kept the bride, but had to pay the *kaly*m, though he was allowed to do this by instalments. Capture or elopement is therefore only an incident in a marriage by purchase. However, Mainoff was told that fifty years ago marriages by simple capture, *lises*, took place, with which the matter ended, for there was no carouse.

§ 2. Wooing, as a formal act, is always done by proxy.³ In the Penza government, if a young man has no special object of his affections, he sends spokesmen "to take a look" at some girl. He may even be present, but must not disclose the object of his visit. If the girl is attractive

¹ A kind of beer mixed with honey.

² *Tagebuch d. Reise durch verschied. Provinz. d. Russ. Reiches in 1768-9*, p. 106.

³ Baron v. Herberstein in 1549 (transl. by R. H. Major, i, 91) mentions that in Russia it was held to be dishonourable and a disgrace for a young man to address a girl in order that he might obtain her hand in marriage.

the spokesmen ask the parents if they intend marrying her, what presents they would give, and in this way negotiations are set on foot.

Elsewhere, if a father wishes to marry his son to some girl, or if the lad has already set his affections upon a certain maiden, the first act is to woo her in the prescribed manner. Either the young man's parents or specially appointed matchmakers proceed to the house of the bride-elect to broach the subject to her people. When the visit is made in the first instance by intermediaries, they report the result, and if their propositions have been favourably received, the young man's parents go there on a later occasion. It is considered very unlucky that the object of their visit should be prematurely known. Should they encounter anyone by the way who remarks, "Ah! I know where you are going; you are going to make a match for your son," they will at once retrace their steps and postpone their errand for another day. If they are fortunate enough to reach their destination unnoticed, they are received by the girl's parents as though the purpose of their coming were unsuspected. By hints the young man's father lets the girl's parents understand that it would be by no means a bad business were they to become connected. As soon as the object of the visit is thus disclosed the visitors are removed to the seat of honour, and negotiations are now begun. A wax candle is placed on the table, and prayer is made in the following terms:—"O mother, *Yurt azyr ava*,¹ O *Kud azyr ava*,² that giveth suck, O deceased ancestors, bless our intention; give a young couple luck, riches, and many children."

The girl's father then cuts off a corner of a loaf with three slashes of a knife, salts it, and places it under the threshold where the Penates are believed to frequent. This is called the "god's portion". For a long time they haggle about the price (*pitne*) to be paid for the bride and about

¹ Goddess of the homestead.

² Goddess of the dwelling-house.

the articles to be "put on the table", such as the bride's presents, the quantity of spirits, *pure*, and provisions required for the carouse. The day of the wedding carouse (*proksimme*) is also fixed. When everything is agreed to the girl is summoned, and she is asked if she wishes to be married. Silence is taken to give consent.

§ 2a. Melnikoff, writing of the Moksha of Simbirsk in the year 1851, mentions a curious custom of wooing. The young man's parents first make offerings at home to *Yurt azyr ava* and *Kud azyr ava*. These gifts consist of dough figures of domestic animals, which are placed under the threshold of the house and of the outside gate, while prayer is made to the goddesses and to deceased ancestors. The father then cuts off the corner of a loaf placed on the table, and at the time of the offerings scoops out the inside and fills it with honey. At midnight he drives in profound secrecy to the house of the bride-elect, places the honeyed bread on the gate-post, strikes the window with his whip, and shouts: "*Seta! I, Veshnak Mazakoff, make a match between thy daughter Kodai and my son Uru. Take the honeyed bread from thy gate-post and pray.*"¹ After this speech *Veshnak* gallops home as hard as he can, while *Seta* dresses in haste and sallies forth in pursuit with his children and relations. Should the former be overtaken he is flogged within an inch of his life; if he escapes, the pursuers drive on to his house and demand if he is at home. He is now bound to show himself at the window in proof that he has not hidden somewhere on the road. *Seta* cannot now oppose the match or refuse his daughter, so he returns home, prays to *Yurt azyr ava*, *Kud azyr ava*, and to his ancestors, and offers up the "god's portion".

§ 2b. A very similar custom was formerly in vogue in the Moksha village of Napolni (Simbirsk). The young man's father, taking a staff and half a round loaf, pro-

¹ Though Mainoff did not believe the words of the original have been quite correctly translated, he has not amended the translation.

ceeded to the girl's house, struck the door with his staff, and when it was opened threw in the half loaf and took to his heels. He was immediately pursued, and if overtaken was mercilessly cudgelled; but he was not only safe if he managed to pass beyond the village boundary in time, but his pursuers had to make terms with him and agree to the match.

§ 2c. Another type of wooing is found in the district of Bugulminsk. The parents and some relations of the young man proceed to the house of the bride-elect, and, on entering it, ask outright whether her parents will give their daughter in marriage. At the same time they demand a direct answer, and will not sit down till it is given. Meanwhile the women of the party just arrived lay on the table a loaf, salt, and spirits. Before the girl's father has expressed his assent to the match no one touches the things. Should he decline the offer, the bread and spirits are left on the table for three days, evidently to allow time for reconsideration; but if he shows his approval by sitting down to table, all present follow suit, and he immediately sends to invite his relations and neighbours to the entertainment. The respective parents now come to terms about the *pitne* or kalym. When this important matter is settled the girl's father takes the young man's parents by the hand, leads them to the bride-elect, who is hiding in some corner, but will not let them see her till they have paid a special fee. She is then asked if she will marry the young man in question, and generally gives her consent, as she has possibly agreed with him to do so long ago. She then gives the suitors presents made by herself, and her future father-in-law gives her money in return.

§ 3. The negotiations which take place between the heads of families about to be connected by marriage are often very lengthy; nor are they broken off, though meanwhile an elopement, *lises*, should have taken place. The Erza haggles most about what should be "put on the table". This is generally a crown, a breast-buckle, and other orna-

ments. With the Moksha everything, down to the most trifling matter, must be agreed upon beforehand, including the quantity of spirits to be brought by the young man's parents. Whatever arrangements are finally decided upon, they always remain verbal, and are never in the form of a written contract, as is the case with the Russians. The bride's price is from 25 to 100 roubles in cash, and also the expenses of the feasts and carouse, amounting to 50 or 60 roubles. With the Erza, this money goes into her father's pocket, who usually regards it as a compensation for the ornaments and gifts given to his daughter. The Moksha pay the *pitne* directly to the bride, who buys for herself a bed, furs, and wearing apparel. The Mordvins have no marriage portion or dowry,¹ in the full sense of the word, though they have something that partly answers to it. The articles that compose it are entirely worked by the bride and her friends, and so are entirely her own property, though sometimes her father will give her a calf or two or three sheep; but such a gift is not compulsory, and is rather to be regarded as a wedding-present.

Of course, it sometimes happens that a match is broken off; then a question of compensation may arise. Among the Moksha this is a matter of mutual private arrangement if possible; otherwise it must be brought into court. It once happened at Kemesher (Saratoff) that a match had been arranged, and the usual preparations were on foot, when suddenly the bridegroom had to be removed to a madhouse. The girl's father demanded compensation for the expense he had already been put to, but the court decided against him. On the other hand, at Verhis (Penza), in the year 1877, a young man heard that his intended was keeping company with the bone-setter of another village,

¹ Georgi, *Descrip. de toutes les nations de l'empire de Russie* (in 1766), i, p. 88, states that the Voguls have no marriage portion, and both he and Isbrants, in 1691, quoted by Le Brun, *op. cit.*, p. 144, mention that the Voguls obtain their wives by purchase, and that the marriages are conducted for the most part without ceremonies.

and on that account renounced his engagement. The matter came before the court, which sentenced him not only to pay costs, but also an additional ten roubles to the girl for spreading a scandalous report about her, and further, to receive twenty strokes with a rod, "that he might learn henceforth not to calumniate a girl."

§ 4. The wedding carouse, *proksimme*, or "hand-striking", forms one of the most essential features in the whole series of marriage customs, as the match is now finally ratified, and Makarius states expressly that, after it, the young man passes every night beside his bride. The period at which it takes place varies. According to Makarius, the Erza of Nizhegorod held it three days before the wedding, which did not take place for two or three years after the wooing, all which time was spent by the bride in preparing a trousseau for herself; but generally it seems to take place either simultaneously with the negotiations about the kalyim, as recorded in § 2c, or when these are definitely settled.

On the day of the carouse there is first a gathering of the bridegroom's relations and friends at his father's house. When the guests have arrived, the proceedings of the day are begun with a prayer to *Chim Paz*, the sun-god: "O father *Chim Paz*, bless a good business, grant good luck, grant many children."

The "god's portion" is then offered, and a little brandy is spilt under the threshold. After this, the whole party, with a supply of pies and spirits, starts for the home of the bride-elect with much jubilation and singing. If her parents, who have received information beforehand of the coming of the match-makers, are inclined to the project, they either drive out by the horse-gate to meet them, or they meet them at the gate with bows, while carrying in their hands bread and a salt-cellar. All then enter the common room. The young man's father is again placed in the seat of honour, and, when everything is accurately agreed to, they begin to strike hands. This ceremony consisted

formerly in the future fathers-in-law seizing the tie-beam with the left hand, and taking each other's right hand, with the formula, *ked koshkek*, "dry thy hand". There is, however, only one Moksha village where all this is done.¹ Elsewhere they merely strike hands, without seizing the tie-beam.

