

serve to shew how much it prevailed. "During the year 1829, Mr. Williams was conversing with some friends in his own house in the Island of Raiatea, on this subject; three native females were sitting in the room at the time, the oldest not more than forty years of age. In the course of conversation he observed, perhaps some of these females have been guilty of the crime."—The question was proposed, and it was found that not one was guiltless; being questioned more particularly, it was found they had destroyed not fewer than one and twenty children. One had destroyed nine, another seven, and another five. This incident may serve to shew how frequently infant murder had been perpetrated in Tahiti, as these women were not interrogated because of any suspicion that they were more addicted to the crime than others, but merely because they happened to be present at the time the conversation turned on that subject. Another great scourge of humanity, was of very frequent occurrence at Tahiti, namely, war. Mr. Nott, one of the Missionaries, spent fifteen years in the island while it was pagan, and, during this period, it was ten different times involved in war.—Considering all these things, the prevalence of idolatry, infant murder, war, as well as divers other forms of wickedness, it may be asked, How could men who daily by their conduct and discourse reprove the doings of the natives, gain such a footing as to settle among them? There was one circumstance which favoured this more than all others put together, and it was, that so many connected with the mission were men who could work with their own hands. And not only so, but who, by the superiority of their workmanship in wood and iron, impressed the natives with such respect, that they gave a favourable hearing to them while declaring the folly and sin of their idolatries, as well as laying open from the Scriptures the character of the true God. The daily occupations of the Missionaries, we are informed, was a subject of much interest to the natives, as the following extract will shew:—"The erection of a saw-pit, and the cutting of a tree into a number of boards, the saw, as they expressed it, biting the boards asunder, filled them with astonishment and delight; they had before never thought it possible to make more than two planks out of a single tree, however large it might be, which they did by splitting it down the middle. But when the forge was erected, and the anvil first employed on their shore, the wonder and joy exceeded all bounds. They were previously acquainted with the superiority of their own tools over the stone hatchets and chisels of bones which they had been accustomed to use. The whole process of working iron, the flying of the sparks when it was beaten on the anvil, its hissing when plunged into the water, equally astonished them; but the facility with which a bar of iron was wrought into adzes, hatchets, fish spears, or fish hooks, filled them with delight. Pomare came in one day while the smith was at work, and after gazing with ecstasy for some time, was so overcome that he caught up the smith in his arms, and disregarding the dirt and perspiration produced by his occupation, most cordially embraced him and

saluted him, according to the fashion of the country, by touching noses."\*

While one part of the Missionaries were gaining the esteem of the people by their skill in mechanics, another part of them were busied with the study of the language. They aimed not only to speak it, but to reduce it to writing. The Roman alphabet they had ready at hand, but the fixing of the spelling was a difficult task, as they had no other guide save the pronunciation of the natives. In conversation, though one knows a language imperfectly, he is helped out by natural signs; but in writing, where these are wanting, it is needful to know the meaning of the words; and the Missionaries found this so difficult a matter, that one of them has been heard to say, he was ten years before he understood the precise meaning of one of their words of very frequent occurrence.

The tide of popular feeling, for reasons unconnected with the truths they taught, had been hitherto in favour of the Missionaries. It now, however, began to turn in an opposite direction. The love of the property of the Missionaries stirred up not a few to trouble them, while the testimony which they continued to bear against the prevailing sins of the people, was not suited to gain them friends. While matters were in this state, an event occurred fraught with disastrous consequences to the mission. A vessel in want of provisions having touched at the island, the Missionaries interested themselves in procuring a supply, as well as in seeking the restitution of some of the seamen who had deserted; their conduct was misconstrued by some of the chiefs, when an assault was made on four of the brethren, who were stripped and otherwise maltreated. When the other Missionaries heard of the outrage, eleven of them deeming their lives insecure, so soon as they fell under the displeasure of the chiefs, came to the resolution of leaving the island, and set sail for Port Jackson in the same ship which had been the cause of the afray. On this occasion, those who remained addressed a letter to the Directors of the London Missionary Society, expressing their continued trust in God, their resolution to abide on the field of labour, and entreating their prayers and countenance to aid them therein.

Although much sorrow was expressed by the natives on account of the assault committed on the Missionaries, those who remained continued exposed to fresh trials. It appears, in their zeal to ward off evil from the natives, they had dissuaded the captain of the ship, above referred to, from giving them muskets in exchange for provisions, and this coming to their ears by some deserters from the crew, the Missionaries were the more exposed to their resentment. "Scarcely a day," they say, "passes without our suffering from plunderers. Last night the store-room was again searched. We have now hardly an axe left for public use." Rumours also were afloat that the chiefs intended burning the Missionary dwelling. In such circumstances they might well

\* See Missionary Records,—Tahiti, &c. by Tract Society, p. 25.