

powerful and efficacious in itself, the virile optimism of the man who knows himself to be responsible and the master of his destiny; such traits as these, so manifest in America's best manhood, are bound to make a deep impression on our minds, ever eager as they are to aspire after the earliest and most universal realization possible of the loftiest and most generous ideal.

May I be permitted to conclude with a comparison which has just entered my mind. During the last few days, I was staying at Washington, D. C., and naturally I made a pilgrimage to Mount Vernon. Among the many spare bedrooms in the simple and homely habitation of George Washington was one bearing the inscription, La Fayette's Room. So also, from this day onward, there may be seen, among other names, that of Theodore Roosevelt attached to one of the seats of this Academy. Thus, after the flight of ages, do the two nations, the American and the French, make exchange of the best they possess:

*Amant alterna sorores.*

## SAVAGE LIFE AND CUSTOM.<sup>1</sup>

BY EDWARD LAWRENCE.

### I. WHAT IS A SAVAGE?

WHAT is a savage? Most people would answer by saying that of course, by the word savage we mean a wild, ferocious, uncouth being, who is fierce and brutal to his fellows, and while destitute of religion, is steeped in superstitious rites and practices. Savages have been repeatedly described by writers and travelers as living in a state of moral degradation and revolting depravity; as being thieves and liars; brutal alike to their womenfolk and to their old people; destitute of all family ties and obligations; naked and not ashamed.

Now I am going to ask you to dismiss this definition from your mind for the present. I want you to place yourself in the position of a scientific investigator who has some new and curious animal to study. Let us assume that we know nothing about savages. To answer the question let us both make a tour of the world and see

<sup>1</sup> In the following pages we give the first part of a series of chapters on the birth, marriage, and burial customs, superstitions, human sacrifices, and cannibalism of modern savages, by Edward Lawrence, Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland.

the real savage in his native state, before he has been influenced by contact with alien races. We will visit North and South America, Africa, India, Polynesia, Melanesia, and Australia, and when we have done this we shall be in a better position to answer the question, What is a savage?

Speaking generally we find that savages may be roughly divided into two groups according to their mode of life. First of all we have the wild unsettled races like the Australians or the Boticudos (Fig. 1) who live a free roving life in the forests of Brazil.

Many such tribes are quite destitute of clothing, they live in



Fig. 1. CANNIBAL BOTOCUDOS OF BRAZIL.

These people are pure nomads, live naked in the forests. All articles used by them are made from wood and fiber.

caves or in holes dug in the ground or build for themselves rough shelters of branches stuck in the ground, bound together with bast. They will eat almost anything from a cake of Pear's soap, snails, grubs, and caterpillars, to frogs and men. When Cakobau—the Fiji chief who handed his country over to Queen Victoria—accompanied by his two sons, paid a visit to the Governor of New South Wales, they all ate the scented soap in the bedrooms!

Some tribes have very peculiar marriage customs, no fixed religion, no temples nor idols of any kind. In the scale of nature

these races are to civilized men what wild races of animals are to domesticated ones.

On the other hand we have the more advanced savage, like the

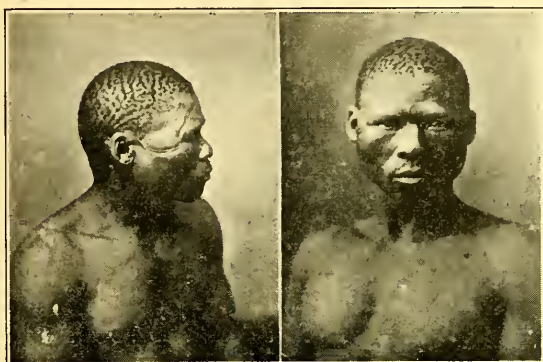


Fig. 2. BUSHMAN OF SOUTH AFRICA.

Now practically extinct as a pure race; held to be one of the most primitive races of Africa. Average height 4 feet 8 inches. Note the "peppercorn" hair coiled up naturally into balls.



Fig. 3. VEDDAHS, NATIVES OF THE INTERIOR OF CEYLON.

Hair nearly straight or waved. Average height 5 feet 2 inches. Note the wild look in the eyes, a characteristic feature of many bush races. (Photo by Skene, Colombo, reproduced by permission of the Baptist Missionary Society, London.)