The bride's mother now sets on the table the loaf and salt-cellar, with which the guests had been met. Her father opens the salt-cellar with a knife, and, holding the latter above his head, utters the above-mentioned prayer, adding to it the name of *Shkai*. All present bow in silence, and raise their hands above their heads. He then holds up the loaf, and hands the knife to the bridegroom's father, who, with three slashes, cuts off the "god's portion", and gives it, on the point of the knife, to the bridegroom, who first takes it into his hands, and then passes it to the bride's father, who salts it, carries it on the point of the knife—under no circumstances in his hands—and places it under the threshold. The rest of the loaf is divided among those present, and the bridegroom must taste it first. After this, the provisions and spirits brought by the bridegroom's party are laid on the table, all present sit down, and the feasting and drinking begin. The bride is not present; she is either sitting with her friends in another room, or is at some relation's house. In course of time the bridegroom's relations come to her to make her acquaintance, for many of them have not seen her before. She gives them presents, made by herself, to show that she is diligent and a good worker, and sends an embroidered handkerchief or a new shirt to the bridegroom, who must wear it, for the first time, on the wedding day. For these gifts her future parents-in-law kiss her, and the young man's mother praises the bride for her intelligence and industry. If the bride and bridegroom are from the same village, the rela-

¹ Mainoff seems to have been under the impression that this is a genuine Mordvin custom, but I believe it must have been taken from the Russians. See Ralston, *Songs of the Russian People*, p. 265.

tives of the latter must invite the bride's relations to their houses and entertain them. The company then separates, and awaits the day of the wedding.

§ 4a. The following account of the carouse differs so considerably from the above, that it must be given separately. It is related by Melnikoff, of the Erza of Teryshevsk (Simbirsk), who are greatly Russianised, and have borrowed many customs from their Slav neighbours. On the day of the carouse the bridegroom proceeds, with his father, to the house of the bride-elect, taking all the articles agreed upon, including spirits and a barrel of beer. They enter the house without a word or the least salutation, lay bread and salt on the table, and place money on the loaf.¹ If the bride belongs to another village, the bridegroom does not accompany his father, nor under any circumstances does he see the bride before the wedding. At the carouse the bridegroom, if present, sits in a corner, and does not utter a word the whole time. His father, after a prayer to God, proffers spirits and beer to all the bride's relatives who are present. Then begins "placing on the table". The purchase, properly speaking, is now made. The bride's father demands a full price, then reduces it, and finally they come to terms. They pay twenty or thirty roubles of this "table money" to the bride, and never more. After this comes the "crown money", which amounts to sixty roubles additional. Then they agree about the fur coats and other articles of dress to be given to the bride. Finally the bride's father demands "pies", together with a *vedro* (3.25 gallons) of spirits, a small barrel of beer, a shoulder of cooked meat, and a cake for the girls, into which a pear has been baked. The bride is not present on these occasions.

On the day fixed for the "feast of holy pies" the bridegroom's relations assemble at his house, and, after refreshments, drive in a long procession to the home of the

¹ This reads like a wooing custom, though the words "agreed upon" show the two parties must have met before.

bride. The bridegroom, however, does not accompany them. The party does not go empty-handed, but takes with it spirits, beer, and the sacred pies, which are an ell-and-a-half long and half-an-ell broad, but contain nothing inside. On reaching the house, the bride's relations go outside to meet them. The pies are broken up, and the pieces are placed in a meal-trough, which is brought into the common room and laid on the table. When once the pies have been accepted, a girl can no longer choose another man, and her parents no longer consider her their own, but call her *iha*, *i.e.*, belonging to the bridegroom's family. * As soon as the pies have been brought in, candles are lit before the holy pictures, and all begin to pray. After that, they eat, drink, and make merry, but do not dance. Meanwhile, the bridegroom's relations enter the courtyard, and take the girls' cake from the carriage. The bridegroom's brother, or nearest relation, raises it up, the girls surround him, and, with much laughter and shouting, try to get possession of it. When the party is about to start home, the girls sing to the bridegroom's father or the spokesman :

"Here are greedy fathers-in-law ; the horses, which are waiting, saddled and bridled, have torn up the grass with their hoofs. On the backs of the steeds are sitting men in red coats and in morocco leather boots of goatskin."

Then the girls begin teasing the bridegroom's father by saying :

"Father-in-law, father-in-law, thou hast boasted, hast greatly boasted that thou art rich : according to thee thou hast a couple of houses, but thou hast only one, and attached to it is but one barn, in the barn there one bin, in the bin one basket ; *kili kali*,¹ in the pot there's no meal at all ; the meal isn't ground, the water is full of salt, the dough-trough is on the lime-tree, the twirling-stick is still on the fir-tree ; the pigeons turn away, fly to

¹ This indicates the sound produced by tapping the fingers against an empty dish.

other people's barns, picked up here and there a grain and carried it to the father-in-law's farm ; they ground it between two coals, sowed it in a besom ; in the besom they brewed beer ; they baked pies and brought them to us here ; devilish bad are the pies, the cakes are worth a farthing. Eat, consume our pies ; our pies are like the wheaten bread of Murom, but thy pies are like the oven-rakes of old women."

When the unlucky bridegroom's father has reached the anteroom the girls will not make way for him, but surround him, shake his skirts, and again sing the thoroughly Russian song of abuse of the father-in-law. On the third day of "holy pies" the bridegroom's father goes alone to the bride's house with half a *shotoff* ($3\frac{1}{2}$ pints) of spirits and a barrel of beer, and then the day for the wedding is fixed.

§ 5. The day before the wedding is called "the weeping day" by the Erza of Teryshevsk (Simbirsk). On the evening before it the bride's relations assemble at her house. Some heat the bath for her, others plait her hair into a tail, but she herself weeps bitterly. After her friends have washed her and loosened her hair, they sit down to supper together, and sing marriage songs. No men are present. The bride and her friends do not go to bed, but pass the night sewing handkerchiefs and singing songs. Before dawn on the "weeping day" the bride goes to her parents and on her knees requests their blessing. When this has been given, she goes outside by the back door, bows profoundly towards the east five times, saying :

"Bless me, O father ; bless me, O mother ; bless me, O humid earth-mother ; bless me, heaven and earth. I now go to seek a good blessing."

She then returns home, sits in the centre of the room and weeps, surrounded by her friends, who also weep and sing songs. Afterwards the girls carry her to a neighbour's—in Arzamas (Nizhegorod) she is carried on a felt cover by men. On passing the outer gate she again bows five times, and seeing that it is beginning to dawn, recites :

"O mother Dawn, bless me with thy red sun, with thy bright moon and with thy bright stars. The dawn is dawning for me. Father drives me away. The lovely sun is rising; my freedom disappears."

After this they proceed to the neighbour's, and, when the sun is fully up, the bride and her friends return home.¹ Her mother receives her, seats her at table, and offers her pancakes. The bride and her friends then start off to visit all her relations and friends in rotation. At each place she is treated to spirits, beer, and pancakes. When the visits are finished, she is carried home by her friends to be dressed. Her mother again meets her, sets a loaf, a salt-cellar, a pot of groats, an egg-cake and a baked egg on the table, and lights a candle before the holy pictures, to which she makes three bows down to the floor. The bride approaches the table weeping; her father offers her beer in a ladle which must not be full, and says: "Look! here, my child, is something for your work; take and drink as much as you like." She laments with tears that a full ladle has not been offered her, praises her work and her submissiveness, and requests to be allowed to entertain her friends, "who had carried her in their white arms." She will not drink the beer proffered by her mother, as to do so would be "like tearing out her own heart". Her father meanwhile advances to the table, presses his hand to his breast, and breaks out in tears. Her friends take her up under the arms and carry her to him. She now recites:

"Stop, father, stop! Do not fear me. Stop, my kind sun. Do not be alarmed at me. I do not desire thy house. I will

¹ Elsewhere in Simbirsk, the bride—apparently alone—starts at dawn for the house of some relation, and sitting at his gate, says: "My mother's brother (or my brother)! let me in, my beloved, for a moment to warm myself. A thundercloud rolls above my head, wets my beautiful white shirt, wets too my silk kerchief. Conceal me, dear, from the thunderclouds. I am no longer in father's favour—he has driven me from home." She is usually admitted and entertained with pancakes, after which she returns home.

not send thee on my business. Give me thy good blessing now that I am going among strange people. Bless me at a strange father's and mother's house. Just look, dear father, towards the open field; behold the kind sun through the window. On the open field grows a lovely birch, in the sky shines the kind sun, variegated leaves are fluttering in the wind, by wind and storm they are blown down to the ground. Stop, father, stop! Look not at the kind sun, gaze not at the lovely sun. The real sun shines not, a real white barked birch is not growing. Thy child stands before thee. Variegated leaves are not fluttering in the wind, are not shaken to the ground by violent gusts. Hot tears are falling from the face of thy child. Stop, father, stop! Fear me not, my kind father, be not alarmed, my darling father. For thy bread, thy salt, thy drink, thy food, thy teaching, I fall down at thy dear feet, I kiss thy precious hand. I do not mind spoiling my gala-dress. I sink down at thy feet. Give me thy blessing. I keep kissing thy hands, I do not spare myself. Bless me, my father, to live with a stranger, to do the work of a stranger."

