

occasioned by the atua, in the shape of a lizard, preying upon his entrails; and, accordingly, in such cases, they often address the most horrid imprecations and curses to the invisible cannibal, in the hope of thereby frightening him away. They imagine that at other times he amuses himself in entangling their nets and oversetting their canoes. Of late years they have suspected that he has been very angry with them for having allowed the white men to obtain a footing in their country, a proof of which they think they see in the greater mortality that has recently prevailed among them. This, however, they at other times attribute to the God of the Christians, whom they also denounce, accordingly, as a cruel being, at least to the New Zealander. Sometimes they more rationally assign as its cause the diseases that have been introduced among them by the whites. Until the whites came to their country, they say, young people did not die, but all lived to be so old as to be obliged to creep on their hands and knees.

The white man's God they believe to be altogether a different being from their own atua. Marsden, in one of his letters, relates a conversation he had upon this subject with some of the chiefs' sons who resided with him in New South Wales. When he told them that there was but one God, and that our God was also theirs, they asked him if our God had given us any sweet