Bantu races of Africa, where we find a more or less settled mode of life, people who make clothing from skins of animals, who wear ornaments of a more or less elaborate description and possess idols

and gods to whom offerings are made. While many wild races are armed only with wooden weapons and wear ornaments of human teeth, these peoples are furnished with steel assagais and leathern shields, possess cattle and practise agriculture.

I propose first of all to select a few typical specimens of different races, then to say something of their family life, their occupations, their cannibalism and human sacrifices, their burial customs, superstitions, and morals.

It is a very curious and remarkable fact that while many apes possess long hair, long bodies, and short legs, some of the lowest races of man, like the Bushmen of South Africa (Fig. 2), should have short, tufty, or "peppercorn" hair, short bodies, and long legs. Again the white man possesses long straight hair, so do the Australians and the Veddahs of Ceylon (Fig. 3).

Apes have broad heads, so have most white men, while the heads of savages are usually long and narrow. Thus, in several respects civilized man is physically nearer the ape than is the negro who has recently been held to be the most apelike of mankind. Such facts as these only help to complicate the problem of man's origin and make the theory of an apelike ancestry more difficult than it was before.

The Australians just referred to are also one of the lowest races on earth, but like in the case of other savages we must not on that account consider them "degraded." As we shall see later on, no savage is *naturally* degraded, but only becomes so when his environment and mode of life has been adversely affected by foreign influences.

In several parts of the world, travelers have from time to time described certain tribes as possessing "tails." The races of the Chaco, in South America, they said possessed real tails; when their possessors wished to sit down they made holes in the ground to pop their tails into and thus prevent them snapping off! Koeping, a traveler of the seventeenth century, said that in the Nicobar Islands (Fig. 4) men were to be seen who possessed tails like cats, which they moved about in the same manner.

This reminds me of the story of a colored gentleman, who was asked to explain what Hamlet meant when he said, "There's a Divinity that shapes our ends." After scratching his pate for a time he replied triumphantly that "Divinity shapes all our ends" in the same way, namely with tails, but that men had rubbed theirs off, whereas monkeys had not, and he knew this explanation was correct, for did not Hamlet's ghost say "he could a *tale* unfold"?

These tales of tails, however, like many others related of savages, have faded away with more exact knowledge. We know now that it is quite impossible for any animal to be able to walk erect as man does and at the same time to possess a tail. Savages

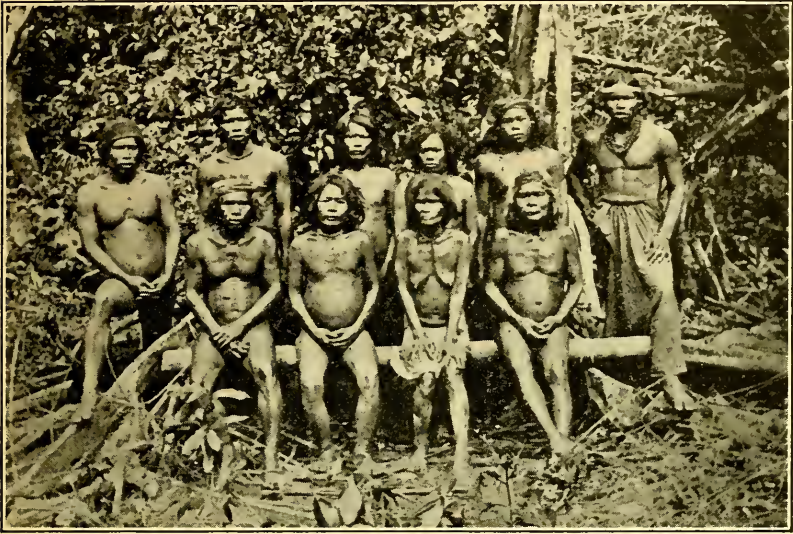


Fig. 4. ABORIGINES OF THE NICOBAR ISLANDS, BAY OF BENGAL.