The bride now falls at her father's feet, lets her head fall on his knees and kisses his hands. He takes up a holy picture, sets it on his daughter's head, and says: "God bless thee, and I too bless thee." She then kisses her father and walks towards her mother, repeating the words: "Now I go to my dear mother. Disperse, stand aside, good friends and neighbours, now I go to the stove-mother; they say mothers stand near the stove-mother." Her mother, in fact, is standing near the stove, and replies: "Come, my child, come, my dove, come, my darling. Come, that you may attain your desire. Thy mother sits near the stove-mother. Come, I will embrace thee to my heart." After receiving her mother's blessing, her friends take her up under the arms and carry her to a neighbouring house. In the street she recites: "My father did not need me; my mother was angry at me; they blessed me to live among strangers, to do the work of strangers." On reaching the house her friends undress her, and all go to rest thoroughly exhausted.

§ 5a. Sometimes a so-called "girls' feast" is held the day before the wedding day. As soon as she has risen, the bride dresses herself in her ordinary clothes, without any ornaments, and starts off to invite her friends, male as well as female, to her house to assist in making preparations, and to console her in her grief. Many of her girl friends have arrived at her house before she has returned home, and when they see her approaching they bar the gate, and do not allow her to enter, for she is going to be married, and has thus deceived them. The following dialogue takes place :

"Who are you?"

"Daughter Kate."

"You are not daughter Kate, you are old woman¹ Kate."

"I'm not old woman Kate."

"We don't know you. Our Kate is drunk, and carried away."

After a long parley, during which the bride repeatedly affirms that she is really their unhappy friend Kate, whom bad men wish to separate from her friends, the girls at last relent, and admit her. As soon as she has entered the room she takes from a chest a shirt made by herself, and sends it by some old woman to the bridegroom. He must wear it on the day of the wedding, and also give a present to the bringer. In the afternoon the work begins, and the praising of the bride. She sits on a stool with her face to the stove, does not touch work, but bursts into tears from time to time, replying that she is unworthy of her friends' praises, and without them she would pine away with sorrow. The following is an example of a song, widely spread among the Erza, from Kemeshker (Saratoff), such as is sung by girls in praise of a bride :

"Our Kitty is gentle as a lamb,
Our Kitty is good as the sun,
Our Kitty's head is like a flower,

¹ This expression in Mordvin implies, Mr. Mainoff remarks, that after the carouse the bride is *de facto* a wife.

Our Kitty's breasts are like knolls,
 Our Kitty's legs are like oak trees,
 Our Kitty's small hands are like a child's,
 Our Kitty's body is like a lime tree,
 Like a lime tree it does not bend,
 Like a lime tree it does not break."

§ 56. In some places, on the day fixed for "the girls' feast", the bride must go off to say good-bye to her relations and friends. She is accompanied by two near male relations, usually her brothers. Her legs are so enveloped in bandages that she can scarcely walk, and she is in her every-day clothes. As she leaves the house she must courtesy three times to the ground, saying: "O earth, earth, take me! O wind, wind, carry me!"

After this she takes mould from under the threshold with her finger tips, and thrusts it into her bosom. With her head sunk upon her breast, the bride now starts off to visit her relations, says farewell to all, and thanks them for having enjoyed their goodwill. She announces her marriage, and bitterly bewails her lot which forces her to leave them, and begin the new life of a slave. Her two companions then take her up, and hurriedly transport her out of the room. They go to the next house, and the same scene is renewed. In the evening the future father-in-law, bringing with him a barrel of *pure*, pays a visit to the bride's parents. He offers the first ladleful of this to the bride, with the words:

"As *pure* is good, may thy life be also good. As *pure* is strong, may thy love be also strong. As *pure* conquers, conquer grief. As *pure* is clean, be thou clean. As hops are rich in leaves, may thou be rich in children. As *pure* is rich in hops, may thou be rich in cattle."

Then he dips his finger in the *pure*, besprinkles the bride, and offers her a ladleful, which she must drink empty.

¹ Among the Erza of Nizhegorod this visit of the father-in-law takes place three days before the wedding. On the eve of the wedding

When this ceremony is concluded, the girls sit on benches and set to work, or, in default of work, they sing and converse.

§ 6. The preceding section narrates what takes place at the house of the bride on the day before the solemnisation of the wedding. Now we must turn to the house of the bridegroom, to see what happens contemporaneously there. In the morning a number of girls, who have been invited, come trooping into the room carrying sticks, the heads of which are covered with women's caps, and adorned with ribbons. Placing themselves in a row before the oldest members of the family, they sing :

"Bless us, silver-haired old man ; bless us, aged mothers ; bless us to invite guests to your house. The bell, hanging by a silver chain to the top of your house, has begun to ring. The sound of the bell is heard around your house. This bell bodes luck to you."

The old man settles what relations must be asked to the feast, and blesses them, with the words : "Go, and may the Lord preserve you." The girls take their departure, and every one whom they invite must give them a present. On their return, they sing :

"We have made visits in truth. What an extraordinary number of relations ! We have had great trouble to see them all ; we have waded in water up to the waist, in mud, up to the knees."

After taking some refreshment, they go to heat the bath-house for the bridegroom, but, before doing so, ask a blessing : "Give a blessing, grey-haired old man, that a thoroughly good bath may be heated auspiciously."

He replies : "Depart, and may the Lord be with you."

day the bride visits at the bridegroom's house, and brings him presents, but he must be absent, either at a neighbour's, or hiding in an outhouse.

Meanwhile, the women that have been invited¹ arrive at the bridegroom's, bringing groats, butter, eggs, meat, etc. His mother receives them in a friendly manner, and invites them to sit at table. When all the guests have arrived, the oldest female member of the household lays on the table a pie an ell long, stuffed with various things. First, a layer of groats, above it egg-cake, sour milk thickened in the oven, and again, eggs and groats. The outside is glazed with egg, and the whole surface stamped with impressions of signet-rings, spoons, and tumblers. While the pie is being placed on the table, the girls sing :

"O God, give good luck at this moment. Defend, O Creator, from the malicious man. Grant, O God, to the bridegroom abundant increase of crops and cattle."

The pie is then cut lengthways and across into four pieces, and the women set to eating, drinking, and making merry. No one goes to bed that night, as preparations have to be made for the feast of the morrow, after the wedding ceremony in church. In some places, in the Penza and Simbirsk governments, the bridegroom is expressly driven out of the house in the course of the evening. Some say it is done that he should not disturb the preparations ; others, that it is in compliance with an old custom, going back to a time when a man had to be on the look-out how most suitably to capture his bride.

§ 7. As the customs observed by the Erza and Moksha between the eve of the wedding-day and the entry into the bridal chamber on the night of the wedding are not quite the same, it is more convenient to give them separately. Among the Erza, on the eve of the wedding-day, the bridegroom's friends assemble at his house and help to prepare the bride's equipage. This consists of a tilt, covered with linen, which, if the bridegroom be rich, is covered with needlework, that may have taken many

¹ Women alone seem to be invited, as only they can assist in making preparations for the feast of the morrow.

months to work. A thick candle, and several thinner ones, have also been made ready for the occasion. The bridegroom's father lights the smaller ones before the holy pictures, but sets up the large one on the threshold. It is called "the house candle", and such a one is used in every home at family prayers. He then turns towards the pictures with a prayer to God to bless the bridegroom, and after that, turning towards the large candle, he exclaims:

"O father, *Chim Paz*, illuminate thy son. Illuminate his eyes to see good and evil. Make him to live prosperously. Make his heart amiable towards his wife, make his wife's heart amiable towards him. Give her plenty of children, and of wealth."

The bridegroom now gives a loaf to his father, who cuts off a piece with three slashes, takes it to the threshold and places it near the candle. With a loaf and a holy picture he gives a blessing to his son, and then makes the signal for departure. The party¹ then mounts into vehicles and drives² to the bride's house, but always by a circuitous route through the forest and across fields, unless it happens to be in the same village as the bridegroom's dwelling. After driving for a short distance the *cortège* halts, and the best man³ walks round it, slashing all the time with a

¹ It is not positively stated here whether the bridegroom accompanies the party or not. In some places (Nizhegorod) he stays at home, and next day hurries to church secretly, and on foot.

² Among the Erza of Teryshevsk (Simbirsk), the bridegroom's mother drives off first with a crown on her head and a candle in her hand. His father follows second, but before getting into his carriage bows down to the ground towards the east, and throws a handful of money in four directions. The bridegroom has the third place. Before the party starts, the horseman who leads the way circles thrice round it with the sun. At Chistopolsk (Kazan), the bridegroom also goes with the party to the bride's.

