

NOTES ON THE MARRIAGE CUSTOMS OF THE KIPSIGIS.

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In every nation marriage is of the greatest importance for upon it depends the stability of society, and the formation of the family which is the prime source of our earliest ideas that are to remain with us through life.

Amongst such a people as the Kipsigis there are special reasons why marriage is of more than ordinary importance.

1. As I have pointed out elsewhere, these people believe not only in the immortality of the spirit, but in its reincarnation in the family. Hence the importance of the family as established by marriage. When a child is born a spirit of a deceased relative enters it, usually from the father's clan, but not always; usually the new-comer retains the sex of the spirit, but again not always. This spirit comes voluntarily, nay desires to come; although in speaking of the ceremony at which it is ascertained which spirit has come, they use the word "call" as if they decided on the spirit and called it.

The child usually has the nature of the spirit, i.e. has such a character as the spirit had when previously incarnated in human bodily form. Grandfather, grandmother, father's brother or sister are those who most commonly come.

It is the urgent desire of every spirit, whether embodied or not, i.e. of every person alive or dead, to return again to earth, and therefore it is the greatest disaster to die childless (*chemukto*).

It need not worry us here that the Kipsigis conception of the human spirit is somewhat different from ours, a point so much emphasised by Levy Bruhl, writing of many primitive people. In the case of the Kipsigis, the conception of spirit is not so very widely different from our own, especially if we take into consideration some of the ideas relating to spirit in connection with our religion.

2. Property in live stock corresponds somewhat to European property in land (real estate) in that it is entailed in the family like many English estates and may not be disposed of in any way, but is handed down from one generation to another for the benefit of the children. Therefore, just as in some European land-owning families it is more than ordinarily important to have a son and heir, so amongst the Kipsigis, there is the same urgency for a legitimate heir.

3. Anthropologists are rather apt, in focussing their attention on the clan (because it is something foreign to our own practice), to lose sight of the restricted family in the form Europeans have it.

We hear of such tribes as the Masai, amongst whom, apparently, the restricted family hardly exists.

I cannot emphasise too strongly, therefore, that amongst the Kipsigis group of tribes (Nandi, Keyo, etc.) the family is of very great importance. It is natural that the family should be highly developed amongst them, for they do not live in villages, but each married couple has its own house often far from any others; in fact they dislike being close together. Near the house is often the " Singgiroynet " house where the elder children and young unmarried men sleep.

The parents and children therefore are much thrown together being thus somewhat isolated from the rest of the community, except when in the field or at ceremonies. It is there that the children's characters are formed, and they learn from parents or other children all they know before they go to the initiation at the age of, say, 15-17. Further, civil Government used (before the advent of British rule) to be based on the " Kokwet," the social unit consisting of families living within reasonable distance of one another, say a couple of miles, irrespective of clan.

Amongst the Kipsigi there is no segregation of clan. Thus the individual family assumed greater importance in everyday affairs though the clan retained its collective responsibility in some major matters.

It is not the purpose of this article to go into details of all the various customs and ceremonies concerned with marriage—it will be sufficient to take a general view of these, picking out for special mention those which are of greatest importance.

EXOGRAMY.

Marriage is very strictly exogamous, i.e. a man may not marry a woman in the remotest degree related by blood on the male side, which is to say that he may not marry a woman of his own clan. Even if a clan has become so large as to be subdivided, yet both portions retaining the same " totem " name are regarded as one clan for marriage purposes, though all other clan obligations between the two branches cease.

It must be mentioned here that a woman takes the clan of her husband when she marries; not only this, but also his generation, even though her father was of the generation after her husband and not before it. He cannot be of the same generation (see below). However, on the female side, remote blood relationship does not prevent marriage; it is not permissible for the descendants of a woman to marry till the third generation, i.e. great grand-children of brother and sister. Put thus simply it does not sound very difficult, but in actual practice the ramifications of relationship are most intricate and are further complicated by two classes of prohibited marriage.

