

SAVAGE LIFE AND CUSTOM.

BY EDWARD LAWRENCE.

IX. CANNIBALISM AND HUMAN SACRIFICES.

WE must now proceed to give particular attention to those two remarkable, though quite distinct customs which have been practised by many savage races in all parts of the world—the eating of human flesh and the offering of human sacrifices to the gods or the spirits of the dead.

Cruel and gruesome as such practices must appear at first sight, we must nevertheless endeavor to cast aside all preconceived ideas. Even the savage is entitled to any benefit of the doubt which all of us ought to give when complete knowledge is lacking. We must also remember that even our own ancestors indulged in such rites and that there still exist in many of our customs to-day, distinct traces of those practices.

The early Christians themselves were accused by their so-called enemies, of killing and eating a child at their sacramental feasts. Again, in the seventeenth century, Oliver Cromwell, in a diplomatic message to the Duke of Savoy, charged his Royal Highness with allowing his troops to dash infants on the rocks and cook and eat the brains of others!

It may also be called to mind that, during the French Revolution, Brissot, the Girondin leader, justified cannibalism on the ground that it was natural, because animals in a state of nature ate one another!

While the practice of eating human flesh is quite common to many of the very lowest races, although unknown to others on a similar plane of culture, the offering of human sacrifices is quite unknown to these peoples. It is only when man has attained a higher stage in civilization that the latter rite appears. Thus, for example, while cannibalism is practised by the Australians and the nomad tribes of Brazil, it is quite unknown to the Andamanese, and human sacrifices are unknown to either.

The early Portuguese travelers of the sixteenth century were the first to bring accounts to Europe of cannibalism in Africa.

Joano Dos Santos in 1586 said that near Tete, on the Zambesi River, there existed one tribe which kept prisoners in pens and

killed and ate them in succession. Gruesome reports were also circulated in Europe of like doings in the Congo regions. It was declared that in those regions tribes existed which ate their enemies captured in battle: who fattened and devoured their slaves, and whose butcher shops were filled with human flesh instead of beef and mutton.

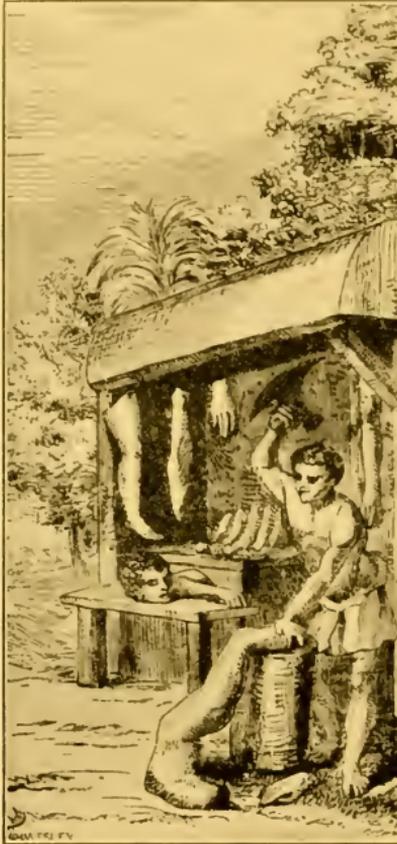


Fig. 28. CANNIBAL BUTCHER SHOP, AS DEPICTED BY A SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ARTIST.

(From *Regnum Congo, per Philippum Pigafettam*. 1598.—After Huxley.)

The truth of these early accounts has been abundantly confirmed by explorers during the last fifty or sixty years. Not only in Africa, but as I have said, practically all over the world we meet with cannibal practices in some shape or form.

Cannibalism is rife over the greater part of the Upper Congo

River. The Bangalas eat all they kill in battle; they remove the inside, stuff the body with bananas, and roast whole over a fire. It is said that two men will eat one body in a night. Even a corpse will be snatched from the grave in order to be eaten. Before eating a slave, the victim is kept prisoner for three days, his limbs are broken and he is fastened to a log chin-deep in a pool of water, to make the flesh tender. With some tribes it is the custom to decapitate the body, clean it out, cut it up, and cook in large pots. The head is not eaten, and the teeth are used as ornaments by the women.

