

very much regulated by the relative situation in regard to rank of the two parties. Most of the European visitors who have hitherto given us an account of the country have mixed chiefly with the higher classes of its inhabitants, and consequently learned but little with regard to the condition of the great body of the population, except in so far as it affected, or was affected by, that of the chiefs. Hence the impression they have taken up that theft in New Zealand is looked upon as one of the worst of crimes, and always punished with death. It is so, we have no doubt, when committed by one of the common people upon any of the privileged class. In that case, the mean and despised condition of the delinquent, as compared with that of the person whose rights he has dared to invade, converts what might otherwise have scarcely been deemed a transgression at all into something little short of sacrilege. The thief is therefore knocked on the head at once, or strung up on a gallows; for that, too, seems to be one of the modes of public punishment for this species of crime in New Zealand. This severity is demanded by the necessity which is felt for upholding the social edifice in its integrity; and is also altogether in keeping with the slight regard in which the lives of the lower orders are universally held, and the love of bloodshed by which this ferocious people is distinguished.