Those who board and lodge or look after initiates during the five months (or even eight months in the case of girls) of initiation are regarded as their parents and are always addressed by the terms father or mother by these initiation children. One might compare them to God-parents and God-children. Unless special precautions are purposely taken these God-children are regarded for purposes of marriage just as if they were true children and the rules of exogamy apply to their descendants, both in the male and female line.

Finally, there is what one may term exogamy of generation—that is, one may not marry the children of a man of the same generation, irrespective of the age of the children or their mothers. One may marry the children of a man of senior or junior generation.

From this arise rules as to what houses one may sleep in, and this is particularly important on a journey, for one must disclose one's own generation and ascertain that of the people of the house, for one may only sleep in the house of men of one's own generation, though if there are no women, one may sleep in other houses provided one does not sleep in the bed-place. I mention this because it has sometimes occurred that a gang of men on road work from a distant district perhaps arriving late in the day, have been told to quarter themselves on the strange district; it becomes obvious at once when one knows these strict rules that it is not such an easy matter as it may appear to a European unacquainted with their customs.

AGE OF MARRIAGE.

Having seen whom one may marry, we may consider the various steps in marriage and what they mean.

All girls are married as soon as they come forth from the Initiation, though the marriage is not consummated until the girl with the advice of her mother decides that she is ready to "cook for" her husband.

Men marry at any age, according to inclination and property. An only son, especially if the father is dead, marries as soon as he comes out of initiation, in order that the chance of the family dying out may be minimized.

THE PROPOSAL—"KEGOYTA TOGA."

While yet the girls are in the initiation the first step is for the father of the prospective bridegroom to pay a ceremonial visit to the father of the girl he desires for his son. It is, of course, frequently the son who tells his father whom he wishes to marry. He talks with the father and mother of the girl and offers merely one cow. This cow is not a real offer, neither does the man expect an answer. They merely discuss suitability according to clan, generation, etc.

After a few days he makes a second visit when the girl's father discloses by his behaviour whether he is willing to consider the pro-

posal. If he is, the man returns a third time, usually with his wife, and they speak of property, of the character of the son, and his capacity to keep a wife and children, after handing over the "presentation" cattle, which are offered at this meeting without being seen.

On a fourth and last occasion the man goes again with his wife, or his wife may even go alone. The number of "presentation" cattle is finally decided, and the man or his wife (or both if they are together) is anointed by the father of the proposed bride.

TOG'AP KOYTA.

This whole process is referred to as "Kebendi Koyta"—"one goes to the giving away or presentation," and the cattle, sheep, and goats so offered are called "Tog'ap Koyta," i.e. the gift cattle or the presentation cattle.

"KEJUT NJOR."

Next the accepted suiter, dressed in a specially fine cloak, usually of monkey skins, and carrying a special walking stick, goes with a friend, "best man," as we might say, to the house of his future father-in-law to the ceremony called "Kejut Njor," which means to enter Njor. Njor is actually that half of a house which is on the east side of a line from the door to the fire. It is always associated with "Sanik," i.e. relations by marriage. In some clans there is a hidden door in the wall (called "Kurg'ap san"—the door of the relations by marriage) opened on this occasion, by which the prospective son-in-law enters. The phrase means "to enter on the east of the house," that is to enter the house as a relation by marriage. Sitting on that side of the house the young man and his companion confirm to his father-in-law all that has been proposed on his behalf and, offering a sheep, is anointed.

THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY—"RATET."

As soon as possible after this the first and most important, though not the greatest, marriage ceremony takes place. It is called "Ratet," which means "the tying." It occurs just after dark in the house of the bridegroom's mother (or his own house if he has one, i.e. if already married), where relations of both parties sit talking and laughing very quietly round a small pot of beer decorated with "Korosek" (sacred plants) from which the guests drink through long tubes some 8 or 10 feet long. The principal old man of the "Kokwet" or social unit sits on the east of the fire, and a large ox-skin is placed on the opposite side for the bride and bridegroom to sit on. Presently the bride is heard arriving, for she usually wears at her waist the virgin's bell—not always of course. She is conducted by her father and mother and perhaps also brothers and sisters. There is no space for all the details (which I have seen many times), the ceremony

