

sion of feeling I muttered, "After all, he may be more than half right. *God is a lunatic in the eyes of men.*"

It was a mere coincidence, of course, but there was something uncanny in the way the Almighty, who was well out of ear-shot, turned and called back to me, with his Olympian smile:

"Better look out, or they'll have you in there next.—And say!" he added, "don't forget Elsa's doll."

Returning to my lonely and Presence-haunted library, I looked at the dust on the family Bible and found the Almighty's autograph It read:

"THE LUNATIC."

I got the doll that afternoon and presented it to Elsa, with the compliments of her friend, the Almighty; and ever since, I have been planning a sort of doll-fest for the kindergarten in general (I refer, of course, to the world), because I am convinced by the "Lunatic" that it is the only rational thing to do. Perhaps life is a toy, and perhaps it is an awful necessity; but in either case, every one seems to want it.

And that is why I have spoiled a good metaphysician to make a bad political economist (or so Professor Spiegelmann will have it), and why my promised volume on "The Mystery of Matter" is not forthcoming.

## SAVAGE LIFE AND CUSTOM.

BY EDWARD LAWRENCE.

### X. THE RITUAL OF DEATH AND BURIAL.

ALL savages, without exception, believe that death does not end all. To them there is no real death, the passing hence to "death-land" being but the continuation in another sphere of life which appears to have been interrupted on earth by some base means. If the ceremonial initiation of the adolescent savage into the mysteries of manhood is the great event of life, then death or the permanent separation of the ghost from the body is the next important. Out of those customs and ceremonies which form such a feature of their funeral rites, a whole system of ritual has grown, and out of that system have evolved the great and complex religions of civilization.

As soon as the breath is out of the body, and frequently before, preparations are made to get on good terms with the ghost, and

many burial customs are shaped to that end. The desire is to cultivate the good humor of the dead man's spirit, to keep it near its late body, and to prevent it prowling about and getting up to all



Fig. 32. TREE BURIAL OF THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS.  
(After Dr. H. C. Yarrow. From *First Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology*, 1879-80.)

manner of pranks to the annoyance of peace-loving friends and relatives.

To prevent this, all kinds of deception are practised by the relations of the dead. A very common one is to take the corpse out

of the hut through an opening made for the purpose, which is afterward closed up. If the body was taken out by the usual entrance, mister ghost would know his way and promptly march back again. The old custom in civilized countries, of burying the dead at night, was probably due to the fear of the ghost's return.

One Australian tribe has such a great fear of the dead man's spirit that it takes special precautions to prevent the body rising from its grave. The toes of the corpse are tied together, the thumbs behind the back. Every evening a clear space is swept round the grave, and in the morning a close inspection is made to discover



Fig. 33. CREMATION OF THE DEAD IN AUSTRALIA.

(After Dr. H. C. Yarrow. From *First Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology.*)

possible tracks that may have been made by the touring ghost. Should tracks be found, the body is taken up and reburied.

Bodies are disposed of in various ways. Some are buried either in or just outside the hut, others are placed in jars, or on a platform, or in the boughs of trees. In some cases the bodies are cremated, in others the dead are eaten. (Compare Figs. 32, 33, 36, and 37.)

It is remarkable that many races so widely separate as the North American Indians and those of India, the Malay Peninsula, and Australia, should practise burial customs almost identical. The bodies are wrapped in matting or in the dead man's blanket, and then placed in the boughs of trees (Fig. 32).

Sometimes the body was burnt; the bones, collected together and wrapped in pieces of bark, were fastened to a tree. In other instances the corpse was placed between two canoes which were suspended in the boughs of a tree.

In Australia, when the flesh has disappeared, the bones are taken down and buried in the ground. When a very old woman dies, the Kaitish tribes say they do not feel sorry enough to go to the trouble of placing her body in a tree and afterward in the ground; they simply bury her. But, if a child or a woman in the prime of life dies, their sorrow is very much greater. Like other savages, the Australians regard the life of old people as of little worth. When crossing a river which may be infested with crocodiles, they always go single file and "philosophically" put an old woman in the rear, because crocodiles always seize the last person, and they say the loss of an old woman does not matter very much!