³ Often there are two best men. The principal one of the two is also master of the ceremonies, and ought to be very quick at repartee and badinage. Sometimes the youngest paternal or maternal uncle, or the eldest brother of the bridegroom, acts in this capacity, while an

sword or an axe. Sometimes he pretends to cut down a bush from the path, a reminiscence, Mr. Mainoff believed, of the time when obstacles really stood in the way when proceeding to carry off a bride by force. As soon as the party is seen approaching by the people at the bride's house the gates are barred, and a dialogue ensues :

"Who are you?"

"Merchants."

"What wares do you want?"

"Live wares."

"We won't negotiate."

"We shall take by force."

"Try it."¹

The bridegroom's party tries to open the gate, but in vain ; and only after a long parley, and after promising to

aunt acts as bridesmaid on his part ; for there are two bridesmaids to represent and defend the interests of the bride and bridegroom respectively.

¹ In Simbirsk the bridegroom and his party are received by the parents of the bride with bread and salt, with the words : "Be welcome, come within." But just before this they are assailed by the girls in the house with abusive songs. They sing at the bridegroom : "You empty head ! what sort of bridegroom are you ? You can't turn a boot round, you can't count money. You thief ! you visit ill-conditioned old women, and leave your shoe there. Why have you delayed till now ? Didn't you find your boots. The bride is not like you. Place on one side of her a barrel of millet, on the other a barrel of walnuts, but count all the grains." Turning to his companions they shout : "You deceivers on horseback ! you have the dress of riders, and in your short fur coats are two pockets, and there you keep your hands."

In some parts of Simbirsk the bridegroom's party, headed by the best man, proceeds to the bride's village the evening before the wedding-day, and lodges there for the night, but does not go to the bride's domicile till early next morning. I think this must be the case also—though it is not expressly stated—in the narrative in the body of the text, where the proceedings of the eve of the wedding run into those of the wedding-day, without a break and without mention of night time. The dialogue above, therefore, really takes place, I presume, on the morning of the wedding day, not on the eve.

pay an entrance fee in money or spirits, is it allowed to enter. In some places the bargaining is renewed at the doors of the porch and of the common room, and additional payments must be made before the party is permitted to set foot within. After it has been at last ushered into the principal apartment, the bridegroom's mother, and the women with her, immediately arrange on the table the eatables and drinkables they have brought with them, and all eat standing. While the others are eating, the parents of the bridegroom start off to invite the bride's relations to the wedding.¹ At the same time the bride's friends dress her in a wedding dress, and envelope her legs with linen bandages till she can scarcely walk. When finally decked out she is brought back into

¹ At Bugulminsk, after the bridegroom's mother has laid out the eatables, before starting to invite the relations, she is led round the house by the bride's people, and must leave a round loaf in every room.

At Teryshevsk (Simbirsk) the parents do not start off to invite the relations, but the future mother-in-law, while the others are eating, proceeds to a neighbouring house, where the bride is being dressed, and is accosted with these words: "Look, girls! is not the thunder rolling and lightning flashing, accompanied with white hailstones?" The mother-in-law replies: "Fear me not, be not alarmed. The thunder is not rolling, lightning is not flashing, hail is not falling. Thy mother-in-law is bringing an escort. Art thou beautiful and handsome? Art thou useful, and a lover of order? I have come to see thee and bring a whole party with me." The bride replies: "Welcome, mother-in-law, welcome." Her future mother-in-law then offers her a ladleful of wort with the right hand. The bride refuses to take it from the right hand, and will only accept it from the left hand. This the mother-in-law declines to do, and at last the girl gives way. Dancing succeeds this ceremony, and the mother-in-law, returning to the house of the bride's father, thanks him for such a well dressed and dutiful daughter-in-law.

In Simbirsk, after the bridegroom and his party have arrived, the bride is taken by her friends to the relation's house where she had taken refuge the day before (p. 431 *note*), and where she remains till fetched by the best man. Meanwhile, the bridegroom, who remains at the bride's paternal house, hides himself.

the common room, when she falls at her parents' feet, begs their pardon, and asks for a blessing. The bride's father takes the round loaf, with which the bridegroom's father has already blessed him, and which has been brought for the purpose, and with it blesses his daughter, holding it over her head, and saying :

" May thy life be smooth, as this loaf is smooth. May thou be as rich as this loaf is rich in seeds. May thou be fruitful as this loaf is fruitful. *Vedava* hear us, and have mercy upon us."

In the loaf there is a hole scooped out in the undercrust by the bridegroom before leaving home, but Mainoff was unable to discover its significance.¹ After receiving the parental blessing the bride is taken up under the arms and carried out of the apartment. In some places this is done by the nearest relatives of the bridegroom, in others by men of her own family, but in either case she resists by pinching and scratching her bearers. Formerly she seized the doorpost three times, and only at the third time, when the best man had struck it with a sword close to where she was holding on, did she loosen her grasp. Nowadays she seizes thrice in succession the tie-beam, the door of the room, or the doorpost of the porch. The best man and the bridegroom's relations loosen her hands and try to carry her in such a way that she can seize nothing. However, a quick girl can grasp something oftener than three times, and tries her utmost to oppose being carried away ; for her comrades praise the more she resists, and extol her dexterity and her love for her parents' house. At last she is conveyed out of the house, when all halt and bow to the gate, for there or in the courtyard is the abode of the god that protects the dwelling-house. The following prayer is made to him :

" *Kardas sarko*, the nourisher, god of the house, do not

¹ Compare the hole made in an omelette by the bridegroom in Ralston, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

abandon her that is about to depart ; always be near her just as thou art here."

The bride is now put in the tilt-cart, to be driven to church, but she stands the whole time, supported by a companion and her future mother-in-law. On reaching the village boundary the *cortège* halts at a signal from the best man, who distributes spirits to the party. While the others are drinking, the bride gives presents to her friends, and with tears extols their good qualities. Before the procession again moves off the bride leaves her carriage, throws herself at the horses' feet, and beseeches them not to be in too great a hurry to carry her away to strange men. She promises to take good care of them if they will but take her back to her parents : twists ribbons into their manes and forelocks, declaring she will always decorate them in future.¹ Getting no reply from the horses, she tries to break away from those around her, but is seized and hurriedly bundled into her carriage. The *cortège* again moves off with the reluctant bride, who tries to throw her head-dress or some part of her dress on to the road, to cause as much delay as possible. When she perceives that she must resign herself to her fate, she cuts or tears off a tuft of her hair and sends it by the best man as a memento to her mother. At last they arrive at the church, where the marriage is solemnised according to the Russian rite. When the ceremony is over the priest exhorts the young couple to kiss. The bride resists and tries in every way to avoid being kissed, even striking and pinching the bridegroom. But all this is make-believe and for the sake of custom, for

¹ According to a variant, she beseeches them to forget the evil she has possibly done them if she has not sufficiently spared them. She then gives them cloths and ribbons, which are plaited into their manes and forelocks (Bugulminsk). In Simbirsk the bride goes through a similar ceremony on reaching the church. She bows down to the horses' feet, saying : "Thank you, good steeds, for having brought me so quickly to my destination." She then presents them with copper money, cloths, and cakes.

if she allowed herself to be kissed for the first time before others she would never have any peace afterwards. During the struggle the father-in-law comes to assist his son and holds the bride by the scruff of the neck till the young man can kiss his wife. The bridegroom then requests the bride to sit at his side during the journey to his house, though he knows she will not consent, but will have to be led by force to the carriage. When this has been done the whole wedding party dashes off at full speed to the abode of the bridegroom. On reaching the gates¹ they are found bolted and guarded by the girls of the bridegroom's village and the bride's companions, who sing songs relating the previous love-adventures of the bridegroom; for it would be a great reproach if he had never had any, and would show that he was such a lout that no girl cared to look at him. But before they begin to sing the bridegroom dismounts from his carriage, slinks in unperceived by a side-entrance, and runs off to hide in an outhouse where the old women have prepared the nuptial bed. The bride is carried into the common room in the arms of some of the party, and now makes no resistance.² Her father-in-law meets her with a holy picture in his hand, and the nearest female relation of the bridegroom covers her with hops. On being brought into the common room she is placed opposite the stove near her friends, who continually abuse her husband, declaring he has one leg shorter than another,

¹ In some parts of Simbirsk, on reaching the bridegroom's house, the best man detaches the body of the carriage in which the bride has sat from the axle—a symbol, no doubt, that henceforth she is not to leave her husband's house.