lasting some two or three hours. Suffice it to say they first sit in a row opposite the officiating elder. Plaits of a certain grass (segutyet) are made and anointed with butter and the bride and bridegroom, sitting side by side, each ties on the wrist of the other a bracelet of segutyet while the elder chants blessings, asking happiness, prosperity and many children for the pair. The four principals, carrying in their hands bouquets of the leaves of the Korosek of their clan, form a procession going round the beer poot under an arch of beer tubes, and then outside and round the "mabwayta" each four times. The mabwayta corresponds to an altar and always stands on the east side of the house (comparable with Njor the eastern side of the house, referred to above).

We see here several items reminiscent of the European marriage, viz. the officiating elder exhorting and blessing the pair, the best man, the bridesmaid, the bouquets, and finally the mutual bracelet on the other's wrist, which seems to correspond to the European ring.

It is interesting to note that the man does not only tie the girl, but each ties the other, which is surely some evidence that marriage is not the one-sided purchase that some are apt to suppose.

BETROTHAL.

This same ceremony is used for the betrothal of a young "un-initiated" girl to the man who will subsequently be her husband after she comes forth from the initiation.

SUET AP TOGA.

The next ceremony is called Suet ap Toga, i.e. viewing the cattle. It may be postponed even for years if the cattle cannot all be handed over at once. It ratifies the contract made at the true marriage ceremony, but must be completed before the grand ceremony and entertainment can take place.

KATUNISYET (from tun—to marry).

To this ceremony and feast come enormous numbers of relations from great distances. It is such an expensive affair that it is often postponed till after there is quite a large family of children, and in some cases is dispensed with altogether.

OTHER CEREMONIES CONNECTED WITH MARRIAGE.

Side by side with these true marriage ceremonies are others of the nature of continued stages of initiation for men only. For example, the first one after the great initiation is called "Eito ap Muget." It should occur soon after the great initiation period and before marriage, but often occurs just after the "Ratet" ceremony. At this ceremony it is interesting to note that young men are taught to

respect married women, to respect the body of women in fact as the mother of the race. By means of an amusing practical joke (taken very seriously) they are taught to cease being ribald about the female anatomy, to cover themselves in the presence of women, and see that women are covered. They are even told not to consider it a matter for attention or comment to see a girl, large or small (not merely a woman), lying naked asleep, and so on. I mention this as it is rather different from the ideas often current amongst Europeans about the morality of a people whose customs happen to differ from their own.

There are three further stages of initiation, the last occurring in old age. The fact that only married men take part shows that they are connected with the previous marriage ceremonies.

POLYGAMY.

Polygamy is practised amongst the Kipsigis, but probably little over 10 per cent. of the men have more than one wife. Some points worth noting with regard to polygamy are the following:—

(1) A man may not use the presentation cattle, “tog-ap Koyta” accruing on his daughter’s marriage to obtain another wife (though I understand that among the Nandi a man may do so if he has no sons).

(2) Polygamy is by no means confined to old men as is often supposed by Europeans (e.g. there are only two men on my land who have more than one wife: one is 28 years old and has three, and the other is 35 years old and has two wives).

(3) Polygamy is as much appreciated by women as by men. When a man wishes to take a second wife he usually consults his first wife—he certainly does so if he is wise. She then frequently selects a wife from amongst her own friends. When such is the case harmony obtains, though of course one cannot say that all plural marriages are happy, any more than one can assert it of monogamy—even amongst Europeans. It is sometimes the wife herself who asks the husband to give her a “siet”—that is the word used to describe the relationship of one wife to another—on the ground that she requires someone to help her. The first wife amongst these people has very little superiority over the others; nor are the children of subsequent wives under any appreciable disability in the matter of inheritance. (See article on Property.)