When the body is buried, all articles used by the deceased must be broken and rendered unfit for earthly use. Any person obtaining them in their original condition would be able to work black magic, and the deceased himself would be unable to live his new life. Pots and pans, bows and arrows are destroyed and placed in or on the graves. Even little children are not forgotten. The Eskimos put in a child's grave its tiny toy lamp, its cooking-pot and toy harpoon, so that the little one's spirit shall enjoy elsewhere that life which was cut short here.

In Africa the dead man's ivory and beads are ground to powder; a hole is punched in his drinking-pot and his calabash is likewise broken. The house he lived in is always pulled down, for no one would dare live in it again. All remains of his food, the very ashes of his fire are carried away and destroyed at a place where the roads cross.

In Australia persons killed were accorded a special funeral (Fig. 33). They were seated on a platform with their faces turned toward the rising sun; their legs were crossed and the arms extended by means of sticks; the fat was removed from their bodies and mixed with red ocher. This mixture was then rubbed over the dead men, from whose bodies all hair had been removed. The legs and arms were painted in red, white, and yellow stripes; their weapons were placed in their laps and fires lighted underneath the platform, which were kept burning for ten days. When the bodies were dry, they were allowed to remain for two months, after which they were buried, with the exception of the skulls. These were kept and used as drinking-cups by their relatives.

Many Indians of America cremate the dead. The body is kept in a lodge for a few days. At the end of that period it is laid upon logs which are then ignited. Beside this pyre the widow must sleep for nine days, from sunset to sunrise. While the corpse is being consumed the widow collects some of the juice from the body and rubs it on her own body and face. The bones are afterward collected and carried about for a period of years corresponding to the depth of her affection (see Fig. 38). At the end of this period, a certain ceremony, lasting some months, is performed in order to remove her mourning. The bones are taken off her back and fastened to a post. She is praised for being a good and faithful wife: bird's down and oil (see Fig. 39) are put on her head, and she is then at liberty to marry again.



Fig. 34. "FISH-COFFIN" OF THE SOLOMON ISLANDERS.  
British Museum. (Photo, reproduced by permission of the Trustees.)

A similar custom exists in the Pacific Islands where the mourners carry the hair of the dead, suspended from their necks, in knitted bags.

One of the most curious forms of burial is that shown in Fig. 34. It represents a "fish-burial" in the Solomon Islands.

On the death of a chief, the body is suspended in the house of his son, enclosed either in a canoe or in the wooden figure of a fish; this fish is then sealed up to prevent any odor escaping. It is kept in this condition for a considerable time, often for years, till a great feast is held. Then the son will say, "Now we will take out father." Father is accordingly taken down from his resting-place and his body removed from the fish-coffin; the skull and jaw-bones are then put in another but smaller fish-shaped coffin, which is set up in the house. The remaining portions of the body are buried in the ground and that is the end of father.

As the dead man's ghost is always a source of persistent annoyance to those left behind, endeavors are made to please and

pacify it by singing and chanting. At the funeral ceremony in East Africa, the men form a circle round the pyre, moving and chanting together, while the women form an outer ring and move in a contrary direction.

On the death of an adult, the natives of the Upper Congo, male and female, dress themselves up in all their finery and walk in single file round and round the grave, singing and shouting the praises of the dead as they go, the whole village looking on. When passing the hut of the dead person, they plunge their spears into the roof, apparently to frighten away the ghost. This dance lasts from eight



Fig. 35. FUNERAL DANCE AT UPOTO, UPPER CONGO.

(Photo by Rev. W. Forfeitt. By permission of the Baptist Missionary Society.)

to ten days, according to the importance of the deceased, and is continued during part of each night (Fig. 35).

Mr. Herbert Ward, one of Stanley's officers, has given a graphic description of the funeral of a chief which he witnessed at Bolobo. The men, who were in a state of intense excitement, had blackened their faces with palm oil and charcoal, and were armed with murderous-looking knives and spears. Near-by were seated the slaves and wives of the deceased, with their arms and legs manacled and their necks fastened in the forked branches of wooden poles, while women's voices bewailed the dead. On the palaver-ground some

