

Cannibals of Africa and Their Deeds

By CAPTAIN GUY BURROWS

Formerly Commandant Congo Free State

IN THE main my observations upon the degrading vice of cannibalism agree with those of other explorers. Livingston for a long time refused to believe in the practice until the inexorable logic of facts forced conviction on him when he came in contact with the Manyema. Both Mr. Herbert Ward, the author of a note on "The Origin and Distribution of Cannibalism," and Mr. S. L. Hinde, author of "The Fall of the Congo Arabs," allude to it.

In noting the various theories we must remember that, with few exceptions, the lower animals will not devour their own kind. "Dog will not eat dog" is an old saying, but we know that if one wolf falls in a pack pursuing a sheep the rest of the pack will stop to eat him, and that certain snakes will devour each other.

Fierce hunger has driven men of our own race, as a last resource in the pinch of hunger, to satisfy their craving in this terrible way. Sailors in a boat or on a raft have killed their fellows for food, and it is a sailor's gruesome tradition that the liver alone in such case should be eaten, as being the most digestible.

This theory came out with horrible vividness in the trial of the men of the Mignonette, who were indicted and convicted of manslaughter for the slaying of a boy, who was the youngest in the boat. Our laws lay it down that under no circumstances is it lawful to take a fellow creature's life; but hunger and the dread of death will override all law and induce such fearful tragedies.

In the practices I am about to describe, however, hunger is not a factor; superstition and depraved appetite being the sole incentives. There is an extraordinary religious sentiment connected with this custom. As we have said, the flesh of relatives is never eaten, and some tribes forbid the use of human flesh to all women. That a cannibal can be kind and affectionate I and others have observed, and no evil results seem to follow from the habit; indeed, from sanitary and scientific points of view, there seems to be no reason why the flesh of man, properly cooked, should not be nutritious. The wonder comes in when we find, as did Livingston, that in countries rich in foods, animal and farinaceous, the awful custom is continued.

HUNGER ABOVE ALL LAWS.

Food superstitions are many and mysterious, but they will all give way under the pressure of hunger; thus a good Jew will never, if he can help it, eat the flesh of pig or blood; but if he were so driven by force of circumstances that he had nothing else to eat, he assuredly would devour them sooner than starve. So, too, a good Roman Catholic eats no meat on Friday; but such fasting would be foolish and impossible if life itself were at stake.

