

everything is going to destruction through their failure to observe the forms and customs of their ancestors. When a prisoner is burned, if the young men are turbulent thereat, some old man begins to exclaim and storm because they are risking the ruin of the country, saying that this is a matter of importance and that they do not behave seriously enough in it. If they resuscitate a Captain,—or, to speak more correctly, his name,⁷—when they come to sing the song of the dead, if two women do not come in to pitch the tone, all is lost, and they expect to see only broken heads under a Captain who assumes the name.

[135] In short, it is the strangest servitude and slavery that can be imagined; and never did galley slave so fear to fail in his duty as these peoples dread to fall short in the least detail of all their wretched ceremonies,—for there would follow from this omission, not only the privation of what they were expecting, but even physical punishment, which the devil for this reason exercises upon these poor wretches. The more thoughtful among them freely admit their misery, and frankly say that the demons alone are the real masters of the country,—that it is they who regulate and decree everything, whether in dreams or otherwise; that they see this plainly, but that there is no remedy for it; that they have always lived in this way, and that there is no prospect or means of living differently,—in other words, that [were any detail omitted] all would be lost.

The Captains and old men say that if they undertook to make this change, they would soon see their villages abandoned, and that each one would infallibly retire where he could see the customs of the country observed, and where he could find the usual