² Among the Erza of Teryshevsk (Simbirsk) there are no songs sung on reaching the bridegroom's house. The bride orders the best man "to light her father's 'blessing', so that she shall enter a strange house with her own light." The candle is lit, and, holding it in her hand, she enters the house. Some female relation of the bridegroom, wearing a fur coat turned inside out, with a crown on her head to which is attached a man's cap, meets the bride, and from a hat full of hops she holds in her hands throws a handful over the bride.

and calling him lopsided, toothless, etc. The bridegroom's relations have to purchase the silence of the girls by giving them spirits, after which they are driven out of the room. The bride is then carried to the stove or fire-place, to become acquainted and good friends with it. She bows to it and beseeches it not to dirty her, but to love and obey her. Then she sits on the oven and a child is handed to her. Her mother-in-law gives her a glass of *pure*, which she drinks and then returns the child to her mother-in-law. While the rest of the company¹ is eating and drinking, the bride is carried to the outhouse serving as a bridal chamber, where her husband has remained since leaving his carriage. She does not go willingly, but tries to free herself, though her bearers pay no heed to her struggles, shove her into the room with the words, "Here, wolf, is a lamb for thee,"² and bolt the door. After a lapse of some minutes a bridesmaid brings in some spirits and a pan containing an omelette. She makes the couple eat and drink, and then they are left alone for half an hour. After this they are raised from the nuptial bed and brought with rejoicing into the common room, where all the guests impatiently await them. The young man proffers spirits to all present, and his bride gives presents chiefly made by herself. In doing this she bows down to the feet of each person and does not rise till the recipient has placed his hand on her head, drunk the spirits, and wiped his mouth with her gift. Each guest in turn gives her something, generally money.

After the wedding, the couple stay together a whole week, after which time the bride returns home on a visit to her parents. For a whole year she leads a happy life, and does not soil her hands with any household work.

¹ In the last century composed entirely of the bridegroom's relations and friends.

² *Variant*: "There is a wolf for thee there" (Erza of Teryshevsk). The bride is referred to as a lamb by the Magyars (*Magyar Folk-tales*, p. 414), and also by the Esthonians (Kohl, *Travels in Russia*, p. 388), though not in this connection.

On the day after the wedding, in Teryshevsk (Simbirsk), the bride takes a pail, and goes with her mother-in-law to fetch water. She bows politely to all she meets; her mother-in-law shows her the water, which she then draws, carries home, and sets on a bench near the stove. Her mother-in-law then thanks her for her obedience. This is called "showing the water".

In Simbirsk, about five days after the wedding, the best man, and two or three of the bride's relations, come to the house of the young couple. The bridegroom's relations again assemble their friends, who bring materials for the feast. After laying these on the table, they pray :

"Grant, good God, that all the relations and friends shall love the young couple; grant that their cattle and crops shall thrive."

The pies that have been brought are cut in four, and all eat and drink. When this is over, the guests drive home, and the bride is taken home by her relations on a visit, her husband fixing how long she is to stay away.

§ 7a. The customs of the Moksha, on the wedding-day, are as follows :—Between 7 A.M. and 8 A.M. the bridegroom's relations, who are about to take part in the wedding, assemble at his father's house, and sit down to a small breakfast. His father, rising from his seat, raises above his head a round loaf, on which is placed a salt-cellar and an omelette, while he exclaims :

"Great *Shkai*, exalted *Shkai*, here is a round loaf and a round egg for thee. Illuminate thy son; illuminate his eyes to see good and evil. Make his life bright. Cause his heart to be warm towards his wife; cause his wife's heart to be warm towards him. We give thee a loaf, do thou give him bread; we give thee the seed of a hen, do thou give him the seed of a human being. Give him luck, wealth, and many children."

After this prayer, the father takes a knife and presents it to his son, whom he exhorts to cut off, for the first time in his life, the "god's portion". This the bridegroom does

with three slashes, then bites a small piece off it, lets his relations do the same, and throws the remainder into the burning stove, where the fire-god has his abode. The father then takes the loaf and a holy picture, and blesses his son, who must kiss the picture, the bread, the salt, and the omelette. His father wishes him success in his new life, and gives him general advice how he is to treat his wife. After doing this he gives the signal for departure.

All mount into their vehicles except the bridegroom, who remains at home, and has to hide himself. When the party has passed the outer gates, opened for it by the best man, he bows thrice to each gate-post, exclaiming: "As you have let us out, so let us in." After this he marches thrice round the wedding-party, with a drawn sword, or with a scythe in default of one, reciting imprecations against evil-wishers. He scratches, in four places, the tree-mark of the bridegroom's father, to which he then adds the bridegroom's own mark, that the good spirits may be able to know whom they must help.¹ Finally the party arrives before the bride's home.² The people within have long seen it approaching, and hasten to bar the outside gates. Naturally, a conversation begins, with the question, who the arrivals are, and what they want. The party is only admitted eventually on payment of a fee of from thirty to thirty-five kopeks; but, on entering the courtyard, it is not allowed to enter the house before another payment at the porch-door, nor to enter the common room without a third outlay. All this money goes to the bride's father. The bridegroom's father, when descending from his carriage, takes

¹ In Nizhegorod, the best man walks thrice round the wedding-party, against the sun, holding a holy picture. He then places himself in front of the party, and scratches the ground, backwards and forwards, with a knife, uttering imprecations against evil spirits and malevolent persons.

² Milkovich, writing in the year 1783, says that the bridegroom's party was received at the bride's house with such insulting songs, so grossly expressed, that the older and better men composing it would burst into tears.

with him a forty-pound loaf, from which the "god's portion" has already been cut off at home, groats, 100 or 200 pancakes, two or three pork pies, about fifty omelettes, and the quantity of spirits agreed upon. All these are placed on the table, and become the property of the mistress of the house, with which the bride's parents—not the bridegroom's—entertain the guests. After a family prayer, the bridegroom's father pays the *kalym* to the bride's father, and all sit down to eat and drink. At the same time, a long stake is brought in, one end of which is stuck in between the tie-beam and the roof, and from the other end of which are suspended the presents to be given by the bride to the guests. When all is ready, she shows herself from behind a curtain, and begins lamenting her misfortune. With tears in her eyes, she then presents shirts, handkerchiefs, etc., for the most part made by herself, to her parents, her parents-in-law, and to her other relations. During this time she is not in full dress, but only in a white skirt, girt with a girdle, and a cloth on her head. She does not receive gifts in exchange, as her object is to show how diligent she is, and what a treasure her parents are losing in her. Her girl friends praise her diligence in songs, narrating how she could sew for a hundred persons; how *Vedyn azyr ava* had helped her from her great love for her. "When the bride span, the old woman (*i.e.*, the goddess) span; when the bride wove, the old woman wove; when the bride sewed, the old woman was sewing. Just let the bridegroom find himself such another worker; just let him look for one. He certainly won't find one, for the old woman loves her; the old woman helps her."

After this giving of presents, the bride retires behind the curtain to be fully dressed, and in place of her comes forth from behind it an old woman, in bridal attire, and wearing a fur coat, turned inside out, who dances before the company, twists herself about, and exhibits all sorts of quick, dexterous movements. She naturally excites laughter; and this is her object, for she announces that

she wishes the bride may awake joy in men, that all around her may laugh, and that the bride herself may laugh and smile all her days. After this performance the old woman retires.

Meanwhile the bride has been dressing, and, when this is completed, she is led into the room, covered with a red silk kerchief, and made to sit between her own and the bridegroom's bridesmaid. All now rise from their seats, and prayer is made to *Vedyn azyr ava* to bless the future wife, to mitigate her pains of labour, and to give her abundant offspring. Her father and mother then give her their blessing. During the prayers and blessing a large candle is burning on the threshold, and is not extinguished before the termination of the wedding ceremonies. The bride is then carried on men's shoulders, seated in the decorated tilt-cart¹ which the bridegroom had had made for her, and afterwards they go for the bridegroom. He is taken to church in a carriage-and-pair, and lies in a recumbent position, covered with a hide. Around this carriage drive the vehicles of his girl relations, who sing songs to belittle the family of the bride.² Before the bride's party, led by the best man, have gone a quarter of a mile, he halts it, and marches round the tilt-cart with his drawn sword to drive away evil spirits, or, after halting the *cortège*, he scratches a ring round it with a sword. This ceremony is again repeated before reaching the church.

After the solemnization of the marriage by a priest, the party drives straight to the bridegroom's house. Here it is received at the gates by the oldest man in the house, who cuts a notch with an axe in the door-post to mark the arrival of a new addition to the family. At the threshold of the house the young couple are met by the bridegroom's

¹ In Saratoff the bride is pushed into the tilt-cart by the best man, who is armed with a sword or a scythe.

² It is not stated whether the bride's party and that of the bridegroom join before reaching the church, or whether they drive there independently.

mother,¹ who places before his foot a hot pan of hops, which he must kick away as far as possible. It is then set before the bride's foot, who must do the same. In some places she kicks it three times, and the bridegroom does not kick at all. If the pan rolls gently it shows she will be a gentle daughter-in-law. If it makes much clatter, it portends she will be noisy. Should the pan fall bottom upwards, connubial life will be unhappy ; but if it does not turn topsy-turvy, and no hops are upset, a happy future may be anticipated.²

As soon as the best man and bridesmaid have raised the young couple from the nuptial bed they prepare to take the bride to a river. A procession is formed, at the head of which walk two or more of her companions, carrying empty tubs ; behind them follows an old woman carrying on her head a round loaf, on the top of which is placed an omelette ; the best man and the bridesmaid, with ladles and barrels of wort, occupy the next place, while behind them walks the young wife in a bare shirt, ungirt and bareheaded. During the whole journey from the house to the banks of the river, the best man and the bridesmaid sprinkle the path with *pure*. The young wife carries a great pile of towels on her head, and holds a hen to be sacrificed to the water goddess, *Vedyn azyr ava*. On reaching the river she drowns the hen, throws the loaf and the omelette into the water, while the old woman loudly utters the following prayer :

“O mother, Mistress of the Waters, thou art clean ; make her

¹ Among the Moksha of Penza she meets the young couple at the gate, and sprinkles them with water from a spoon. The pan-kicking incident is omitted.