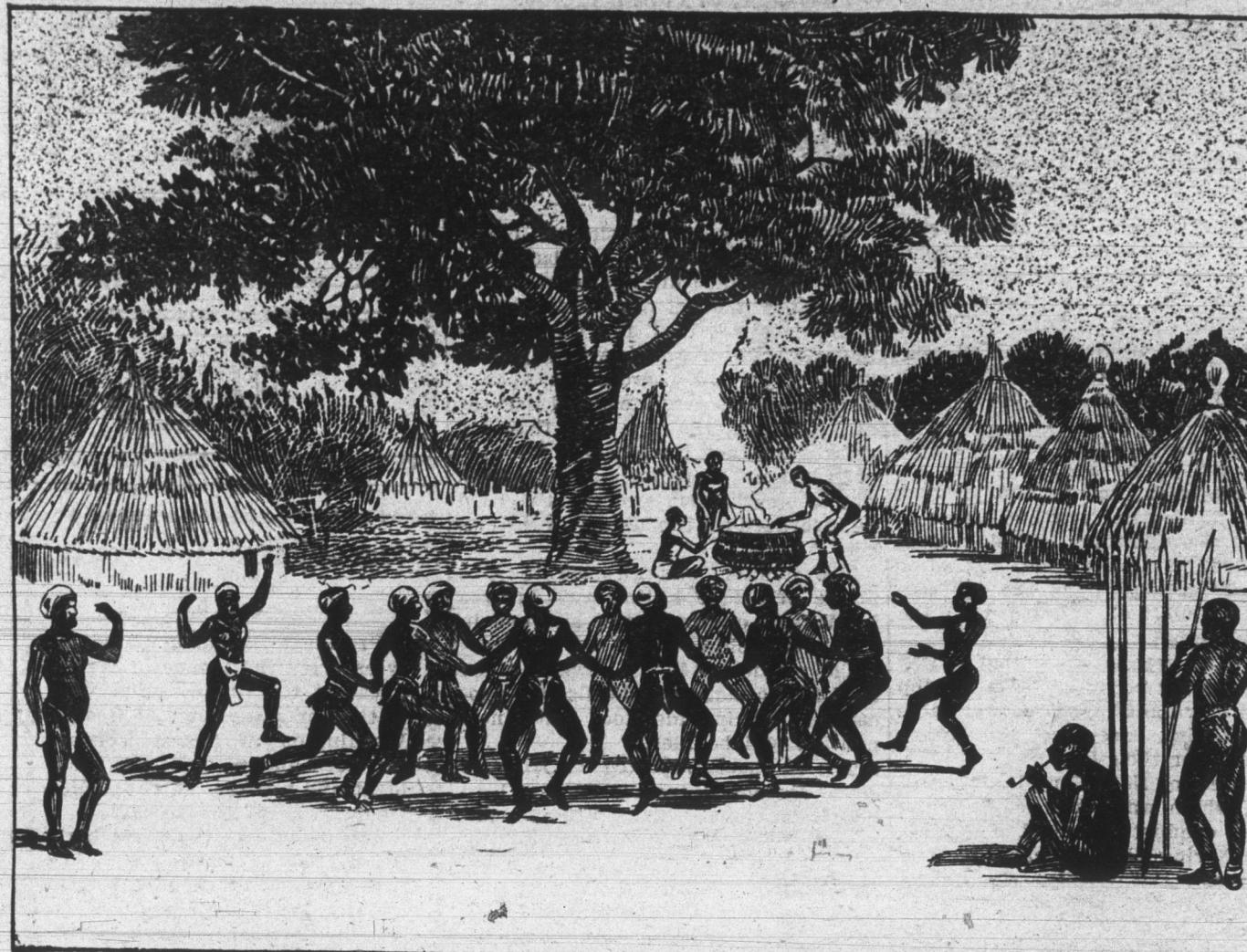
These and other considerations (such, for instance as the love of a Red Indian for a "rib-roast" of dog) indicate that the real origin of cannibalism was hunger and that by a process of heredity and warlike propensities it grew into a cult. The people who practice it see in it no wrong; so that nothing but punishment and the gradual progress of civilization can be expected to eradicate the evil. Happily it is now slowly disappearing, and the natives are beginning to be ashamed of a practice which degrades them in the eyes of those with whom they desire to stand well.

Notwithstanding its obvious and vital interests, writers on equatorial Africa, who must of necessity have encountered races among whom this practice was a part of everyday life, seem, intentionally or otherwise, either to have misled their readers or to have slurred over all unpleasant details. None seem to have gone to any pains in order to establish the accuracy of the statements they put forward, or to confirm bare assertions founded either upon hearsay or conjecture. On the plea of wishing to avoid a distasteful subject, and quite ignoring its social and scientific aspect and value, many travelers have deliberately suppressed their notes, or still worse, have gone out of their way to give false information—fearful lest the truth should offend.

HISTORY OF CANNIBALISM.

Much has, however, been said by various writers on what may be called the theoretical side of cannibalism; by which I mean speculation as to its origin, its history and its effects upon the people who practice it. In a geographical journal for July, 1893, we find the following words: "Cannibalism seems to have prevailed to a considerable extent among primitive inhabitants of Europe, and still more in America. The fact that no traces of it date back to paleolithic times, while the lower animals rarely devour their own species, seems to show that a certain degree of intelligence was first attained." With this may be compared the remark of Pescuel that the custom is most prevalent among tribes distinguished by a certain social advance.

While instances of resort to human flesh as food in times of famine are widely diffused, the most common cause seems to be the well-known superstition that by eating the heart or



CELEBRATING A VICTORY—COOKING THE FALLEN ENEMIES IN THE BACKGROUND.

other part of an enemy, to which the practice is often restricted, his prowess is assimilated and acquired. A true note is struck when the writer we have quoted says that this habit, begun from some necessity, is "afterwards persisted in from choice." In Manyemaland and other districts of the Congo Free State human sacrifices and religious rites are wholly distinct from cannibalism, which is persisted in deliberately.

