

and of acquiring new possessions, is the motive of most of their wars; and it has invariably been found, that after the natives of any newly discovered group or island have recovered from the first emotions of fear, with which they regarded their unknown visitors, their immediate impulse has been to attack and destroy them for the purpose of seizing upon their property.

The Polynesians are not naturally treacherous. This is by no means from a horror of deception, but apparently from a mere inaptitude at dissembling. Their wars are rarely carried on like those of our Indians, by surprises and ambushments, but by fair fighting in open fields. If they have sometimes resorted to treachery, in their attacks upon vessels, it is only when they have learned by experience the utter inefficiency of their ordinary mode of warfare when opposed to the weapons of the whites. And in almost every case where ships have been cut off, it is worthy of remark, that those on board have, in some way or other, either by direct disclosure, or from the bearing and conduct of the natives, had previous warning of their intention. They seem nearly incapable of keeping a secret. The perpetrator of a crime is almost certain to be discovered by his own indiscretion and inability to keep silent about it; political conspiracies are divulged almost as soon as formed, not through treachery but heedlessness. When their usual air of frankness and gaiety is suddenly succeeded by an access of ferocity, we are not to conclude, in most cases, that the former was assumed to conceal the latter; each exhibition of feeling is natural to them, and not less so is the rapid transition from one to the other.

But of all the qualities that distinguish this race, there is none which exerts a more powerful influence than their superstition,—or, perhaps, it would be more just to say, their strong religious feeling. When we compare them with the natives of Australia, who, though not altogether without the idea of a God, hardly allow this idea to influence their conduct, we are especially struck with the earnest devotional tendencies of this people, among whom the whole system of public polity, and the regulation of their daily actions, have reference to the supposed sanction of a supernatural power; who not only have a pantheon surpassing, in the number of divinities and the variety of their attributes, those of India and Greece, but to whom every striking natural phenomenon, every appearance calculated to inspire wonder and fear,—nay, often the most minute, harmless, and insignificant objects, seem invested with supernatural attributes, and worthy of