Mr. John H. Weeks, the well-known Baptist missionary, has given a vivid description of the Bangalas returning from the field of battle, laden with their human spoil.

He says: "While we were sitting at our tea, the last party of returning warriors filed past our house, carrying the limbs of those who had been slain in the fight. Some had human legs over their shoulders, others had threaded arms through slits in the stomachs of their dismembered foes, had tied the ends of the arms together thus forming loops, and through these ghastly loops they had thrust their own living arms and were carrying them thus with the gory trunks dangling to and fro. The horrible sight was too much for us, and retching badly we had to abandon our meal and it was some days before we could again eat with any relish. The sight worked on our nerves, and in the night we would start from our sleep, having seen in our dreams exaggerated processions passing before us, burdened with the sanguinary loads of slain and dismembered bodies."

The Basongo sell slaves and children as food; children will eat their own parents as soon as they show signs of decrepitude. One man who accidentally killed his father expressed regret that he could not eat him, being forbidden by taboo, but he gave the body to his friends for them to eat.

It is no unusual thing to see women carrying portions of human flesh in baskets suspended from their heads, to serve as provisions during a journey.

The Niam-Niam allow women and children to eat human flesh, but the men themselves must only eat those whom they have killed in battle.

On the Mubangi River, slaves are kept and fattened for the butcher. The purchaser feeds them up, kills them, and sells the meat in small joints, and what remains unsold is smoked. Some tribes are said to prefer the flesh of women and children to that

of men. One African traveler tells us that he never bought flesh of any kind in the market for fear it might be human.

Among the Baluba, only those who are initiated into the secrets of a certain sect are allowed to eat human flesh, which is done secretly. Some of the victim's bones are burnt and the cinders put into a small pot on which a larger pot is placed upside down. A pin is then attached to the smaller pot and fastened by a cord to a branch fixed in the ground. The object of this is to imprison the victim's soul and thus prevent it doing harm to the living.

The Bambala will eat any corpse that is not in the last stage of decomposition. The body is buried for two days before being eaten; a fire kept burning on the grave, the body is then exhumed, cooked with manioc flour and practically all eaten.

The Fiji Islanders considered every unfortunate wrecked upon their shores a fit candidate for their cooking-pots. When a canoe was launched they celebrated the event by a cannibal feast, the man to be cooked being decked out, and his face painted. After a battle the bodies of the slain were dragged by ropes tied to their necks, and in this manner taken to the temple where they were offered to the gods. Afterward all the bodies were cooked and divided among the men and the priests. During this time, every restraint was laid aside. Sometimes the victims were not killed, but were bound and placed alive in the ovens, and on special occasions were even made to eat part of their own bodies.

The bodies were cut up by means of a bamboo knife, a special fork with four prongs being used to convey the flesh to the mouth, it being considered too sacred to be touched by human hands. The bones of the dead were afterward placed in the branches of a tree.

The savages of the South Seas exercise a discriminating taste, and show a decided preference for the flesh of John Chinaman to that of John Bull. They say the Chinaman is a vegetable feeder and his flesh is therefore sweet to the taste, whereas the white man is frequently a hard drinker whose flesh is also rendered rank from the habitual use of tobacco. Consequently the yellow man more frequently finds his way to the cooking-pot than does his white brother.

In New Britain portions of the dead are sold to neighboring tribes, and it is declared that the women are worse cannibals than the men.

The natives of New Ireland hang up by the neck the bodies of those killed in battle, washing and scraping them carefully. After certain ceremonies have been performed the bodies are cut up into

small pieces, wrapped in tough leaves to make them tender and put into ovens in the ground. Four days after the flesh is eaten. Their own bodies are also rubbed with this "human" food, which now resembles grease; so fond are they of its odor, they do not wash themselves for several days so that the smell of the flesh shall not be lost.