Livingston, who was the first Englishman to cross the Manyema country, traveled through the district in company with a party of Arab slave-traders, under whose protection he placed himself in 1869—not from choice, but as the only means by which it was possible for him to penetrate into those dangerous parts. The journey was protracted; halts were long and frequent; and so he was enabled to watch closely the habits, haunts and customs of the Manyema people.

LIVINGSTON'S TESTIMONY.

Very slowly and with great reluctance Livingston became convinced that, from whatever cause their cannibalism might have originated, it had then nothing to do with superstition or religious rites. The natives made no endeavor to conceal their liking for human flesh, and the great traveler could no longer close his eyes to a self-evident fact. Since the country was full of animal and vegetable food, and starvation was an impossible plea, cannibalism could alone be accounted for by the assumption that it was the result of a depraved appetite, or the outcome of greediness. "Yet," said Livingston, "they are a fine looking race; I would back a company of Manyema men to be far superior in shape of head, and generally in physical form, to the whole Anthropological society."

This unnatural practice stands by itself, seeming not in any way to affect or retard the development of the better emotions. Thus, tribes to whom cannibalism is quite foreign are in many cases more bloodthirsty and far less advanced, both morally and socially, than others openly addicted to it. The prisoner or slave who is to grace the feast is not killed outright. Three days beforehand his limbs are broken, after which he is placed chin-deep in a pool of water, his head being fastened to a log so that he may not be drowned. On the third day he is taken out and killed. This process is supposed to make his flesh more tender, but it is difficult to see how the Bangala can have arrived at this conclusion.

Mrs. S. L. Hinde tells the following story, which will serve to illustrate the man-eating propensities of the Bangala: "When I was returning from Stanley Falls on my homeward journey six of the crew were in irons on board ship, whom the captain delivered up to justice at Bangala for having eaten two of their number during the voyage up to the falls. I was not at the trial, but the captain told me that two of the crew had fallen ill on the upward voyage, and had been allowed to rest for a short time. On the next ration day these two men were missing, and, upon making inquiries, the captain was informed that they had died in the night, and had been buried on shore. This, however, did not satisfy him, and having his own suspicions he searched the ship and discovered parts of the men, smoke-dried and hidden away in the lockers of the six Bangala, whom he was then handing over to the authorities."

On this subject Mr. Herbert Ward, author of "Five Years Among the Congo Cannibals," makes the following statement: "It must not be supposed that the cannibal tribes of the interior are altogether brutal in every action of life. On the contrary, I have observed more frequent traits of affection for wife and children than are exhibited in the conduct of domestic affairs among the people of the lower or Ba Congo country, who are not cannibals." This remark coincides so exactly with my own observations that I am glad to quote it in full.

PIGMIES NOT CANNIBALS.

The same argument applies also to the dwarfs or pygmy races of Central Africa, who are of a very low type. They build the worst huts of any people in the district; they have no arts, nor do they till the soil. Nomadic by hunting, trapping and fishing. Yet they will starve sooner than eat human flesh. In this I am confirmed by Cassati, who, in his "Ten Years in Equatorial Africa," gives ample testimony, instancing a fight, and the reveling of the victors as they feasted on the bodies of the slain, while their allies, the pygmies, weary as they were from fighting, scoured the country round searching for vegetable food.

Dr. Parke, by the way, in his book, "Experiences in Equatorial Africa," inclines to the opinion that cannibalism among the dwarfs does not exist, though they can, for they are improvident in everything, taking no thought for the

practice of it. "My pygmy," he says, "tells me that the people of her tribe rarely eat human flesh, and are ashamed of doing so." The doctor, however, made no attempt to verify this assertion, and frankly I do not believe it is at all reliable. I have lived among the pygmies at various times, and have had excellent opportunity for studying their character and customs, but I have never encountered a single case of cannibalism among them, nor did I ever hear of one. If an isolated instance should have occurred I have no hesitation in saying that it was the result of imitation, for the pygmies are very prone to imitate their neighbors both in peace and war.

