

Fritjoff Nansen, the famous Danish explorer, states that in East Greenland the only method of contracting a marriage is still for the man to go to the girl's tent, catch her by the hair or anything else which offers a hold, and drag her off to his dwelling without further ado.

But this custom of forcible abduction was slowly rooted out by the gradual advance in civilization. It left, however, its traces and symbols in the marriage ceremonies of hundreds of savage and civilized nations. Among the Indians of South America the carrying off of the bride is still an important part of a wedding. Thus, among the Mosquito Indians, after the wedding is all arranged and the presents paid, the groom seizes his bride and carries her off, followed by her female relatives; while the Aracanians consider the carrying off of the bride by pretended violence an essential prerequisite to the nuptials. The bride is expected to resist, no matter how willing she may be to follow her future lord and master. The same custom is found in Africa, Asia and Australia, where the wife, after having been bought and paid for in a peaceful manner, is carried off by force or stratagem. Even the highest civilized nations of ancient Europe show traces of this peculiar mode of contracting a marriage. Among the Greeks and Romans it was customary for the bride, after the marriage had been contracted, to take refuge in the lap of her mother whence she was taken away by the bridegroom and his friends; while the Welch groom, accompanied by his friends on horseback, betook himself on the morning of the wedding-day to the house of the bride and carried her off by force. The South Slavonians adhere to this practice even today, and in some parts of Europe the bride is still being forcibly lifted over the threshold by the bridegroom—a ceremony that symbolizes beyond doubt the ancient habit of carrying off wives. Even our own wedding ceremonies show clearly traces of this savage custom. To our civilized minds the "bridesmaids", the "ushers" and the "best man" are necessary, because they lend dignity to an up-to-date wedding, while as a matter of fact, they are nothing but harmless, emasculated successors to participants in a pre-historic marriage ceremony. The "bridesmaids" represent the female relatives of the primitive bride, who lamented and cried, while their dear companion was dragged away, and the "ushers" and the "best man" symbolize the friends of the groom who very often gave up their lives in order to aid him in the abduction of the bride. The mere expression "best man" shows the contention to be true. In savage speech "best man" means the "strongest man", and in early days the "best man" fully justified his appellation. He was chosen as the bravest warrior and fought next to the bridegroom in the fierce struggle, that usually ensued between the abductors and the male relatives of the kidnapped girl.

But as man advanced in civilization, his manners and customs under-