

SUPERSTITION AND CRUELTY.

HUMAN SACRIFICES.—The most ancient of the Canaanitish idols, was Aglibolus, or Baal. The meaning of the word "Baal," is "Lord;" and refers to the sun. Another idol was Malach-bolus, or Moloch; a male personification of the moon. To both these idols human sacrifices were offered. Before entering Canaan, the Israelites received the strongest possible injunctions, to preserve them from adopting these abominations. Death was denounced against those who should imitate the idolaters by offering their children. But notwithstanding these threatenings, the kings of Israel set their people the example of conforming to these horrid rites. Solomon built a temple to Moloch on the Mount of Olives; and Manasseh reared altars to Baal, and "made his son pass through the fire." It is believed that the children were sometimes obliged only to pass between fires, or to leap over them. Generally, however, there can be no doubt they were really sacrificed. So infamous did the valley of Tophet become, on account of these barbarities, that the prophet Jeremiah declared it should be called "the valley of slaughter."

Mr. Croker, in his "Fairy Tales and Legends of the South of Ireland," gives an account of some curious relics of the ancient worship of this deity. He says that May-day is called "the day of Beal's fire;" and May-eve, "the eve of Beal's fire."—from having been, in heathen times, consecrated to the god Beal, or Belus; whence, also, the month of May is termed, in Irish, "Mina Bealtine." He goes on to observe that the ceremony practised on May-eve, of making the cows leap over lighted straw, or faggots, has been generally traced to the worship of that deity. It is now vulgarly used in order to save the milk from being pilfered by "the good people," as the fairies are called.

Moloch, according to the Jewish rabbies, was an idol of brass, with a calf's head, and seated on a brazen throne. It was hollow, and divided into seven compartments. In the first compartment was placed meal; in the second, a turtle; in the third, an ewe; in the fourth, a ram; in the fifth, a calf; in the sixth, an ox; and in the seventh, a child. The idol was then heated; and the whole of its contents were consumed together, amidst the noise of shouts, and warlike instruments. Milton thus notices some of the particulars we have mentioned:—

"First, Moloch!—horrid king!—besmeared with blood
Of human sacrifice, and parents' tears;
Though (for the noise of drums and timbrels loud)
Their children's cries unheard, that pass'd through fire
To this grim idol.

The wisest heart
Of Solomon he led, by fraud, to build
His temple, right against the temple of God,
On that opprobrious hill; and made his grove
The pleasant vale of Hinnom;—Tophet, thence,
And black Gehenna called,—the type of hell!"

The grand object of worship among the Carthaginians, was Saturn; and the rites performed to his honour were of the same horrid character as those of Moloch. The statue of this idol was of brass; with its arms extended, and so inclined, that whatever was placed on them rolled into a fire. The most respectable authors of antiquity unite to assure us, that to this deity infants were sacrificed; and those who had no children of their own, purchased those of the poor for this dreadful purpose. The attendant priests were clothed in scarlet;—fit emblem of their bloody office! Their sacrifices were always attended by drums, and other noisy instruments; in the same manner as those of Moloch previously, and of the Hindoos to this day. When Agathocles was approaching to besiege Carthage, the inhabitants imagined they had offended Saturn, by neglecting the proper sacrifices; and two hundred children, of the first families in the city, were publicly immolated.

WORSHIP OF ANIMALS.—One of the most remarkable features of the Egyptian Mythology, was the worship of animals. They imagined that some animals partook of the nature of their celestial deities; and were therefore entitled to divine honours. Thus when the worship of the moon had become established, and her increase and diminution superstitiously considered, it was thought to bear some analogy to the dilating and contracting pupil of the cat's eye; and puss was accordingly deified. In the same manner, the asp and the beetle became sacred; because they were supposed to exhibit some faint images of particular deities. The hawk was dedicated to Osiris; the ass, the crocodile, and the hippopotamus, to Typho; the serpent, or dragon, to Neptho. Every element was laid under contribution; and men, women, bulls, cows, rams, goats, dogs, cats, snakes, crocodiles, frogs, beetles, and innumerable others, were all included in the sacred catalogue. Ophilitria, or serpent-worship, was very famous; and was celebrated with the most horrid rites. To this animal human victims were immolated. Richardson, in his researches in Egypt, discovered a tomb at Eiban al Melook, in which there is a representation of six men sacrificed at one time. The walls of their tombs are frequently covered with representations of this idol; as may be seen by consulting the volumes of the "Library of Entertaining Knowledge" devoted to "Egyptian Antiquities," and Dr. Taylor's recently published work on the subject.