It is a nice literary question as to whether Shakespeare gained his knowledge of "the anthropophagi," and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders? Did he mean cannibals and stunted dwarfs? We shall never get to the root of his shrewd omniscience.

The practice of body-snatching from the cemeteries is frequently resorted to in the Bangala country, where the inhabitants are habitual cannibals. As a consequence Leopoldville, the chief station on the Upper Congo, is obliged to keep a regular guard at the cemetery, as the Bangala are constantly coming and going, against whom several cases of body-snatching have been proved. This practice became at one time so common that nothing short of capital punishment had any effect in putting a stop to it.

MEN KILLED FOR FOOD.

The Bangala, besides feasting on the bodies of those slain in battle, are also in the habit of killing men for food. Their method of preparation is a cruel one, but it is curious, and one is inclined to think there must be some hidden origin and history behind it. The prisoner or slave who is to grace the feast is not killed outright.

Three days before his limbs are broken, after which he is placed chin-deep in a pool of water, his head being fastened to a log so that he may not be drowned. On the third day he is taken out and killed. This process is supposed to make his flesh more tender, but it is difficult to see how the Bangala can have arrived at this conclusion.

Details of the death of Corp. R. L. M. Donaldson, one of the detachment, which took place while cruising from Cape Fullerton, 500 miles to Fort Churchill, have been furnished to the Field, London, Corp. Donaldson and Corp. Reeves started from Fullerton in a 44-foot H. B. cruising yacht, accompanied by an Eskimo half-breed named Ford. They made the cruise all safe, and at length reached Marble Island, some miles down the coast from Fullerton. The Eskimos have a tradition regarding this island, which they believe to be a great iceberg turned by a spirit into stone of peculiar whiteness. No Eskimo will land upon it. When the boat drew near, the officers seemed to see the island moving up and down in the water, but the Eskimo cried that what seemed to make this island move was the presence of an immense herd of walrus.

Donaldson then determined to get near them in the dinghy and have a shot at them. The yacht lay by while he killed or wounded several of the herd, but his barrel became hot and he started to put back to the yacht. This gave him trouble, as the whole herd was now thoroughly excited. Donaldson and Reeves then set out together to skin the edges of the herd and secure the tusks and heads of the animals killed.

a boy hit in the shoulder by a bullet from one of the muzzle-loading guns that are used by the natives, such as they receive in bartering with the traders. Looking supremely unconcerned and apathetic about the whole affair, he was carried to one side by the men nearest him. I called the men up and told them to take him up to the camp where the other wounded were lying. They objected that he was only a boy and it did not matter. I berated them for their insubordination and saw my order carried through. But for some time afterwards the men continue to grumble, saying I might just as well let them have the boy for killing when the work of the fight was done. The boy recovered, and remained with me for a considerable time; but the two men, as well as many of the others who had heard of the circumstance, were highly disgusted with me, and labored long under a sense of having been the victims of gross injustice.

DEAD ENEMIES EATEN.

I saw another side of cannibalism during the same campaign. I was sitting outside my tent in the cool of the evening, after camp had been pitched, watching the men get their food ready. The day's work had been a hard one, and a good many on both sides had been left dead on the scene of the fight; there were also a large number of wounded, and fewer men to get through the camp fatigue work, so we were not clear until nearly dark. Presently in the deepening gloom a man passed me, with a packet on his shoulders, neatly done up in banana leaves. I asked him what he was carrying. "Food," he said; "food for the men." I asked what food it was, and he replied that it was banana food. As a matter of fact he and several of the other men were going continually to and fro from the scene of the fight, cutting up the bodies and bringing them down in small parcels so as not to attract my notice as they passed my tent.

In reality most of them are ashamed of being cannibals, and are much confused if interrupted in their grewsome work. Nearly always after a fight when they have cut up the fallen and are bringing in the flesh, they will carefully conceal their tracks, so that if you wish to pass through in the same direction they will pretend to tell you much better way. "This is a bad path, infested with snakes and wild beasts. It is quite dangerous, and you must cross a wide river, etc., etc. But over there, there is a very fine, clear, easy path," and so on. But they will never let you pass the place where they are cutting up the bodies, if they can possibly prevent you by guile or force.

