

days of ancient Israel. A small spot is cleared in the midst of the luxuriant foliage of these regions, and an altar of rude construction is erected, on which to place the offerings to the Natmasses. These sacred spots are numerous throughout the island, and to them the natives repair in ordinary cases, to present their gifts, and offer up their prayers. But the efficiency of worship is not confined to places, for they will *ahllap* to their Natmasses, when and where circumstances call on them so to do. I have often observed the natives who accompany me on my tours around the island, when the wind or weather has been unfavorable, endeavour to propitiate their deities by throwing taro or coconuts into the water.

SACRED MEN.

In addition to the objects of worship on Anoiteum, there is a numerous class of sacred men. Every Natmass has a certain number who are devoted to its service. These persons are held in great veneration by the natives, and they dread to offend them, lest they should incur their maledictions. They are supposed to be invested with remarkable powers, such as making thunder and lightning, causing hurricanes, generating diseases, &c.—The ceremonies by which they effect these wonders, are alike absurd and childish; for instance, filling a canoe with water and throwing stones in it, to cause rain; beating certain sacred stones on the shore, to cause a storm; and performing certain rites before a man's house, to cause his sickness. These sacred men are supposed to be the servants of Natmasses and they spend much time in waiting on them. It belongs to them to prepare the food that is collected to feast their deities, and to consume it too, I presume. There are certain seasons when they are peculiarly sacred, and they abstain in a measure from all intercourse with the world. At such times they dare not speak even to their own wives, and if a sacred man is seen on the road, the common people will immediately turn off to avoid him. In order that his sanctity may be known, one side of his face is painted black, while the other is left untouched, and there may be other marks of which I am not aware.—From this class of men who are both numerous and influential we may expect to encounter opposition, for the gospel endangers and will eventually ruin their craft, which at present turns them in no small gain.

IDEAS OF A FUTURE STATE.

The belief in a future state is universal among these natives. They suppose that after death the spirit takes its departure to the invisible world. The place for the residence of departed souls is situated at the western extremity of the island near the sea. A spot is pointed out, evidently the crater of an extinct volcano, through the centre of which all spirits are supposed to descend to their eternal abodes beneath. There is but one path for the good and the evil in their passage from this world, but different habitations are assigned them beyond the grave. The latter no sooner reach the land of darkness, than they are seized by Tahiarotti, a great Natmass, of whom the natives speak in terms of the utmost execration. He constantly lacerates them with rough, sharp stones, which occasion indescribable pain. Their food is scanty and of the most loathesome description. The good, on the other hand, are conducted to a happy land. Here they feast themselves on pigs, taro, bananas and all sorts of good, to their hearts content. In this sensual paradise nothing is wanting that may contribute to their pleasure. It is hard to say on what this distinction of destiny is founded, in the view of the natives. The line of distinction between right and wrong among them is so slightly marked, that it is almost impossible to trace it.—The gentle, benevolent and peaceful man, is no more likely to obtain happiness in the world of spirits, than the man who is fierce, revengeful, and bloody. Any want of attention to Natmasses, or any failure in presenting the required offerings, is far more likely, in their esteem, to affect the destiny of individuals, than an immoral character or a wicked life. How sad the condition of these poor islanders. Sin, that abominable thing which God hates, has little or no turpitude in their eyes.

LETTER FROM MRS GEDDIE.

Anoiteum, Sep. 16, 1851.

My Dear Friends,

There is a vessel here taking in a load of Sandaul wood, for China, and the Captain has kindly offered to take letters for us, and I gladly embrace the opportunity to write you a few lines. We seldom have the opportunity of sending letters by way of Sydney, but we always write by China when we can,—we cannot send many letters as it is expensive.