A case is reported from New Guinea where a lad was partly devoured by a crocodile; his mother and sister finished what the crocodile had left, the lad's flesh being eaten raw.

In Australia, when a child was weak, it was fed with the flesh of an infant brother or sister to make it strong. These Australians consider that the fat surrounding the kidneys is the most important for consumption, as it contains the center of life; the kidney fat being frequently extracted while the victim is alive.

Sometimes a man killed in a fight will be skinned and eaten. A burning stick is passed over the body which causes the skin to peel off and leaves the corpse nearly as white as the body of a white man.

The Cocomas of the Upper Amazon, after eating the body, ground up the bones which were afterward put into fermented liquor and drank.

In Nicaragua the head was cut off, the body cut up into small pieces and boiled in earthen pots with salt and garlic and then eaten by the chiefs with Indian corn. The head was neither cooked nor eaten, but was placed on a stake in front of a temple.

Lionel Decla, while traveling in Central Africa, unknowingly dined off human flesh on more than one occasion. The natives in order to test the white man's knowledge, supplied his cook with human flesh to see if the traveler found it out. Decla made several meals before he did find it out and relates how he ate the flesh with great relish and particularly enjoyed the grilled bones which afterward turned out to be ribs of man and not ribs of beef!

Now comes the question: Why do men eat men? The custom is not primarily due to hunger, because cannibalism is most rife in those countries where the food supply is abundant. It is not due to cruelty, or to the ferocity of the savage, because the cannibal is usually a "gentleman" and most kindly in disposition, as Robert Louis Stevenson found by experience. The Congo cannibals are more advanced socially and far less bloodthirsty than tribes in the same region which do not dine upon their fellows.

In many instances it was due to revenge—to punish the dead man and destroy his spirit. Thus in Hayti, the thief was punished

by being eaten. In Australia white men have frequently been devoured because of their cruelty to the natives. In the New Hebrides it was usually a murdered or a detested enemy that was eaten.

In other cases it was to obtain the qualities of the dead. The Ashantis ate a portion so that their own spirits and courage would not waste away. In South Australia, only the old men and women were allowed to partake, in order to obtain fresh vitality.

The eater was polluted by his act and frequently had to undergo certain rites before he resumed his usual place in the community. Thus the Kwakiutl Indians of British Columbia were not allowed to eat any warm food for sixteen days; even the spoon, dish, and kettle must be thrown away four months after the act. Whenever a man wished to leave the house, he had to do so by a secret door at the back; if he left by the usual opening the ghost of the dead man was ready to pounce down upon him. In Melanesia, while cutting up a human body, the operator covered his mouth and nose for fear the spirit of the dead might enter into him and cause him hurt.

Thus, while the savage may assign various, though to us unsatisfactory reasons for devouring his own species, it will be obvious that magical and religious motives are really at the bottom of the rite. Abhorrent as this horrible and gruesome custom must appear, it will be allowed that civilization has also its grave defects. As Robert Louis Stevenson said of the South Sea cannibals, rightly speaking it is far less hateful to cut a man's flesh when he is dead than to oppress him while he lives. Weighing all the facts one is, after all, inclined to agree with Joaquin Miller that civilized life is a sort of moral cannibalism where souls eat souls, and where men kill men in order to get their places!

In giving attention to the other sanguinary rite about to be detailed, we must not forget that any preconception on our part must necessarily prejudice our judgment.

Human sacrifices are acts which belong to a stage of civilization in advance of that found among the very lowest races, although the sacrifices themselves may be accompanied by cannibalism.

The sacrificial act was an act made either on behalf of an individual or on behalf of the community at large. It appears to have had two distinct objects—one to bring prosperity or avert disaster—and the other, to provide attendants for the dead in the land of spirits. In order to achieve these supposed results, hundreds and hundreds of victims have been, from time to time, offered up alive.