The heads of those killed for food, as I have already said, are rejected, but the teeth are extracted and serve to make ornaments, such as necklaces and arm bands, which are worn by the women. The hair, too, when it is not the thick wool of the negro, is used for plaiting into ornamental strips. Very often the skin is removed from the body of the victim, and is made into drum-heads. In this fashion they are, if report is true, followed by the ladies of Paris, who, according to the latest fad, are said to carry books or purses bound in a strip of human skin. The skulls are stuck up on posts around the village. These central African cannibals have not the belief which is held by others that to eat the heart of any enemy will give them courage, or that by eating his arms they receive his strength.

While I was conducting a punitive expedition against the Mabode, I saw

Inspector Pelletier, with noncommissioned officers and troopers of the Royal Northwest mounted police, who started in June last from Edmonton, Canadian northwest, on patrol duty to the arctic regions, recently reached Winnipeg on their return journey. From Edmonton the route was taken by sled and snowshoes across the continent, through the great northern wilderness, by way of Great Slave lake to Baker lake, thence overland to Fort Churchill on the Hudson bay, and back to Winnipeg by way of Split lake and Norway house. Important geological discoveries were made.

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The ONLOOKER
by WILBUR D. NESBIT

Another Difficult Question



One strange problem hitherto
My onslaught has withheld;
What kind of wood would a woodchuck
chuck
If a woodchuck could, chuck wood?"
Punch.

If a gopher went when he was bid,
Though he be wild or tame,
And the thing for which he went was
hid

If he knew not its name,
Then what would the little gopher do?
That's what I want to know,
O, what would the gopher go for then,
And where would the gopher go?

If the gopher went to whippoorwill,
Would the whippoorwill tell him
If he knew poor Will had a whetted bill
And was in fighting trim?
If Will wouldn't wait for the first attack
But would land a knockout blow,
O, what would the gopher go for then
And where would the gopher go?

Does the gopher go for a single thing?
Would he, if he were sent,
In a hurry, come some day to bring
Us the reason why he went?
Ah, this is the question vexing me,
And this I want to know:
O, what would the gopher go for then
And where would the gopher go?

Exercise.

Exercise is what people talk about.
Exercise consists of a cold bath
every morning, a brisk walk of five
miles in the open air, and a session
with the clubs and the punching bag.

This forms a constant topic of conversation. Folks who talk about it always say they must take it. Exercise is seldom taken. It is not very catching.

A man who is naturally healthy, who eats pie and Welsh rabbit and all such stuff, will look you in the eye and swear that his perfect condition is entirely due to the regular exercise he takes. A man who is growing fat will say that he is going to take regular exercise and reduce. He keeps saying this until he grows so big that his clothes have to be measured by trigonometry.

Nobody takes exercise—unless he can wear his best clothes.

And he doesn't like to spoil them.

Percy's Circumstances.



"Yes, I have accepted Percy."
"But do you think he makes enough
money to get married?"

"Oh, dear, no. But he makes enough
to be engaged on."

Reassuring.

"When I see so many instances of
marital infidelity," murmurs the kittenish lady with the corkscrew curls,
"I shudder!"

"You do?" asks the man with the lantern jaws.

"Yes. Oh, it seems to be such a lottery! One cannot tell what the future may be. Tell me, Mr. Skidmore, do you think I would make a mistake in marrying?"

"Mistake!" echoed the lantern-jawed man. "Mistake! Not at your age, madam."

Culture in the Forest.

"What makes that bird sing so
fiercely?" asks the tiger.

"Professor Parrot escaped from his cage in the city and has come back and established a school of voice culture. The bird is one of his pupils," explains the hippopotamus.

Whereupon the hyena laughs immoderately.

The I. C. of L. Again.

"Darling," means the enamored youth, "I fear we cannot be married this year!"

"Say not so!" exclaims the fair young thing. "What can be the reason?"

"Have you not read that because of the horrible tariff on cigarettes there will be only eight in a box hereafter? How can I make both ends meet?"

Wilbur D. Nesbit