A primitive Mongolic people who possess rather oblique eyes, flat and wide noses, yellow complexion, straight hair. Their only weapon—a painted wooden spear. Average height 5 feet 2 inches. (Photo by the courtesy of E. H. Man, Esq., C.I.E., F.R.A.I.)

frequently wear skins of animals with the tails dangling behind and it is thought that this practice gave rise to the stories of tailed-men.

## II. THE HOME OF THE SAVAGE.

How wide the gap is that separates different savage races, may be gathered from their habitations alone. I have alluded to the dwellings of the Botocudos, whose "home" is simply a shelter made from large palm-leaves resting on crossed branches, who sleep upon the ground, and whose dwelling is practically devoid of furniture of any kind. In Australia, at Port Darwin and other places, the natives are not so well provided; they simply sleep in holes in the ground "like pups in a basket." Primitive man has therefore no

reason whatever to congratulate himself on his attempts to provide shelter; there are many birds and mammals which construct far more elaborate nests and dwellings than anything of the kind attempted by some savage races.

In Fiji, however, we meet with houses of an imposing appearance and often of elaborate workmanship (Fig. 5). Large houses, constructed like the one in the photograph, would take from two to three months to build. Nearly in the center of the house and sunk below the surface, fire-places are provided, surrounded by curbs of hard wood. These houses are always well kept, are clean



Fig. 5. FIJI HOUSE.

(Photo by the courtesy of the Baptist Missionary Society, London.)

and comfortable. Girls and women sleep in huts by themselves—the men, married and single, always occupy a special hut. Formerly when a house of this description was built, a human sacrifice was made to the earth-spirits. A man was buried alive at the foot of the main pillar, so that by clasping the foot of the post he might prevent the building falling down. The custom of burying a person alive to give support to the foundations of a building is found in other parts of the world, for instance in India, and even in Germany so late as the year 1843 an idea got abroad that a child was wanted to be built into the foundations of a bridge then about to be erected.

The Nicobarese build houses on wooden piles six to eight feet from the ground, the entrance to which is gained by means of a well-constructed bamboo ladder or a notched tree-trunk (Fig. 6). The upper part of these dwellings is constructed with the stipules of palm-leaves, neatly interwoven with rushes, the conical-shaped roof being made of rattan covered with woven pandanus leaves. All villages are kept scrupulously clean.

In West and Central Africa the houses are square in shape, built of poles firmly fixed in the ground and are covered with straw, woven reeds, or grass. Some of these houses are divided into two

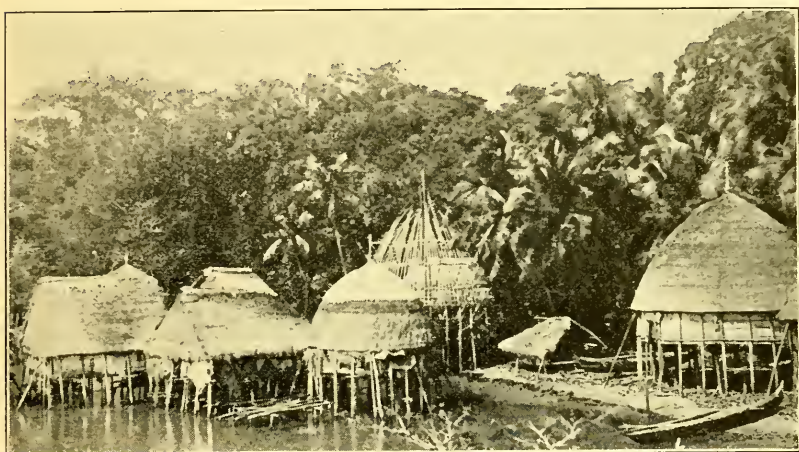


Fig. 6. PILE-DWELLINGS OF THE NICOBAR ISLANDER IN DRING HARBOUR.

(Photo by the courtesy of E. H. Man, Esq., C.I.E., F.R.A.I.)

compartments which serve as dining-rooms and bedrooms. Each wife has a separate hut of her own. As in Fiji and elsewhere the unmarried men sleep in a large house by themselves, and on the roof of their house are fixed the skulls of men whom they have slain.

The hill tribes of Northeastern India build comfortable dwellings of bamboo on a raised platform several feet from the ground. In the interior is a large hall containing two fire-places—one at each end. The walls are made of split bamboo, woven like a mat; the floor is also of woven bamboo; the roof, thatched with grass or bamboo leaves over bamboo matting.

