

CHAPTER XII.

This is, we believe, the most complete account, and, at the same time, the one most to be depended on, which has yet been given to the public, of a New Zealand battle. None of the other persons who have described to us the manners of these savages have seen them engaged with each other, except in a sham fight; although Nicholas, on one occasion, was very near being afforded an opportunity of witnessing a real combat. That gentleman and Marsden, however, have given us some very interesting details respecting the preliminaries to an actual engagement. They describe the debates which generally take place in the war-council of a tribe or district previous to any declaration of hostilities; and those conferences between the two opposing parties in which, even after they have met on the intended field of action, the matter of dispute is often made the subject of a war of argument and eloquence, and sometimes, it would seem, is even settled without any resort to more destructive weapons.

When Marsden visited the neighbourhood of the Shukehanga, in 1819, he found a quarrel just about to commence between two of the principal