(4) From the man’s point of view there is something to be said in favour of polygamy, for, under the customs governing sexual relations amongst the Kipsigis there are a large number of occasions and periods when cohabitation is prohibited, more especially in connection with pregnancy and the post-natal period.

KIPKONDIT.

The ancient custom of "raising up seed" to a deceased husband by his brother is also practised. It forms the only exception to the strictest exogamy.

It is to be noted that a widow is under the care of a certain brother of her deceased husband, and expects from him help in all social matters, in the field, house-building, and so on, especially if she has no grown-up sons. But as regards sexual relations with him, it is only with mutual desire that it occurs. More usually the woman finds another man, usually too poor to marry, with whom she lives exactly as though they were married, only with this difference, that the children legally belong to the deceased husband and inherit from him. The *de facto* husband has no relationship with the deceased husband's family.

This form of union is recognised as a proper one and called "payet-ap-ge," i.e. feeding one another, or rather boarding and lodging one another which describes its purpose as being for mutual help. One has seen the word translated as "adultery"—a most unsuitable word for it as an approved form of union, not an illicit one, as the word adultery implies.

DIVORCE—KEIL-GE.

Divorce is recognised, but not very commonly resorted to. It consists in the husband and wife each anointing the other and saying "Kaynutik ap Musarek," the particular names of childhood which are never used when adult (except by fathers to their children).

Separation, however, is common, the presentation cattle being returned (without any mutual anointing) if there have been no children of the union or if the woman takes with her the children. If, however, she leaves any of their children with the father, then the cattle are not returned.

If such a woman from then on lives permanently with one man as if he were her real husband, and the original presentation cattle have been made good by the *de facto* husband, then he becomes recognised as the father of any children of the union, and they can inherit from him, and not from the first husband. If, however, the second husband did not restore the "tog'ap Koyta," or again if the woman does not stay permanently with one man, when she is said to be a "chebkasesyot"; then any children she has belong to the original husband. Whether a man was her real husband or not becomes apparent on his death, for only if he had become her real husband does the woman carry out what is called "Ngesiret." i.e. all the ceremonies of respect and sorrow which are too many to enumerate, but particularly conspicuous is the removal of her ornaments and the potsherd from the house roof. This, be it noted, she can only do with the approval of the "Kokwet." In fact it is the Kokwet with the

aid of one or more "Kirnogik," i.e. judges or counsellors, which decides all matters of divorce or separation, and decides between disputing clans, for, being the local council it knows all the details of the case; whilst the "Kirnogik" not being local, are free from bias.

FEMALE MARRIAGE—KETUNCI TOLOCH.

There is still one curious form of marriage to be referred to, viz., the taking of a wife by an old childless widow. The native name for this explains its purpose. It is called "Ketunchi toloch," i.e. "one marries for support," for toloch is from tolayta, the support of the upper storey in a married person's house. This might refer to the support of the widow herself by prospective sons, or to the support of the husband's "house" by carrying on the family, probably the latter. The widow goes through exactly the same procedure as a man in taking to her a wife. A husband is found for this "wife" from amongst the relations of the deceased husband of the widow, if possible. Failing that, some other man of the girl's choice. Children of this union are the children of the widow and her deceased husband. We see here an attempt to prevent the dying out of a family referred to above. This form of marriage, however, as might be expected, is not very successful, the girl sometimes resenting subordination to an old woman is often far from happy. On the other hand the desire of a childless woman to have children in her old age to support her is understandable amongst a people where old age without children is hard and lonely.

We have now before us sufficient data, when I add a few comments which I have reserved till the end, to consider what constitutes marriage and why the marriage tie has no longer the same universal respect that it formerly had.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PRESENTATION CATTLE.

