

of the groups, natives of the highest rank, enjoying all the comforts and pleasures which arbitrary power could afford, have voluntarily renounced these advantages, for the purpose of visiting distant regions and increasing their knowledge of the world.

The Polynesians are fond of fighting, and display in their wars a cruel and ferocious disposition. Indifference to human suffering is, indeed, one of their worst characteristics. It is exhibited not only in war, but in their ill-treatment of the sick, the weak, and the aged,—the oppression of their slaves,—and the customs of infanticide and human sacrifice. Nor can we suppose that cannibalism would exist among any but a sanguinary people.

Another well-known trait in their character is a gross licentiousness,—the more remarkable as it contrasts strongly with the opposite disposition in the different races by whom they are surrounded on all sides.

The weakness of the domestic affections in these islanders has often excited the surprise of their visitors, who have observed their ordinarily good-humoured and social temperament. The conjugal tie is every where lax. Parents have little authority over their children, even when young; and in their old age are generally treated with neglect, and often left to perish. Parental affection, which we rarely see wanting in any state of society, is in this race one of the feelings which exert the least influence. In some of the principal groups, as the Society and Sandwich Islands, infanticide, public and systematic, was practised without compunction or excuse, to an extent almost incredible. In New Zealand and the Marquesas, though not so general, it is still frequently committed, and not considered a crime. At Tonga, a father, when suffering from disease, seldom hesitates to sacrifice his child to appease the anger of the gods. It is not, of course, to be understood that cases of strong attachment among members of a family do not occur,—but they attract attention as exceptions from the general rule.

A lack of conscientiousness is another displeasing characteristic of the Polynesian islanders. Lying, hypocrisy, and theft, are hardly regarded by them as faults; and there are very few who will not be guilty of them on a very trifling temptation, and often on none at all. In this point, the Australians, stupid and unamiable as they are, have a great advantage over them,—and so, to a certain degree, have the American aborigines.

Cupidity is a universal trait in this people. The hope of plunder,