In New Guinea we meet with further examples of the world-

wide custom of apartments for "gentlemen only." As a lad reaches maturity he leaves the maternal roof, henceforth avoiding his mother and sisters, and goes to live with other young men according to the clan to which he belongs, in one of the communal lodges which



Fig. 7. MEN'S HOUSE, ISLAND OF TAMARA, NEW GUINEA.

Skulls of the dead are preserved in these lodges. Each "clan" or family has its own separate house. The erection in front is a newly made grave. (From Meyer's and Parkinson's *Album von Papua-Typen*.)

are erected by themselves on piles in a certain part of the village (Fig. 7). Here he is taught certain customs and undergoes special rites to which reference will be made later.

### III. CHILD-BIRTH AND CHILD LIFE.

Having taken a cursory glance at savages in general, let us proceed to examine more minutely their social life. We will take their birth customs first of all.

One great difference between savages and many of their civilized brethren is this: savages are very much concerned about the well-being of their children. Owing to an extreme desire to preserve them against fancied harm they observe many curious customs. They believe that the conduct of both parents materially affects



not only the newly born child, but the health of prospective children as well. Thus among the eastern tribes of Brazil it is the practice for the mother to eat her first child in order that succeeding children may be born healthy and strong.

In Guiana, before the child is born, the woman must refrain from eating meat because any animal partaking of it might suffer. Should she partake of any double fruit she will have twins; she must neither laugh nor grieve, nor look upon the face of any dead person. Among the Greenlanders the mother is not allowed to eat any flesh except that which was the result of her husband's chase.

The woman usually works to the last possible moment, and when the time approaches retires to the bush with a few female companions. A few hours after the event the mother returns with her babe and soon resumes her domestic duties. The father must now abstain from work and retires to bed. He must not partake of any meat or other food, except a thin gruel made from cassava meal, and must on no account smoke, wash himself nor touch weapons of any kind. If he desires to scratch himself he must not use his finger-nails but must ease the irritation by means of a splinter made from the mid-rib of a certain palm. While in this condition he groans and grunts and is waited upon by the ladies of the place.

In Labrador the child is licked all over and the mother given a potion to eat, consisting of a mixture of heart, lungs, liver, and intestines, which is kept in a bladder. This again is in order to procure health and long life for the babe.

Thus all manner of harm is supposed to surround the new-born child. Evil spirits are believed to be ready to plague it by entering its poor little body, and the one great anxiety of the mother is to counteract these evil influences. In one case the child is painted all over with white paint; in another, baby's head is moistened with milk and then shaved with a piece of flint. In Borneo a young chicken is waved over the child's head, the head of the chicken is then chopped off and some of its blood smeared on the youngster's head. In India soon after a birth, a fowl is sacrificed, all the women are treated to liquor, chewed rice is placed in the infant's mouth and afterward baby is plunged into very hot water. Mother herself does not escape, she is wrapped in hot-water blankets until she faints away.

In Africa, when a child is four days old, the witch-doctor is called in. He makes little cuts in various parts of its body, into these he rubs certain "medicines" so that the child shall be healthy.

In one case a necklace made of hair taken from the tail of a cow is put on the new arrival which is then washed in cow-dung! The Tahitians flattened the heads of their boys, and as flat noses for girls were esteemed, they were pressed flat too.

But it is not all superstition that surrounds baby's early days; sentiment and a mother's real love are there as well. The sweet lullaby is not lacking. The Chippewa mother, as she gently presses her little brown bairn to her own warm breast, sings it softly to sleep with some such words as the following:

"O my little Blue Bird,  
O my little Blue Bird,  
Mother knew that you would come,  
Mother knew that you would come,  
When the ice lets go the river,  
When the wild geese come again,  
When the sugar-maple swells,  
When the maple swells its buds,  
Then the little bluebirds come,  
Then *my* little bluebird came."<sup>2</sup>

In studying the social life of pure savages there is no more interesting and certainly no more important chapter than that which deals with childhood. If we were to set up a certain standard of judgment and give the highest place to those races which treat their children best, that place would have to be given to savages and not to many who are more advanced in the scale of civilization.