We may start from what I have called the presentation cattle, so usually called in the past the "bride price," for it is this transaction which has caused much misunderstanding of African marriage. I have advisedly used the term "presentation cattle" because that is what the Kipsigis actually call them. That is they use the word for "to give" not the words for "to buy" or "to sell." They say also "Keganda toga," but this word is exclusively used for this transaction, and for nothing else, so that we cannot interpret its meaning in English except by the native feeling on the subject. I say feeling, for all old custom is based on feeling, not on thought, not only amongst Africans, as is sometimes assumed, but amongst Europeans as well. The feeling seems to be chiefly that it is a compensation for a life taken—somewhat similar to the "Tog'ap Moget" which is the compensation in the case of homicide, and note that it is only in the case of homicide by a member of another clan; it applies neither to

foreigners nor to one's own clan. This was usually nine head of cattle, irrespective of sex or age, whilst the presentation cattle amount only to about four head. Is this perhaps because the life is not lost altogether and the woman still has duties to her father's family? We have just seen that if a woman who leaves her husband does not take with her the children she had by him, he cannot claim the return of the presentation cattle, for he has the lives of the children from the other clan.

If she returns to the clan leaving no children behind, her parents willingly return the presentation cattle, for the husband has gained nothing and has ceased to be responsible for their daughter. If she runs away to another man he is usually willing to make good the cattle and to undertake the responsibility if the woman will really stay, i.e. if she had some good cause for leaving her first husband, a matter on which the Kokwet used to adjudicate. The difficulty arises however when she is, as they put it, a "bad woman" and will stay with no man permanently, as is increasingly common the last few years. Then the parents naturally are unwilling to give back the cattle, whilst the husband continues to demand them, for it is likely he may expect no children, even though any she bears are his in law.

WHAT ACTUALLY CONSTITUTES MARRIAGE.

That the "presentation of cattle" does not, however, constitute marriage is very clearly shown as follows: A man may steal, as it is called, a bride by carrying out with her before the necessary witnesses, a curtailed form of the "Ratet" ceremony, i.e., the mutual tying of the bracelets. This is resorted to when parents or guardians will not give their consent. It is a love match corresponding to our Gretna Green and to some registry office marriages.

I have been present at such a runaway match and have subsequently watched closely the procedure followed when the young wife subsequently ran away, and would stay permanently with no one.

It is an absolutely binding marriage and no presentation cattle are given. It is true that later on, when the parent's anger has subsided or when the young man can find cattle, he will present cattle to the full amount in the end, if he is a good man, and for this reason only, that he may have the friendship of his wife's family, and may show them respect. One's wife's family and clan are called "Konyitenik," which means "those whom we honour," and no man is happy who is on bad terms with these "Konyitenik." The man's own family would resent his not honouring the family of the woman he had introduced into their family.

The "Ratet" ceremony alone constitutes legal marriage, i.e. the children of the union inherit the property entailed in the father's family, and any other man who takes that woman cannot have children of his own by her without the divorce ceremony. If, how-

ever, presentation of cattle has been made, return of the cattle without ritual divorce is sufficient to transfer the inheritance.

Let us consider another set of circumstances which throws light on the presentation cattle. Compare the customs in this respect of the allied tribes, Kipsigis, Keyo, and Tugen (called Kamasia) which less than 200 years ago were one tribe. (Note: I know only the Kipsigis customs by experience, those of the other members by hearsay from the Kipsigis and by asking questions when visiting the territories of the other tribes.)

(1) Amongst the Kipsigis the presentation cattle are merely held in trust by the father of the bride for her brothers. This is proved by the fact that he may not dispose of them in any way, or even use them again as presentation cattle. The bride's brothers may not dispose of these cattle in any way except as presentation cattle when taking wives themselves. If not thus used, they are inherited by their children to be used as presentation cattle only. If the bride has no brothers when her mother and father die (so that there is no possibility of her having brothers) the cattle revert to the bride in trust for her children. Now, note that these cattle may not be used by the bride's half-brothers, i.e. her father's sons by another mother, and they do not inherit these presentation cattle, which they would do if the cattle were the property of the bride's father.

Turning to the Keyo, we find that they do not make a presentation of cattle on marriage, but when the bride has children her husband gives her cattle for her children. This is what occurs amongst the Kipsigis in the special case just cited.