According to Milkovitch, in the last century, the young wife was here met by the father and mother of the bridegroom with their caps and fur coats turned inside out. Then followed the pan-kicking.

² There is a gap here in the narrative I have followed, as to what takes place between entering the house and being taken to the bridal chamber, but what occurs is probably the same as with the Erza.

clean, wash her from disease and iniquity. Permit her frequently and successfully to bear children. Permit her to see her children's children. Be a mother to her; love thy daughter."

After this invocation the bride either plunges entirely into the stream or she is drenched with water, and the remainder of the *pure* is upset into the river; then all return home in the same order.

On re-entering the house the bride is received by her mother-in-law, who gives her a new name, such as *Vechai* (the Darling), or *Masai* (the Beautiful), or *Pavai* (the Lucky One), or *Tozai* (the Healthy), or any other name she prefers. The ceremony is performed as follows: she leads the young wife by the hand to the stove, from which she takes a loaf of bread and strikes her on the head with it, saying: "I call thee *Masai*."¹ After this she leads her by the hand to the oven; the daughter-in-law places her hands upon it with the palms downwards, and her mother-in-law feeds her with bread, meat, eggs, and salt, out of hand, in such a way that the bride need not make the least movement, with the words, "Just as the stove never leaves the room, do thou never leave it."

In the Penza government, on the second day of the wedding, the young wife is again dressed and led by the other girls to a river to fetch water in a large bucket. On their way there they sing songs, and on their return besprinkle each other. The rest of the day is spent in dancing and merry-making.

On the third day of the wedding, prayer is made to *Ban azyr ava*, goddess of the bath-house, and to *Kud azyr ava*,² when the young wife offers to the first a new oaken

¹ In Simbirsk and Penza it is the best man who takes the bride to the stove, and, striking her on the head with a loaf, gives her a new name. Among the Erza a new name is also given to the bride, but on the third day of the wedding.

² In some places the bride offers to *Ban azyr ava* and *Ved azyr ava* by laying money, bread, and salt under the bench in the bath-house for the first goddess, and by throwing them into the water for the other divinity. (Moksha of Nizhegorod).

pail, and decorates the house with linen cloths and towels. The feasting lasts a week or more, according to the means of the parents. Sometimes a whole month elapses before a village settles down into its normal condition.

A wife during her whole life must never show her bare feet to her father and mother-in-law, and on that account women work in boots, for they fear to insult their ancestors.¹ With the Moksha of Nizhegorod the bride wears nothing on her head for six weeks. She is then invested with one, with a curious ceremony. After a prescribed prayer the mother-in-law or oldest woman of the house mounts upon the roof, opens the smoke-hole, and then gives the young wife a head-dress, with these words: "The old women of thine ancestors wore such an one, and order thee to wear one."

Among the Moksha of Saratoff, for the first year, the bride is termed *Odyrava* (young woman), or *Vechova* (beloved), and she goes about bareheaded. After that period she is invested with a head-dress in the same way as described, and receives the name of *Parava* (good woman), or *Mazava* (beautiful woman).²

§ 8. Separations and divorces are extremely rare, for the

¹ So, too, the Yakuts (Böhtlingk, *Ueber die Sprache der Jakuten*, iii, pt. 1, p. 67) do not allow the father, mother, or grown-up relations of a husband to see his wife's head uncovered or her feet bare. Ostiak women cover their faces before the grown-up men of their husband's family (Ahlqvist *Unter Wogul. u. Ostiak*, p. 160). Among the Kirgiz, a young wife must not show herself to her father-in-law or to any male relation of her husband for three years (Vámbéry, *Das Türken-volk*, p. 249). From this it is tolerably certain that the Mordvins brought with them from Asia the taboo against a wife showing her bare feet to her father-in-law.

² Not receiving the head-dress of a married woman for a year might be compared with De Gaya's statement (*Cérémonies nupt. de toutes les Nations*, p. 15) that in Poland young married women were considered girls till they had given birth to a son. The custom seems based upon a similar conception. With the Votiaks, too, a young married woman dresses for months, sometimes more than a year, like a girl. (Georgi, i, 71.)

Mordvins are of opinion that toleration and patience must be pushed to their extreme limit before such courses are adopted. There are a couple of sayings which illustrate their point of view. A Moksha says, "Wedlock is a fetter," and an Erza, that "Wedlock has forged together, no one can break it open." But this tenet is, I imagine, of recent growth, for Lepekhin, in 1768 (*op. cit.*, p. 106), averred that in heathen times the Mordvins had the right of selling their wives and children, and taking others. For a widow to re-marry is not considered in the least reprehensible, and is of frequent occurrence, for they have no theories about a future world in which a husband and wife will again meet. Among the Erza she must always dedicate six weeks to the memory of her late husband, after then she may think of marrying again. The Moksha are stricter in one respect, in requiring her to wait for a whole year; but then she is at liberty to live where she will, while an Erza widow must reside with her father-in-law, either for the rest of her life, or till she finds another husband.

A Mordvin who has lost his wife is much inclined to marry a sister-in-law. Writing in 1783, Milkovich relates the following wooing ceremony, which is very similar to the one already described at p. 423. If the man was refused in the first instance by his father-in-law, he laid secretly a small loaf on the table of the latter, with the words, "Get me my sister-in-law." Having done this, he ran away, was pursued, and if caught, received a sound thrashing. But if he was lucky enough to escape, he was given his sister-in-law in marriage.

Having now given a description of Mordvin marriage customs, I shall first make a few observations, and then recapitulate the main incidents, the better to compare them with similar points of resemblance in Slav, Finno-Ugrian, Turkish, and Mongol marriage ceremonies, though I have not been able to find very full accounts of some of these.

Marriage Restrictions.—We cannot be quite sure whether the Mordvins were originally divided into tribes or not, and

whether they were exogamous or endogamous. Their near neighbours, the Votiaks, are said to have formerly possessed a tribal organisation (Georgi, *Descrip.*, i, 65), but nothing is mentioned with regard to marrying in or out of the tribe. Ahlqvist (*Culturwörter*, 220), using language as a test, believed the Finns never coalesced into tribes. But beyond the Ural mountains, whence the Mordvins originally wandered into Europe, people, at about the same stage of civilisation as theirs was a few centuries ago, like the Samoyedes (Finsch, 543) and the Yakuts (Böhtlingk, iii, pt. I, 72) maintain a tribal system, and prohibit marriage within the tribe. Hence there is a presumption that at one time the Mordvins were also similarly divided with a like restriction. Mr. Mainoff's belief, that the only prohibited marriage among the Mordvins was that between a brother and sister by the same parents, rests on slight evidence, and should be received with reservation. It is true that Isbrants, in 1692 (Le Brun, 153, 144), states of the Ostiaks that consanguinity was no bar to marriage, and that the nearest relation was as acceptable as a stranger, while the Voguls could not marry within the fourth degree of consanguinity; but as he was a passing traveller his statement requires verification. For while Plano Carpini (Hakluyt, i, 62), who travelled in 1246, averred that the Tatars (Mongols) marry even near kinsfolk, save mother, daughter, and sister by the mother's side; that they marry a sister on the father's side; yet Rubruquis (Hakl., i, 109), who was in Tartary in 1253, declared that the Tatars (Mongols) kept the first and second degrees of consanguinity inviolable, though they paid no regard to degrees of affinity, since they married in succession two sisters. Marco Polo (Col. Yule's 2nd ed., i, 245) mentions that the Tatars may marry cousins. Timnovsky (*Travels through Mongolia to China*, ii, 303) says first-cousins are allowed to marry; and adds that the Mongols keep their genealogical registers with such care that they never lose sight of the degrees of affinity.