The pivot on which savage life turns is that of the family circle; nowhere else is the family instinct so strong. Both parents are intensely fond of their offspring, they care for them and idolize them to an extraordinary degree. Go to a cannibal village in Nigeria, make friends with one of the little children there, and you will find your path a very easy one into the affections of the whole tribe.

Children are never ill-treated, they are seldom beaten, and as for children being deserted by their parents, such a thing hardly ever occurs. In return children render their parents an obedience and have a regard for their elders, which are too often wanting in races which pride themselves on their higher culture.

Most of us are apt to condemn these people for many practices which to our mind are extremely cruel, but we must remember that their motives are not necessarily those which we so readily suggest. A great number—probably all—of savage customs have a superstitious origin, and to uncultured man, what we term superstition occupies in the savage mind the place that religion takes in the

<sup>2</sup> Jenks, *Childhood of Ji-Shib*.

higher races. It is therefore to religious motives that we must assign the origin of certain rites.

No people have a greater desire for children than these "barbarians," yet we find them constantly destroying them. If twins are born—the one a girl and the other a boy—one tribe will kill the boy and preserve the girl: in another case the girl will be killed and the boy saved. In some instances both are killed, and no greater insult could be offered a woman than to hold up two fingers to her, thus implying that she was the mother of twins. Some tribes allow both children to live, but the mother must undergo a ceremony of purification. Again, until the child is named it is not regarded as really human, just as formerly in England it was believed that no child could go to heaven until it had been christened because it did not possess a soul before that rite took place.



Fig. 8. BIDO-BIDO,

as played by Papuan children in British New Guinea. (Photo by the courtesy of Captain Barton, C.M.G., F.R.A.I.)

As children grow up all kinds of games are indulged in. Many games so well known to our children at home are also known to their darker brothers and sisters. String games in great number and variety are played; cat's cradle is one of the most common. They play hockey, fly kites, have tiny bows and arrows, tiny canoes, and swings. Girls imitate their mothers in domestic duties; nothing pleases them more than to copy their elders. Object-drawing is known to some tribes; children will make representations of ships, animals, human beings, etc. I have seen copies of pictures made by them and very well done they are.

No children in the world are more delightfully attractive than

those of the Southern Seas; perhaps the most attractive of all are the little brownies of British New Guinea.

Let us follow a group of these little people as they wind their way from the village to the sea, singing and laughing, pushing and jostling each other as they go. Some of these children—whose ages range from six to fourteen years—are going a-fishing, others will amuse themselves by playing their favorite games. Bido-Bido is one of these. It is played by a number of boys and girls standing closely together in a row, their bodies bent forward, each one places his or her hands on the back of the playmate in front. A boy is then hoisted on the shoulders of the last one in the row and has to walk along the shoulders of the children in front (Fig. 8).

In another game the children form a circle, holding each other by the wrists, while a boy squats on the ground in the middle of the ring. The circle now moves slowly round the boy, the players singing merrily as they move. When the song is finished the lad hops on his hams and faces the opposite way. The singing is then repeated and when ended the players stand quite still. The boy himself now stands up and attempts to break the circle, but must not use his hands in doing so.

A game known as Evanena is also played by forming two rows of boys and girls, who face each other with hands locked together. A small boy then projects himself at one end of the row on the line of hands thus formed and is tossed along by an upward movement of the interlocked hands.

The following translation of a song sung by Iroquois children affords sufficient evidence of the joyousness of these little "savage" mortals, and is proof, if further proof be needed, to show that the savage children who sing it cannot be so very savage after all.

"Firefly, firefly, bright little thing,  
Light me to bed and my song I will sing,  
Give me your light as you fly o'er my head  
That I may merrily go to my bed.

"Give me your light o'er the grass as you creep,  
That I may joyfully go to my sleep.  
Come, little firefly—come little beast!  
Come and I'll make you to-morrow a feast.

"Come little candle that flies as I sing,  
Bright little fairy bug—night's little king—  
Come and I'll dance as you guide me along,  
Come and I'll pay you, my bug, with a song!"<sup>3</sup>

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

<sup>3</sup> From Mrs. Caswell's *Among the Iroquois*, Boston and Chicago, 1892.