In many parts, children were offered to the earth-spirits in order to fertilize the soil and thereby ensure good crops. In other cases, to avert famine, a child will be offered, as for instance during a draught in India some years since, a lad was discovered in a temple near Calcutta, with his throat cut and his eyes staring out of his head.

In the same country, in order that a journey may prove successful, a child was buried alive in a hole up to its shoulders; loaded bullocks were then driven over the poor little victim, and in proportion as this trampling was thoroughly done, so was the journey likely to prove an equally successful one.

It is stated that the Lambadis—a tribe of carriers known all over southern and western India—up to a recent period carried off the first person they met; took him to a lonely spot, where a hole was dug in the ground and the victim buried up to the neck. A dough made of flour was then placed on his head and filled with oil, four wicks were stuck in and set alight. The men and women formed a circle, danced and sang around the victim until he expired.

A case is also recorded from India where a litigant made a final appeal to the Privy Council in England, and to ensure success, caught a harmless lunatic and killed him as a sacrifice in order to obtain a successful issue to his cause.

In Oceania, in order to bring peace, two women were sacrificed. The victims arrayed themselves in their best clothing, specially made for the occasion, and their bodies were then offered upon the altar. The ears were divided between the two contending chiefs and the noses among the political sovereigns, and thus was peace "signed."

To make young braves courageous, the witch-doctor in South Africa killed a boy and a girl, mixed their blood with that of an ox, and then used it as a magical potion.

To ensure good crops, the Pawnees formerly sacrificed a young girl, who had been carefully tended and fed for several months. At the approach of spring, she was painted half red and half black, then attached to a gallows, slowly roasted over a fire, and finally shot to death with arrows. Her heart was then torn out and devoured by the chief priest. The still quivering flesh was now cut into small pieces and taken to the cornfield where a little of her blood was pressed upon some grains of corn, in order to make the crops plentiful.

In Africa, as elsewhere, human sacrifices were made to provide attendants and wives for the deceased in the land of spirits. The hill-tribes of North East India make raids specially for this pur-

pose, upon the weak Bengali of the plains, and will kill their captives at the funeral of their chief in order to provide him with a retinue in his new world.

The Hawaiians on making an expedition of great magnitude offered victims to induce the gods to grant them victory by striking terror in the hearts of their enemies. These victims were either captives taken in battle or persons who deserved punishment for having broken their sacred laws. War-gods were carried by the



Fig. 29.
HEAD OF WAR-GOD OF THE
SANDWICH ISLANDERS.*



Fig. 30.
SACRIFICIAL DRUM OF THE
ASHANTIS.

(Photos by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.)

priests on to the field of battle, the body of the god being made of wood and crowned by this helmet or mask (Fig. 29). All will agree that the terrible and distorted features of this hideous image were well calculated to strike panic in the hearts of the enemy.

The gods were kept in or near a palisaded enclosure which was of considerable extent and of which offenders had the right of

* Made of basket-work from the aerial roots of a fig-tree; covered with string net-work, overlain with beautiful red and yellow feathers. The eyes are of mother-of-pearl. The teeth are those of dogs or sharks. Human hair adorns the top of the head.

sanctuary. Here dwelt the priests and here were buried kings and high chiefs.

During a sacrifice the victims were dragged by the priests into the presence of the god and slain, and their bodies placed upon the altar, face downward in front of the idol. Sometimes as many as twenty persons were killed at one time.

In that land of blood, Ashanti, hundreds of victims were killed at one time, on the death of important persons. The executions were announced by the priests beating the celebrated sacrificial drum, which was ornamented at the sides with human skulls and thigh-bones (Fig. 30).

To prevent the victims screaming out or cursing their executioners, long knives or skewers were thrust through their tongues and cheeks. The executioners rushed forward and lopped off the right hands of their victims, which they threw at their feet and then severed the heads from their bodies. The remains of the chief having been placed in a basket, a man was called forward to assist in lowering the corpse into the grave. While doing this he received a severe blow at the back of his head by which he was stunned; he was then swiftly gashed in the neck and his body toppled into the grave on top of the dead chief. The heads of the other victims were deposited at the side of the corpse.