three hundred naked women, with faces daubed in red and white, were kneeling, swaying their bodies to and fro. In the center lay the body of the dead chief, his face painted white, while a broad black band of paint traversed his face from forehead to chin. His body was dotted with large yellow spots, the arms being painted red. Arranged in front were a large number of fetishes, images, and amulets. A deep hole had been dug and around it the natives danced. Presently a procession of other dancing figures made their way forward, and out of it bounded forth the great charm-doctor, decked with leopard skins and rattling charms (compare frontispiece to *The Open Court*, November, 1918). With whitened eyelids and body smeared with the brains and blood of a fowl, he commenced the "dance of death." Presently he seated himself in front of the grave; then hideous shouts rent the air, and in front of him were placed—bound hand and foot—the ten wives of the deceased whose corpse was brought forward to the graveside. The ten bodies, alive and shrieking, were pitched into the grave, the dead man was then placed in the hole which was rapidly filled in with earth by the assembled people, who shouted and danced upon the spot. The slaves were now brought forth and speedily decapitated over the filled-in grave.

The custom of cutting the flesh and mutilating the body, referred to in the Old Testament (Leviticus xix. 28), on behalf of the departed soul is very common in savage obsequies. These mutilations, while apparently due to excessive grief, are really of religious significance and follow certain rules which custom has laid down. The blood shed is supposed to be a kind of spiritual food on which the soul will feed and thus vivify itself at the expense of friends left on earth.

On the death of a relative, the Fijians cut off their little fingers, and cases have been recorded where some of the older men had gone into mourning so many times that they had few fingers left! The poor people often sent their own mutilated fingers to wealthier folk who were in mourning.

Thomas Williams, the missionary, relates of these people that, ten days after a man's death, all the women of the village provided themselves with long whips, knotted with shells, with which they belabored the bodies of their men-folk.

In New Guinea, female relatives cut their breasts, faces, and in fact all parts of their bodies, with sharp shells until they fall down exhausted in a stream of blood.

A father in Australia who has lost a son, beats and cuts himself

with a tomahawk, while the mother burns her breast and abdomen for hours and hours at a time, frequently with such severity that fatal results ensue. In other cases, women dig their sharply-pointed yam sticks into the top of their heads until blood falls in streams



Fig. 36. SIOUX WOMEN, CUTTING THEIR HAIR AND MUTI-LATING THEIR BODIES AT THE GRAVE.

(After Dr. H. C. Yarrow. From *First Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology.*)

over their faces. One man was seen to lash his thigh with a stone knife, cutting the muscles so deeply that he was unable to stand.

In America the practice of lacerating the flesh and cutting off the hair is very widely spread (Fig. 36). The Salish cut the hair of relatives, which is burnt to prevent it falling into the hands of sorcerers; or they bury it in dense vegetation which is supposed



to bring them wealth and strength. They consider the closer the hair is cut, the greater is the sign of mourning. The Loucheux cut the hair close to the head, and sometimes, in their frenzy, kill some poor friendless stranger who may be sojourning with them.



Fig. 37. NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS OFFERING FOOD TO THE DEAD MAN'S SPIRIT.

(After Dr. H. C. Yarrow. From *First Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology*.)

The life in ghost-land being but a counterpart of life on earth, food as well as utensils are placed near the corpse. The "spiritual" part of the food is supposed to feed the ghost and satisfy its desires so that it will not wish to return.

The Kiwai Islanders of New Guinea believe that the spirit

remains in the ground near the body, occasionally coming up, taking a look round, and then returning again to earth. The appearance of the spirit is eagerly looked for in order to ascertain how the deceased met his death. Nothing is buried with the body, but in the case of a man his bows and arrows are stuck at the head of the grave; if the deceased be a woman her petticoat is fastened there on a stick. Over the grave a small platform is erected and on this is placed sago, yams, bananas, and fish for the spirit to eat. A fire is lighted at the side of the grave and kept burning for nine days, so that the spirit may warm itself.



Fig. 38. PAINTED SKULL OF AN ANDAMAN ISLANDER, WORN AROUND THE NECK BY A MOURNER.

British Museum. (Photo, reproduced by permission of the Trustees.)

Among the Kacharis of India the corpse is washed immediately after death, the arms and legs straightened out, the head anointed with oil, and the hair carefully combed. A fowl is then killed from which a curry is made with vegetables and condiments. A portion of this food is placed near the head of the corpse and a pretense made of feeding him, but no food is actually placed on the lips. After repeating this act ten or twelve times, the remaining food is thrown away, no person being allowed to eat it.

