

EARLY MARRIAGE.

[The following extract from Sir Surendranath Banerjee's "A NATION IN MAKING" is reprinted here, in connection with Mahatma Gandhi's observations on EARLY MARRIAGE on p 101 of this issue.]

"For more than three generations early marriage was unknown in our family. My ancestors were not reformers, but rigid orthodox Brahmins; and, strangely enough, it was this orthodoxy which re-acted upon their domestic institution and prevented early marriage in the family. Coming from one of the highest *Kulin* families, it was difficult for them to secure suitable husbands for their marriageable daughter from amongst men of the same social status, whose number was necessarily limited. They had to wait till the girls grew in years and then they were married. My mother and my grandmother were quite grown up young ladies when they were married, and, I believe, the same was the case with my great grandmother, whom I saw in my early years when she was over a hundred years of age. In the life-history of my family I found the strongest argument against child-marriage, and I was never tired of repeating it when I had an opportunity in my public and private utterances. The members of my family have always enjoyed exceptional health, and I ascribe the fact largely to the absence of child-marriage for generations among them. This was the explanation I gave to Lord Hardinge, one of the earliest interviews I had with him. He/ his surprise at my physical alertness, which he, quite extraordinary for an Indian of my years. An old fact is worth a ton of theory. I have placed these facts on record in the hope that they may influence the judgment of my countrymen in a matter of vital importance to their well-being. For, after all, the health and physique of a nation is the first condition of national progress."

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