

This he explained to his men on rising from his trance; the line "Trees are seen in the bloodred clouds" were the enemy waiting for the battle, the "small summer birds" were the enemy in their flight after the defeat; the two parties met as thus foretold, a battle was fought at Mangawhai where many of both sides fell; the Kaipara tribes were forced to fly into the Waikato district, the invaders being conquerors. Our second specimen is the one which prophesied the capture of the famous Waikato Pa, Matakitaiki, by the Ngapuhi under the great Hongi Hika:—

Stay thou O Muri, guard thy fishing bank at Ahuriri.
And make thee a resting-place;
But let that part on which thou dost rest be soft,
Rest not sitting, listen to the distant noise
Made by those erecting sleeping places on the cave of Koroki;
Bring ye the food now sought by the dogs
The boom of the ocean's swell is heard dashing in Reinga's cave.

In the last two lines the local allusion to the cave of Reinga marks at once the interpretation of the otherwise ambiguous oracle, and prophecies the victory of the Ngapuhi (the Northern tribe.) The gods even inspire animals with the power of knowing future events. Before the battle at Rotoiti between the tribes of Heke and Waka, a chief called Te Kahakaha was sitting with Heke in a hut, when a dog came and barked at him: this was thought to be a warning of his death; he fell the next day, and it was said the god Te Nganahau (the god of death and evil) inspired the dog, thus telling Te Kahakaha of his doom. When going into battle, if men feel a creeping of the flesh in any part of the body, they are to be wounded in those parts; if they feel a warm air pass over them, which causes them to perspire, they are to die; such omens to man are called "Aitua," and to animals "Pawera." Lest animals intended to be hunted should feel the "pawera," the Natives in olden times never determined to hunt before the day on which they started for the chase. Three young Chiefs whose mother was a priestess, in defiance of this rule determined in the night to go to a certain place to hunt; the old lady overheard them agreeing to start next day, and told them that as they had determined beforehand the pigs would certainly be "pawera," and so go from the place; they, however, went and failed to catch one: a few days afterwards the priestess told them to go to the same place and they would catch a pig, they went and did so; now in this case the mother was so feeble by age that she could not have gone to the place where the pigs were, therefore it was believed her gods had enabled her to give such positive information. A European, who was in the camp at the time the troops were mustering to march against Heke's Pa at Okaihau, states that when the Native allies saw the litters brought, and that too to accompany a body of living men to battle, that one and all said, "great would be the mischief which would follow on such an evil 'aitua';" that evening he (the European) again passed through the camp where the dying and wounded were; the Natives observed what a number of men were wounded, but added "these men have brought this upon themselves, they consigned their bodies to death while they were alive by taking those litters with them."

All that a seer has is sacred, and partakes of the influence of his gods, and any violation of his property is therefore visited with their vengeance; for example, there lived in Waikato a seer, whose wife also was a prophetess; these after being married for many years at last quarrelled, and the wife took her dog with her and left Waikato and went down near Kawhia and along the West Coast, passing through Tararua, till she arrived at a settlement of the Ngatiruanui, and there she became the wife of a chief, whose name was "Porou." For some reason (now forgotten) the Ngatiruanui killed and ate her dog; but, for this sin (for it was a prophetess' dog), the gods laid upon the tongues of all the people this curse: "That, whenever they spoke, they should bark like the dog they had killed;" to this day this branch of the Ngatiruanui retain the curious provincialism of commencing every address, every question, and every answer, with the syllable "ou, ou," and they are hence, in allusion to the legend, distinguished by the name of "Ngatikuri"—"Sons of the dog." We will conclude this portion of our subject with a few anecdotes from the history of the Northern war. While our troops and those of our allies were lying before the pa of Ohaeawai, an old seer within the pa, who could not speak one word of English, announced that he was attended by the European gods, so that he could foretell the fate of the English forces as well as of his own people; his prophecy was, of course, delivered in a kind of "gibberish," which was interpreted by Pene Tau, the Chief of Ohaeawai, who understood English, as follows:—"The gods spoke by the seer, and said 'No one must smoke a pipe while standing, and two shillings and six-pence will be killed.'" Now it did so happen that, on the same day when this prophecy was delivered, a cannon shot entered the pa, killed a woman and her child, and continuing its course took off the leg of a man, who died in the course of the day: these two adults and child were the 2s. 6d. in the oracle. How far either the priest or his interpreter (Pene Tau) believed themselves is very questionable, but they required the people to believe implicitly, and, if they reposed any faith in their own prophecy, it is only one of many instances where the extent to which a man practised in deceiving others, may end in imposing upon himself. Again, on the morning when the troops were preparing for the attack upon Ohaeawai, this same Pene Tau took a leaf of an English Bible, and loading his gun with it, fired it up to Heaven, at the moment of the assault, "for," said he, "the God in Heaven was the author of the Bible, and was the defender of the Europeans,"—and the best way to obtain his protection for themselves instead was to send a leaf of his own book to implore his aid. One morning at daybreak Mohi Tawhai (one of the bravest of our allies) went out of the camp and inadvertently got within 50 yards of an ambush party of ten men sent out of the pa to reconnoitre. Mohi was next in rank and command to Tamati Waka, and his death would have given no small credit to the man who might kill him; but not one of the ten could pull the trigger of his gun at him, they all lay on the ground looking at one another, wondering what spell restrained them, and Mohi returned unmolested to the camp; the men themselves told me this afterwards, and accounted for it on the ground that as Mohi was a firm believer in the Christian God, and every Sabbath taught his people out of the Word of God, the