The bull was sacred to Osiris; and was called Apis. It was to be black, with a square piece of white on the forehead. Many years sometimes elapsed, before an animal could be found exactly answering this description. When Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, (called, in Scripture, Ahazuerus,) invaded Egypt, he desired the priest to show him their god. They immediately, with much pomp, led Apis before him. Cambyses, enraged at their stupidity, drew his dagger, and thrust it into the animal's thigh;—of which wound poor Apis died. The priests were shocked at his profanity; and predicted the most direful calamities in consequence. Sometime afterwards, Cambyses, in drawing his sword, wounded his own thigh; and, like the bull, died of the injury. The priests, of course, did not fail to represent it as a judgment on his daring crime. Dr. Prideaux, in relating this occurrence, actually coincides with the priests; and thinks that God punished the king for his contempt of their religion, though that religion was idolatrous. For so eminent a man, and a Dean of the Church of England, such an opinion appears a little extraordinary.—Dr. Rogers.

THE MAID OF RONA.

About the beginning of September, 1746, some months after the final overthrow of the brave, but unfortunate Prince Charles Edward, and his devoted adherents, at the battle of Culloden, a French ship was hovering round the Western Isles, in order to carry off to France such of the unfortunate insurgents, as were still hunted by their merciless enemies among the fastnesses of their native mountains.

At this period, the small and barren island of Rona was the hiding-place of Captain McDonald, a younger brother of the chief of Moidart, and one of those daring spirits who had rendered themselves particularly obnoxious to the government, by their activity in fomenting the rebellion, and afterwards, in facilitating the escape of the prince. He had been some weeks on the island, under the protection of Rory M'Allister, his foster-father, who, with his wife, was the only inhabitant of this barren-rock, when, to his great joy, he one evening descried a ship, carrying the private signal of his party, standing off to the westward. He immediately answered the signal; and anxiously awaited the approach of night.

The day was closing with every appearance of a coming storm; and Rory M'Allister's practised eye could discover, that the brave bark, which had ventured into the very jaws, as it were, of the British ships of war, was closely reefed, as it passed between him and the fiery disk of the sun, just disappearing in the western waters.

At any other time, Captain M'Donald would have hailed the approach of a storm with pleasure, as it would have afforded him an opportunity of leaving his cold, desolate retreat; to enjoy in security the comparative comfort of his humble friend's fire-side—a luxury he dared not venture upon, while the little island was accessible to the boats from the men of war. Two parties had been already despatched on different occasions to pay domiciliary visits to Rory, on suspicion of his harbouring his foster son; but a very slight search sufficed to convince the pursuers that no human being could be concealed on the premises, viz., a mad cabin, containing one apartment; and the barren rock, surrounded for the most part, by perpendicular cliffs, appeared very little better calculated to afford shelter.

Rory had, however, discovered a place of concealment which he thought would defy the most active vigilance of his foster-son's enemies, and had accordingly carried him thither from the mainland. It was a cave opening into the face of the rock, a little above low-water mark, and rising in numerous shelves and compartments to the very brow of the cliff, where it ended in an aperture sufficiently large to admit light and air, but not ingress or egress to a full-grown person.

In this cave, then, did Captain McDonald pass the three weeks previous to the commencement of the present narrative, except such intervals of stormy weather as secured him from all chance of a surprise. He sometimes descended, with the assistance of his faithful friend, by ropes let down the face of the rock, and at other times, when the weather permitted, was carried round the island in Rory's skiff. It will be observed that the refugee's hiding-place became a prison during a portion of the time, owing to the rising of the tide, and, on such occasions, he received his scanty sustenance through the aperture at the top. Captain McDonald was too much excited by the hope of escape, to retire to his strong-hold on the evening in question; but as the storm increased, his hopes began to vanish. Towards midnight it blew a hurricane, and, although it was impossible for any boat to effect a landing, yet he continued to look out at intervals, through the pitchy darkness, in the forlorn hope of seeing or hearing a friendly signal. Soon after midnight, a gun was heard to windward, and, notwithstanding the apparent uselessness of such a step, he proceeded in the direction of the cave, which was at the western extremity of the island. He had not been long there, when he distinctly heard another report, and saw a flash at no great distance. It was now evident that those guns were fired by a ship in distress, and as it was to windward, and probably not aware of the dangerous vicinity, its fate was but too likely to be soon decided. It was im-

possible to warn the ill-fated vessel of its danger; Captain McDonald, therefore, could only await in painful anxiety the fearful catastrophe which, in all human probability, must inevitably occur.