Marriage with Capture.—§ 1. By this I understand capture of a bride, associated with some other form of marriage, such as that by purchase. In marriage by capture, a man carries off and appropriates a woman, and that ends the matter. Mr. Mainoff was certainly of opinion that the old habitual method of obtaining a wife among the Mordvins was by capture, without, however, assigning any special reason for this belief. He probably imagined that it was a necessary survival from a remote epoch, when it was the only way of securing for oneself a wife. But this hypothesis is, I submit, an erroneous one. As marriage by purchase is, or is known to have once been, a usage among the Finns, Esthonians, Cheremis, Votiaks, Voguls, Ostiaks, Samoyedes, Turks, Jakuts, and Mongols, its origin among the Erza and Moksha Mordvins can be of no recent date; its antiquity must be very great, reaching back, for all we know, to the polished stone period. No doubt during the centuries that have elapsed since purchase of the bride became an institution there have been concurrently endless instances of capture of women made by men of one tribe at war with another. But these instances hardly explain marriage with capture. Georgi (*Descrip.*, i, 71) describes the capture of girls among the Cheremis and Votiaks almost in the same words as Mainoff. If the abductor is overtaken he loses his bride and receives a sound cudgelling. Should he escape, he consummates the marriage before witnesses, so as to get her at a reduced price, for the parents, in spite of this outrage, will not part with her for nothing. The marriage is afterwards celebrated in the usual way. Here the reason of the capture is simply to lower the price of the bride, and the capture itself is merely an interlude in a marriage by purchase. Ahlqvist (*Unter Wogulen*, p. 159) mentions that the Ostiaks occasionally resort to capture to shirk paying the kalym, which is often enormous, and requires years to pay. The Avars and Khevsurs of the Caucasus frequently run away with a bride for the avowed reason of

displaying their spirit and gallantry, but they have, notwithstanding, to pay the kalym in order to avoid a blood feud. In folk-tales there are many instances of tasks imposed by a father on the suitor for the hand of his daughter, where the tasks, if successfully performed, have a double function; they serve to obtain a valuable object—a kalym, in fact, for the father of the bride, and likewise test the suitor's courage, dexterity, and hardihood. Any one of these three very natural reasons for eloping with a girl—(1) to reduce her price, (2) to avoid payment, (3) to exhibit courage—when translated into action, attaches itself in a perfectly natural and spontaneous manner as an incident in marriage by purchase. It is self-evident that capture for either of the first two reasons must be posterior in time to the institution of the practice of paying for a bride. And if marriage with capture is as ancient as marriage by purchase, its cause is to be found rather in the innate universal desire to display courage,¹ than as a survival of a still older practice of taking women captive in time of war. Capture for the third reason may be regarded as a stereotyped task imposed by custom, based on the double sentiment that a wife is not to be obtained too easily, and not without giving some proof of daring.

The special incidents accompanying the act of capture in § 1 seem to corroborate this view. For though the young man's friends accompany him to the girl's village, he goes alone to the house to carry her off—though there may be a suspicion that he has prearranged the affair with her—as if that must be the individual act of the bridegroom, to prove his personal intrepidity. Of course, it is likely enough that actual elopement, without any sort of subsequent ceremony, and without payment of the kalym, occasionally happened, but that it was ever the

¹ For instances of savages that require proofs of courage as qualifications for marriage, see H. Spencer, *Principles of Sociology*, i, 621, and E. Westermarck, *The History of Human Marriage*, pt. i, 24.

rule during the last few centuries is open to grave doubt.

Wooing by Proxy. § 2.—This is common to the Slav, Finno-Ugrian, Turkish, and Mongol peoples. But the incident that the match-makers should not be noticed on their way to the house of the bride-elect is Russian. (See Ralston, p. 265.) The prayers and offerings to the house-gods and to deceased ancestors, made on this occasion, can be paralleled by those made by the Chuvash, Tatars, and Yakuts; the maxim that "silence gives consent" is also found among the Yakuts.

*Wooing with Bread.*¹ § 2a, 2b, 8.—Here bread is evidently a symbol of maintenance. By leaving a loaf at the house of the girl's father, the wooer means that he, or he that he represents, will keep and maintain her. An old Russian wooing custom of a similar nature, though more elaborate in its details, is recorded by Jenkinson, in the year 1557 (Hakluyt, i, 360). In this, a man sends to the object of his affections a chest containing a whip, needles, silk, thread, spears, etc., and sometimes raisins and figs; meaning that if she offends she will be whipped; that she must sew and be industrious; and that if she does well she will have all good things. The running away of the wooer, who is not only safe if he passes a certain boundary in time, but compels his pursuer to agree to his terms, might be explained in the same way as marriage with capture. The wooer was bound to show his adroitness and fleetness, so

¹ It will be noticed that bread plays a considerable rôle in the wedding ceremonies. Wooing is made with it. The bride and bridegroom are both blessed with a loaf, and with a loaf the bride is struck on the head when receiving a new name. But this use is probably borrowed from the Russians, with whom bread is also used as a symbol. At a little Russian wedding, Kohl (*op. cit.*, p. 520) saw a pretty girl, led by a couple of peasant lads, and carrying in her hand a sabre thrust through a loaf. She followed immediately behind the bridegroom. He understood it to mean, obviously, that it was a warning, in the olden time, to the bridegroom that he had undertaken to defend his bride and furnish her with bread.

that, if he was superior in these respects to his pursuers, he gained his object by virtue of these good qualities ; the stereotyped task set by custom had been victoriously accomplished.

The incident in § 2, that the bride is only to be shown on payment of a fee, is quite Turkish ; see Vámbéry, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

*The Carouse.*¹ § 4.—1. Assembly of relations at bridegroom's (*i.e.*, at his father's) house. 2. Prayers and offerings to the household gods. 3. Drive to bride's home with provisions and strong drink. 4. Received with bread and salt. 5. Hand-striking.² 6. Prayers and offerings to the gods. 7. Feasting and drinking [at the expense of bridegroom's parents.³ Bride not present⁴]. 8. Bridegroom's relations make acquaintance with bride. 9. Bride gives presents [bridegroom not present]. 10. Return home.

Variant. § 4a.—1. Bridegroom [if of same village as bride] and his father go to bride's home with supplies.

¹ This seems to answer to the Chuvash "driving with presents". After the wooing, and the negotiations about the kaly, the bridegroom and his parents visit the bride, and pay the rest of the kaly. They bring wheaten bread with them. The bride's father places this, with honey, on a dish, washes himself, and goes with a loaf and three ladlefuls of honey into the courtyard. Here he prays towards the sun to *Thore*. He offers another loaf and honey to the mother of the gods, and to all the divinities in whom he has confidence. The bride's mother gives her new relations shirts or linen cloths, and entertains them and the neighbours with food and drink, when they also dance and sing. They then fix the day for the wedding, and separate. (Georgi, *Reisen in Russland* (in 1770), ii, 852.)

² A Russian custom ; see Ralston, p. 265. At Lett courtships, the bride's father and the suitor join hands when the girl has given her consent (Kohl, p. 382). As the Magyar word for betrothal means "clasping the hands", the Magyars have probably borrowed the custom from their Slav or Teuton neighbours.

³ With the Kalmuks, too, though the feast of betrothal is held at the tent of the bride's parents, it is at the bridegroom's expense. (B. Bergmann, *Nomad. Streifereien unter d. Kalmuken*, iii, 146.)

⁴ Possibly because it is supposed to be no affair of hers, but merely of the respective parents.

2. Enter without salutation. 3. Bread, salt, and money laid on table. 4. Eating and drinking [bridegroom takes no part.¹ Bride not present]. 5. Negotiations about kalym, etc. 6. Return home.

Feast of Sacred Pies. § 4a.—1. Assembly of relations at bridegroom's. 2. Drive to bride's home, with pies, cake, and strong drink. 3. Welcomed; pies accepted [engagement cannot now be broken off, = hand-striking]. 4. Bride's girl friends bully and abuse bridegroom's father.² 5. Return home.

*Weeping-day.*³ § 5. (The day before the wedding).—1. Before dawn, bride asks for parents' blessing. 2. Bows outside towards the east five times. 3. Weeps at home, surrounded by friends. 4. Prays at gate, and carried to neighbour's. *Variant.*—Goes at dawn to a relation's [begs for shelter, as she is driven from home]. 5. Bride carried to relation's in turn.⁴ 6. Returns home; offered half-empty ladleful of beer by father. 7. Refuses beer offered by mother. 8. Asks for and receives parents' blessing. 9. Carried to a neighbour's. 10. Goes to bed there.

*Girls' Feast.*⁵ § 5a. (The day before the wedding).—1. Bride leaves home to invite friends. 2. Refused admission on her return. 3. Sends shirt to bridegroom. 4. Her friends praise her.

Variant. § 5b.—1. Bride [in every-day clothes] starts with

¹ Probably because he is looked upon as a mere cipher, the arrangements of the marriage resting with the parents alone. This rather points to Russian influence.

² Quite Turkish; see Vámbéry, *op. cit.*, p. 232; but also Russian.

³ With the Tatars of Kazan and Orenburg, on the eve of the wedding, the bride covers herself with a veil, and her companions visit her to weep with her over her approaching change of state. (Georgi, *Descrip.*, ii, 24.)

⁴ Part of the day preceding the wedding is spent by the bride in paying farewell visits to her relatives (Ralston, p. 276).

⁵ This social gathering is the "girls' party" of the Russians, from whom it has probably been adopted, though the incidents mentioned by Mr. Ralston (*op. cit.*, 271-6) are different.

brothers to take leave of relations. 2. Courtseys thrice at gate. 3. Takes mould from the threshold [abode of house-god], and puts it on her bosom. 4. Bewails her fate to relations in turn. 5. Returns home. 6. Father-in-law visits, proffers *pure*, and blesses her.