Again, amongst the Tugen I gather that there is no gift of cattle at all; marriage consists only of the "Ratet" ceremony, followed by the "Katunisyet." There is, however, the exception of the "Lembus" section of the Tugen tribe who follow the custom of either the Kipsigis or the Nandi (I am not certain which) in respect of presentation cattle.

All this goes to show that "presentation cattle," formerly called "bride-price," is not essential to the legality of a marriage, and is not a purchase price, but that it cannot be omitted without injustice where it is the custom, or without destroying the respect and good feeling between families related by marriage, which is of the greatest service in preserving harmony and good feeling in each district. This is not merely a wordy observation, but the result of years of experience of the practical value of the system.

To show that the presentation cattle are, besides being a compensation for a life, also a guarantee of proper treatment of the daughter, is more difficult. This fact appears to a small extent in the foregoing considerations, but is chiefly seen in the conversations which take place during the "proposal" visit, Kegoyta toga, and also in the exhortations at the first and essential marriage ceremony, Ratet.

Not only is the suitor's father questioned as to the eligibility of his son, as regards family, generation, and ability to find presentation cattle, but also as to his character, what property he has for the support of a wife and family; or, nowadays, what capacity he has for earning sufficient to acquire property.

Both bride and bridegroom at the Ratet ceremony are exhorted to behave in such a way as to bring no discredit on the other or upon the families, e.g. by being mean, selfish or inhospitable.

Such subjects being mentioned at the same time as the presentation cattle seem to indicate that the cattle are more than compensation. The fact that a man has to part with four head of cattle when taking a wife must make him take the matter much more seriously and consider well before he takes the step, than if he merely took the girl and married her hastily in a moment of passion.

We come now, finally, to the following question: *Why is it that there is an increasing lack of respect for marriage*, as exhibited by the frequency with which young married women run away from their husbands, thus causing endless difficulties and trouble between families, which, more than once lately, has culminated in murder.

It is impossible to give any one reason. Many causes have been suggested, both amongst this tribe and others, most of which only apply to particular cases. For example, those who dislike polygamy will attribute it to that institution, saying that the old men take the young girls against their wills, leaving the young men without wives, and often depriving them of their sweethearts. This probably does occur at times, but though unfortunately, I know personally of a very large number of cases of runaway wives, yet I can only call to mind two such cases. More often (I know such cases) it is an oldish man taking his first wife, who fails to keep her. As I have already mentioned, young men, as well as old, marry more than one wife. I know also a number of cases where a girl has been given her choice, and then has run away before a year is out. Even when a girl marries her own young sweetheart, as I have seen twice recently, she may run away. One can therefore lay down no rule and say that it is polygamy, or that it is because girls are forced to marry against their will. These are undoubtedly contributory causes. But, before the advent of the European, they were not the cause of any running away, firstly, because there was less opportunity of doing so, and, secondly, because it did not enter their heads to do so. That probably is the basic reason. Expressed otherwise, it is the result of the new freedom, which the old method of bringing up children and some of the old laws are not strong enough to control. Thus, from earliest childhood, children are allowed the greatest freedom. Though they are taught duty to parents, and respect to all elders, and are, therefore, always polite to such, yet they may go off to neighbour's houses, a mile or more away, where they are sure to be fed without question

and may stay the night if they like; for hospitality is general, and anyone who did not feed any visiting children would be considered mean and ill-tempered. The children never need ask leave for such excursions, and the parents only enquire subsequently where they have been. Thus the habit of free wandering is learned early, and not easily given up later in life.

In the old days, when they were surrounded by enemies, this resulted in little harm, but now, since the advent of the European, there are no boundaries beyond which they cannot go. Children may go off and obtain work, which means not only food and lodging, but wages.

And so young married women find they can run away to foreign people, whether on farms or in the Kisii Native Reserve, where they cannot be found. Even if found, there is no penalty, for, though they can be ordered to return, and brought back, they can simply run away again.