There was every reason to fear that the distressed ship was that which had been seen on the previous evening, a circumstance which greatly added to the intensity of his anxiety, as not only was his own escape rendered impossible for the present, but the lives of the brave men who had attempted to save him were likely to be sacrificed. The storm still raged with unabated fury, when Rory observed to his foster-son, that he fancied he could distinguish the sound of voices amidst the raging of the elements. Just at this instant a vivid flash of lightning burst through the surrounding gloom, and exhibited to their view for a moment a ship within a hundred yards of the cliff. In a few seconds a crash was heard—it had struck on a ledge of low rocks, about a cable's-length from the island. A confused cry of wild despair, rose for a moment above the warring elements, and then all was silent, save the thundering roar of the breakers dashing against the rock, which shook to its foundation.

As the tide was low at the time, McDonald determined to descend the face of the cliff, in the hope of rendering assistance, much against the advice of his friend, who remonstrated on the folly and madness of such an attempt, but in vain. He reached the mouth of the cave in safety, and, advancing to the edge of the lower rock, observed a dark mass left by the receding wave within a few feet of the spot where he stood.

He made a dash at the object, and, pulling it beyond reach of the breakers, discovered a large dog, much exhausted, but still holding in its teeth the clothes of a child which he had evidently brought ashore.

The brave Highlander carried the child—a girl, as appeared from her garments, into the cave, and returned to the beach, but without further success.

It was impossible to ascend with the child, which now gave signs of returning animation, by the same way he had descended: he therefore proceeded to the aperture at the top of the cavern, and succeeded, after some difficulty, in handing it to Rory M'Allister, enjoining him, at the same time, to hasten with it to his hut, and use every means to restore life.

Before he could return, the advancing tide had driven the faithful dog into the cave, and cut off his own retreat for the present.

Rory and his wife, having used every means in their power to restore warmth to the frozen limbs of the child so providentially saved from the waves, had the satisfaction of seeing her open her large dark eyes—fixed and meaningless, indeed, but still beautiful; they only wanted the familiar objects that were wont to meet their waking gaze, to light them up with conscious expression. But, alas! she had been rudely separated from those objects—from all, except the faithful dog, probably, the last of her old friends—and left floating on the wild ocean, from which she was only saved to float on the ocean of life, the more dangerous of the two to a beautiful, but friendless orphan girl.

Her scattered senses were, by degrees, recalled, and she began to speak, but in a language unknown to her kind attendants; nothing, therefore, could be learnt from her, concerning the ill-fated ship.

By the time the tide had receded so far as to allow Captain McDonald to leave his hiding-place, the morning was far advanced, and the storm had entirely subsided. As he approached the mouth of the cavern, a melancholy scene presented itself: several human bodies, horribly disfigured, were lying on ledges of the rock, or jammed into crevices; a considerable portion of the fore-part of the wreck was still to be seen on the rock on which it first struck, and the remainder floated about in the little bay in front of the cave. He was roused from the contemplation of this heart-sickening scene, by the appearance of one of the government cruizers rounding the island a little to the southward. He immediately retreated to his place of concealment, where he had not been long when he became seriously alarmed for his safety on seeing a boat put off from the man-of-war towards the wreck, which had attracted its attention. As the boat, in which were five persons, boarded the wreck, the noise roused the dog which had hitherto remained in the cave, and dashing into the water, he made for the rock. The unfortunate rebel's situation now appeared desperate; he had no doubt his hiding-place would be explored; to fly was impossible, and to offer resistance madness; he had, therefore, almost made up his mind to submit quietly, when he recollected a large fragment of rock which had frequently attracted his notice, in his descents into his stronghold. It was a huge mass, which some convulsion had deposited on a projecting point of the rock, on the southern verge of the cavern, about twenty feet above low water mark, and immediately overhanging the narrow passage which led to the only landing-place, which was on the opposite side. Although his fragment had been accidentally poised with such mathematical exactness as to resist the violence of the frequent storms to which it was exposed, yet a little mechanical force judiciously applied was capable of dislodging it.

The idea of overwhelming his enemies by the removal of this rock, no sooner occurred so Captain McDonald, than, with that promptness peculiar to minds familiarized to danger, he seized a handspike belonging to the wreck, and, clambering along the side of the cave, took his station behind it. The boat was, by this