During the Ashanti harvest festival or "yam custom" which took place in the autumn, large numbers were also put to death every year. The festival was attended by all the chiefs under dire compulsion. Executioners grotesquely adorned and with painted faces danced and beat time with their long executioner's knives on human skulls which they carried. Slaves and other persons who were guilty of offenses were put to death and their blood placed in a large brass pan, and mingled with a decoction of vegetable and animal matter.

When danger threatened, a newly-born child, not more than a few hours old, would be torn to pieces and its limbs and members scattered around. If the country feared an invasion, men and women were sacrificed and their bodies placed along the road by which the foe must travel. Sometimes the corpses would be extended cruciform fashion and stakes driven through the bodies. When the British under Lord Wolseley invaded Ashanti, the victims were placed along the road leading to the capital, with their severed heads toward their advancing foe, and their feet toward Coomassie.

The Kondhs of India systematically offered sacrifices to the

earth-spirit to ensure good crops and to obtain immunity from disease. Children who had not been guilty of any impurity were purchased to be offered up. They were carefully tended, fed and clothed at the public expense.

A month before the sacrifice the whole community indulged in intoxication, danced and fêted themselves. On the day before the offering, a child was stupified with toddy and bound to the bottom of the sacrificial post. The assembly now danced and addressed the earth: "O god, we offer the sacrifice to you. Give us good crops, seasons, and health." Then addressing the victim they cried: "We bought you with a price and did not seize you. Now we sacrifice you according to custom and no sin rests with us." The following day the victim is again made drunk, anointed with oil and carried in procession round the village. He is then seized and thrown into a pit, his face pressed downward until he is suffocated in the mud. The priest cuts off a portion from the body which is buried near the village idol as an offering to the earth. All the assembly now help themselves to a portion of the body and carry their bloody prizes to their villages. The head and face alone are left untouched.

Another method of sacrifice was to fix the victim to an image of an elephant's head, rudely carved, which was fixed to the top of a stout post on which it revolved—the victim being fastened to the trunk. Amid the shouts and yells of the assembled multitude, the disk was turned rapidly round, and at a signal given by the priest the mob rushed forward and amid the shrieks of the little victim, gashed the flesh from his body as long as life itself lasted. The remains were then cut down and the skeleton burnt.

Sometimes the victim was dragged through the fields, surrounded by screaming and gesticulating Kondhs who rushed upon the victim, cut the flesh piecemeal from his body till he expired, then the remains were burnt and the ashes mixed with new grain to preserve it.

The following custom is said to be peculiar to the Kondhs of Jeypore. A stout post was fixed in the ground and at the foot a grave was dug. To the top of this post the sacrifice was secured firmly by his hair. Then four men advanced, outstretched his arms and legs, the body itself being suspended over the grave and facing the earth. At different intervals the priest hacked the back of the shrieking victim with his sacrificial knife, and as he did so, repeated the following prayer:

"O mighty one, this is your festal day. On account of this

sacrifice you have given us kingdoms and swords. The sacrifice we now offer you must eat, and we pray that our battle-axes may be converted into swords, and if we have any quarrels with other tribes, give us the victory. Preserve us from the tyranny of kings and their officers."

He then addressed the victim and said:

"That we may enjoy prosperity we offer you a sacrifice to our god, who will immediately eat you, so be not grieved at our slaying you, you were purchased for sixty rupees, therefore no sin is on our hands but on your parents."

The sacrifice is now decapitated, the body thrown into the grave, but the head is left attached to the post to be devoured by wild beasts.

Notwithstanding the efforts of the Indian government, probably these sacrifices are still practised in secret, and only as recently as 1902 a district magistrate actually received a petition requesting him to allow a human sacrifice to be performed.