Sometimes a hole is made in the ground to allow the ghost to pass in and out; with the North American Indians, a hole is

made in the side of the coffin to enable the spirit to partake of the food offered (Fig. 37).

Captain Speke, who discovered one of the sources of the Nile, gave an account of a Myoro woman who, having lost her twins, kept two small pots in her house as effigies of her children into which she allowed some of her milk to flow every evening for five months. This she did lest the spirits of the dead should persecute her. The twins were not buried according to the usual custom, but were placed in pots which were taken to the jungle and placed by a tree with the mouths turned downward.

For a considerable time after the death of a relative the members of many races carry about with them either articles which belonged to the deceased or his skull and other bones, fixed round their necks. Thus in New Guinea, a widower will wear the petticoat of his dead wife, fastened by means of a cord. His hair is cropped short and his body blackened from head to foot. New Guinea ladies dangle from their necks the lower jaws of their husbands.

In the Andaman Islands, the dead body of a child is pressed into the smallest compass and buried, and some of its mother's milk placed in a shell which is put by the graveside. After a time the remains are exhumed, cleansed of all matter by the father, who takes the skull and bones to his hut. He breaks up the bones into small pieces, and these are made into a necklace for the mother to wear. The mother paints the skull and wears it round her neck (Fig. 38).

When a person dies in civilized countries, why do the relatives go in black? The usual answer is, of course, that it is done out of respect for the dead.

Savages provide us with a very different answer. As Sir J. G. Frazer pointed out many years ago, their mourning customs are the very reverse of those practised in ordinary life, and are in all probability nothing less than a disguise to prevent recognition by the ghost. Some blacken their faces; others lather themselves with mud or rub ashes on their faces; those who in ordinary life paint themselves now refrain from doing so. Among the Mpongwes of West Africa, a race particularly fond of clothes, the woman wears as few as possible, the man none at all. The Bororo Indians of Brazil paint the face and cover the body with feathers (Fig. 39).

Our examination of the different methods of disposing of the dead, cursory though it may have been, is sufficient to show us what a very important place those rites occupy in the life of savage

man. The fear of the dead man's ghost, and the desire to propitiate it by all means; the devices and deceptions practised to mislead it; all these and the customs arising therefrom, form the very basis upon which savage ethics have been built. For if a man be offended in any way during life, he will threaten the offender that he will

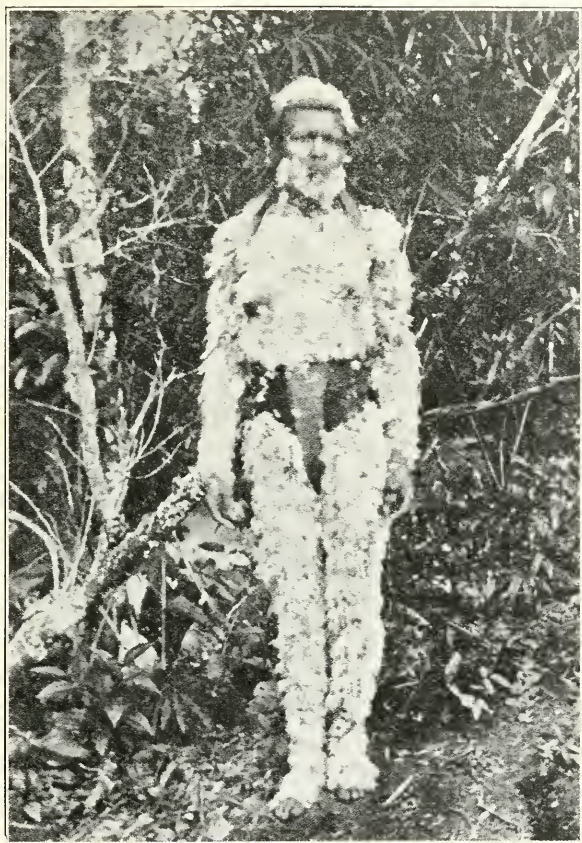


Fig. 39. BORORO INDIAN WOMAN WITH BODY COVERED WITH FEATHERS.

(From the Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, 1907.)

return from dead-land and inflict him with all manner of pain. It is this fear which prevents would-be tyrants from exercising the baneful influence they otherwise would use, for a bad man in this life is bound to be a scoundrel in the next.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]