Some have suggested that they run away because the work is hard, but amongst the Kisii the woman's work is as hard as among the Kipsigis, if not harder; but they can equally run away from there and return to their parental home. Another reason why disregard of marriage is so common is that there is no fear for the future, for a family cannot refuse to receive and care for any member unless they are ceremonially outcast. This is only resorted to in cases of habitual theft or witchcraft, and means that the outcast is no longer a Kipsigis and may be put to death.

Thus a woman may even run away and turn complete prostitute, and yet be sure that on her return she will be received by her family and her clan.

Polygamy, then, hard work, and marrying a man not of their own choice, are contributory causes, more especially the last, but the real causes are the freedom of early up-bringing, which, under the new conditions, teaches them that they can wander at will with impunity, and can be sure both of a present livelihood and of a future welcome back to the family. The growing number of examples of returned prostitutes in prosperity is a further encouragement.

What remedies can one suggest for this rapidly growing evil, which may, in the end, completely undermine the life of the tribe? Hardly a week passes but a case of a runaway is brought to my notice. Husbands, brothers, and fathers spend quite a considerable time travelling, hunting for these stray women. They are all quite young, usually in the first or second year of marriage.

The custom is that every girl is married as soon as she comes out of the Initiation, though, as I have said, the marriage may not be consummated for even a year. Now, under these conditions, they obviously cannot all have free choice of a husband, for they have no one in view, and would prefer to remain single for a time in many

cases, I expect. If they did so we should doubtless have a new trouble in the form of illegitimate children, for where would these young women live? There are no houses for them. Hut tax is partly responsible for the paucity of houses; this is surely a great argument for its replacement by poll tax, so that there may be free houses for women, and better houses for children and unmarried men.

Further, even with free choice of husband, the young women still run away.

Amongst Europeans public opinion demands that a man and wife keep up the appearance of living together, even though they have other lovers. Kipsigis public opinion, and the feeling of the woman herself, are directly opposed to this, and could not tolerate the idea of living with one man whilst associating with another. Hence, when a marriage is unsatisfactory no pretence is made, and the wife simply runs away. To alter the up-bringing of the children would undoubtedly go to the root of the matter, but it will take years, generations in fact. The same applies to the alteration of the marriage age. There is one thing, however, which could be done in the meantime to alleviate the situation.

When a young married woman runs away, in nine cases out of ten she goes to another man (if she returns to her family little harm is done). Though one cannot put any penalty on the woman, the man who takes her is equally guilty, if not more so; for he has no excuse which, in some cases, the woman has. If he were at once made responsible by being compelled to hand over the presentation cattle, he would certainly think twice about taking another man's wife, more especially as, having run away from one man, she may do so again. Furthermore, many a man who is glad to take advantage of such young women, has not the necessary cattle, and it could be enacted that if he fails to produce the cattle he would have to go to gaol, or, better, to suffer some other form of punishment. If this deterrent were put upon the men, undoubtedly there would be less temptation for young women to run away—for they could then only return to the parental home.

Government may find such a procedure difficult perhaps (for I am not acquainted with legal matters). But help of some sort is most urgently needed, and this seems the only speedy method of alleviation.

One other comment may be added. If the presentation cattle were converted into a money payment, as I understand is being done amongst the Kikuyu, and seems to be in favour for Christian marriage, it degenerates into the purchase of a wife for cash. The money will probably be spent by the father, or others, instead of being kept for the benefit of the bride's brothers and their children, or for the bride's own children. This might be a serious matter in more ways than one, for children would be without property and so not have the means

of marrying, and also, the milk supply, so important amongst these pastoral people, especially for the children, would be further depleted when already, in many districts, it is insufficient. It seems improbable that the money would be entailed to the children, as it the case of livestock.

The present system of presentation cattle actually helps young men to get married, for it is to the bride's brothers that the cattle go, for their use in obtaining wives in their turn; whereas one understands that in the case of cash payment it goes to the bride's father, thus bringing about the condition which those who disapprove of legal polygamy complain of, that the elder men have an advantage over the younger as regards marriage.

The custom of presentation cattle, on the contrary, puts a young Kipsigis man in a better position to marry than his young European confrère.