Among the tribes of the Lower Mississippi, when a chief died, the youngest wife and some hundred men offered themselves as living sacrifices to the shade of the departed. The temple of sacrifice was built like the house of a chief, with the exception that it had figures of three eagles which looked toward the rising sun. High walls of mud surrounded this building, and upon the wall, spikes were placed which held the heads of those killed in battle or of persons who had been sacrificed to the sun. The center of this temple contained an altar at the foot of which a fire was kept burning continually by two old priests. If lightning set one of these temples on fire, five infants were thrown into the flames to appease the angered spirits.

When a chief was dead, his household esteemed it a great honor to follow him hence. Dressing themselves in their best finery, they repaired to the temple where all the tribe had assembled. Having sung and danced, a cord of buffalo hair, made with a running noose, was passed around them. The priest came forward, and commanding them to join their master in the land of spirits, strangled them, their bodies being afterward placed in a row in the temple (Fig. 31).

Such are a few of those customs practised by uncivilized man which illustrate in a most forcible way that king of all beliefs—the doctrine of a future life.

While one may well stand horrified at the manner in which the savage gives expression to that belief, at those rites which to us

are so gruesome and so sanguinary, yet one cannot fail to be moved deeply by their intensity and reality, and by the "sacrifices" which primitive man is always ready to make on behalf of his creed. No such "faith" exists in Christendom. That which we call the doctrine of a future life is but a flimsy shadow of that serious belief which is so tenaciously held by those poor savages whom we so ignorantly



Fig. 31. HUMAN SACRIFICES IN LOUISIANA.

Depicted by an artist in the early part of the eighteenth century.
(From Lafitau, *Mœurs des Sauvages*.)

despise. If life itself is real to the savage, death and the beyond are yet more real. Hence he shapes his life as if death itself and the continued life beyond counted for more than aught else. It has been stated, over and over again, that those who went forward to their slaughter, sang with joy and danced as if their happy time had come at last, and willingly submitted themselves to the knife

of the executioner. There are lessons—and they are many—which civilized man might well learn from his naked brother, and one of those lessons is, that if faith and creed are to be held at all, they should be acted as well as believed.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

PARACELSUS AS A THEOLOGICAL WRITER.¹

BY JOHN MAXSON STILLMAN.

UNTIL recently little notice has been taken of the very considerable activity of Paracelsus (1493-1541) as a thinker and writer on theology. To be sure, it was known from very early records that Paracelsus had written works of this character. Even the inventory of his personal effects recorded at Salzburg after his death makes mention of a collection of theological manuscripts presumably written by himself. So also Conrad Gesner in his *Bibliotheca Universalis* (1545) says of Paracelsus that he composed and dedicated to the Abbot of St. Gall, "I know not what theological works which I believe not to have been published."²

Moreover there exists on record a receipt signed by Johann Huser³ at Neuburg, October 10, 1594, for a collection of autograph manuscripts by Paracelsus upon theological subjects. The collection includes some twenty-five titles of works. Other lists of his theological writings are in existence dating from the latter half of the sixteenth century. In 1618 a publisher, Johann Staricius, issued a volume containing a few of these theological essays. In his preface the editor asserts that he knows a place where nearly a cart-load of the theological manuscripts may be found.⁴

Of all these manuscripts not one is now known to exist as autograph, though Sudhoff's search through the libraries of Europe has brought to light collections of copies in the libraries at Leyden, Görlitz, and elsewhere, some of these copies dating as early as 1564 to 1567, and many of them bearing titles included in the early list

¹ The following is a chapter taken from a book on Paracelsus by Professor Stillman which we intend to publish soon.—ED.

² Netzhammer, *Theophrastus Paracelsus*, p. 53.

³ Joh. Huser had just published the medical, philosophical, and surgical writings of Paracelsus (Basel, 1589-91).

⁴ Cf. Netzhammer, *op. cit.*, p. 127.