Day before Wedding (at bridegroom's house). § 6.—1. Girls arrive at bridegroom's, carrying sticks dressed with caps and ribbons. 2. Ask his father to bless them to invite guests [only women]. 3. Invite guests and return. 4. Ask a blessing to heat bridegroom's bath. 5. The guests arrive, eat and drink. 6. Sit up all night making preparations for feast. 7. Bridegroom sent away from the house before night.

Afternoon of Wedding-day (Erza). § 7.—Assembly at bridegroom's. 2. Prayer to *Chimpaz*. 3. Father blesses with loaf and holy picture. Bridegroom's parents, bridegroom [sometimes], and relations start for bride's village [best man armed with a sword]. Pass the night there.

Wedding-day (Erza). § 7—1. Bridegroom's party refused admission at bride's¹; only enter on payment. *Variant.*—Bridegroom's party received with insulting songs by bride's girl friends, but her parents welcome it with bread and salt. 2. Eatables and drinkables brought by party are set on table and all eat and drink [bride not present]. Bridegroom's parents start off to invite bride's relations [before starting his mother sometimes leaves a loaf in each room]. *Variant.*—His mother goes to see bride dressing at neighbour's; gives her beer and returns. 4. Bride dressed by friends in private room; then brought to common room. 5. Bride blessed with same loaf [a hole scooped out in its under-crust] as bridegroom was blessed with. 6. Bride [violently resisting]² carried outside; after prayer to house-

¹ This is customary in some parts of Russia. (Ralston, p. 285.)

² Mentioned by Jenkinson as Russian (Hakluyt, i, 360), and regarded by Mainoff—erroneously, as I believe—as a survival of the custom of marriage by capture.

hold god is put into tilt-cart [stands the whole way, supported by mother-in-law¹ and friend]. 7. Wedding *cortège* halts at village boundary; bride gives presents; best man distributes drink. 8. Bride falls at horses' feet; gives them ribbons and money. 9. *Cortège* moves off [bride still resisting] to church; [bride sometimes thanks horses]. *Variant*.—In last century, bride escorted to church half-way by her relations and rest of journey by bridegroom's friends alone, who had come to meet her there.² 10. Marriage solemnised after Russian rite³; bride refuses to kiss bridegroom⁴; his father assists him. 11. Bridal party drives to bridegroom's, where best man detaches body of bride's carriage.⁵ 12. Bridegroom received with derisive songs by girls; slinks in by side entrance and hides in nuptial out-house. 13. Bride carried⁶ into common room and covered with hops.⁷ *Variant*.—Bride walks in, carrying her father's

¹ With the Letts the bride is seated in her mother-in-law's lap, and her bridesmaid is at her side. (Kohl, p. 381.)

² A very old custom, probably, for Vámbéry (*op. cit.*, 239) mentions that though a Kirgiz bride is sometimes escorted part of the way to her husband's tent by her youngest brother, yet she must appear quite alone at the *aul* of her father-in-law.

³ In Lepekhin's account (*op. cit.*, p. 104) there is no mention of going to church, and he states that the whole ceremony of marriage consisted in this: the bride's father (at his own house) took his daughter by the hand, while her mother took up bread and salt, and then these and the daughter were handed to the father and mother of the bridegroom, who seems not to have been present.

⁴ Mentioned by Le Brun (*op. cit.*, p. 82) as a Russian usage.

⁵ Perhaps an old Slav custom. The Bœotians conducted the bride to the bridegroom's house in a chariot, and then burnt the axletree before the door, signifying thereby that she was to remain in her new home. (Montfaucon, Eng. ed., iii, 137.)

⁶ Perhaps to avoid touching the threshold, the seat of the Penates. A Roman bride was lifted over the threshold for the same reason (Montfaucon, iii, 140); but treading on the threshold was also tabooed by the Tatars.

⁷ In Russia, with barley and down. (Ralston, p. 280.)

"blessing" (a candle); hops thrown over her by woman [in fur coat, worn inside out]. 14. Bride introduced to stove¹; mother-in-law gives her *pure*. 15. Guests eat and drink; bride carried out and shoved into nuptial outhouse [with the words, "Here, wolf, is a lamb² for thee"]; bridesmaid brings in omelette and spirits; couple left alone for half-an-hour. 16. Couple brought back to common room, and offer spirits to guests [bride bows to ground and requires each to bless her].

Wedding-day (Moksha). § 7a.—1. Assembly at bridegroom's of his relations. 2. Prayer to *Shkai*. 3. Bridegroom cuts off "god's portion" for fire-god. 4. Father blesses son [with loaf, salt, omelette, and picture]. 5. Start for bride's home [bridegroom stays at home,³ and hides]. 6. Prayer to the gates, and imprecations against evil spirits. 7. Received at bride's with insulting songs; gates

¹ De Gaya (*op. cit.*, p. 15) mentions that in Poland part of the marriage ceremony consisted in leading the bride thrice round the fire.

² The designation of the bride as a lamb is, perhaps, of Slav origin (see above p. 443, note), or suggested itself as an antithesis to wolf. Though the Mordvins have no legend relating to their supposed origin from a wolf, so far as I am aware, several Turkish stocks derive themselves from a she-wolf (Deguignes, *Hist. générale des Huns*, i, pt. 2, p. 371); and the Hoeike Turks believed themselves descended from the union between a he-wolf and a Hunnish princess of great beauty, who had been shut up in a tower (Deguignes, ii, p. 2). It is just possible the Mordvins once held some such belief, which has only survived in this formula.

³ In some parts of Russia the bridegroom accompanies his friends to the bride's house; in others, he remains at home (Ralston, p. 277). With the Letts, the bride's *portège* and that of the bridegroom proceed independently to church, and meet at the altar (Kohl, p. 381). With the Cheremis, the bridegroom accompanies the party to fetch the bride (Georgi, *Descrip.*, i, 37). When the bridegroom stays at home, it is, perhaps, to be more certain of anticipating the bride at church, for if a Slovene bride contrives to reach the church-porch before the bridegroom, she hopes to enjoy a life-long supremacy over him (Ralston, p. 303).

barred¹; only opened on payment. 8. Prayer; kalym paid; eating and drinking [bride not present]. 9. Bride [in undress] appears from behind curtain; bewails herself; gives presents; her friends praise her; bride retires. 10. Old woman [in fur coat, turned inside out] plays the buffoon; hopes bride will ever excite smiles of pleasure. 11. Bride brought in [in full dress]. 12. Prayer to water-goddess (goddess of marriage). 13. Bride blessed by parents [candle burning on threshold; not extinguished till marriage is over²]. 14. Carried to tilt-cart, and taken to church, with precautions against evil spirits. 15. Bridegroom [covered with a hide] is driven to church. 16. Marriage solemnised after Russian rite. 17. Wedding-party drives to bridegroom's. 18. Received by oldest man in house. *Variant.*—Received by father and mother of bridegroom [in coats, turned inside out]; notch cut in door-post. 19. Pan-kicking.³ 20. Couple left in bridal chamber (out-house). 21. Bride taken to river⁴ [path sprinkled with *pure*]; hen sacrificed, and prayer to water-goddess; bride drenched, and returns home. 22. New name given [by striking on head with loaf]. 23. Bride led to stove, and fed out of hand by mother-in-law.

From the above we may arrive, with considerable probability, at the following conclusions:—That the Mordvins, before they came in contact with the Slavs, wooed by proxy, and contracted marriages by purchase, though there was a prevailing sentiment that a man should give proof of his

¹ This is also done in some parts of Russia. (Ralston, p. 285.)

² A Little Russian usage. (Haxthausen's *Russian Empire* (R. Farie), i, 413.)

³ A Russian custom of similar purport is mentioned by Jenkinson in 1557 (Hakluyt, i, 360). After receiving the priestly blessing in church, the young couple had to drink out of a cup. The bride drank first, and, after the bridegroom had drunk, he let the cup fall to the ground. Whichever of the two could first tread upon it would have, it was supposed, the upper hand in future.

⁴ A Russian bride takes a bath the morning after the wedding. (Ralston, p. 281.)

courage and address, which generally took the form of capturing and carrying off the bride. The original marriage ceremonies were, no doubt, few and simple, like those of the Voguls (see above, p. 425). But, as purchase involves discussion, and ultimately ratification; as the separation of a bride from the parental home, preparatory to exchanging a comparatively free-and-easy life with the hard, slave-like life of a married woman, cannot take place without reluctance on her part, and without many tears, we may see in these acts some of the original foundation-stones on which the existing superstructure of marriage usages and customs has gradually been built. This superstructure has been enormously augmented and modified through intercourse with Russian neighbours, through increasing civilisation, brought on by the change from a roving to a settled mode of life, and through the introduction of Christianity. For unquestionably a far larger proportion of incidents, set phrases, and other peculiarities have been borrowed from the Russians than I have been able to exemplify.

JOHN ABERCROMBY.
