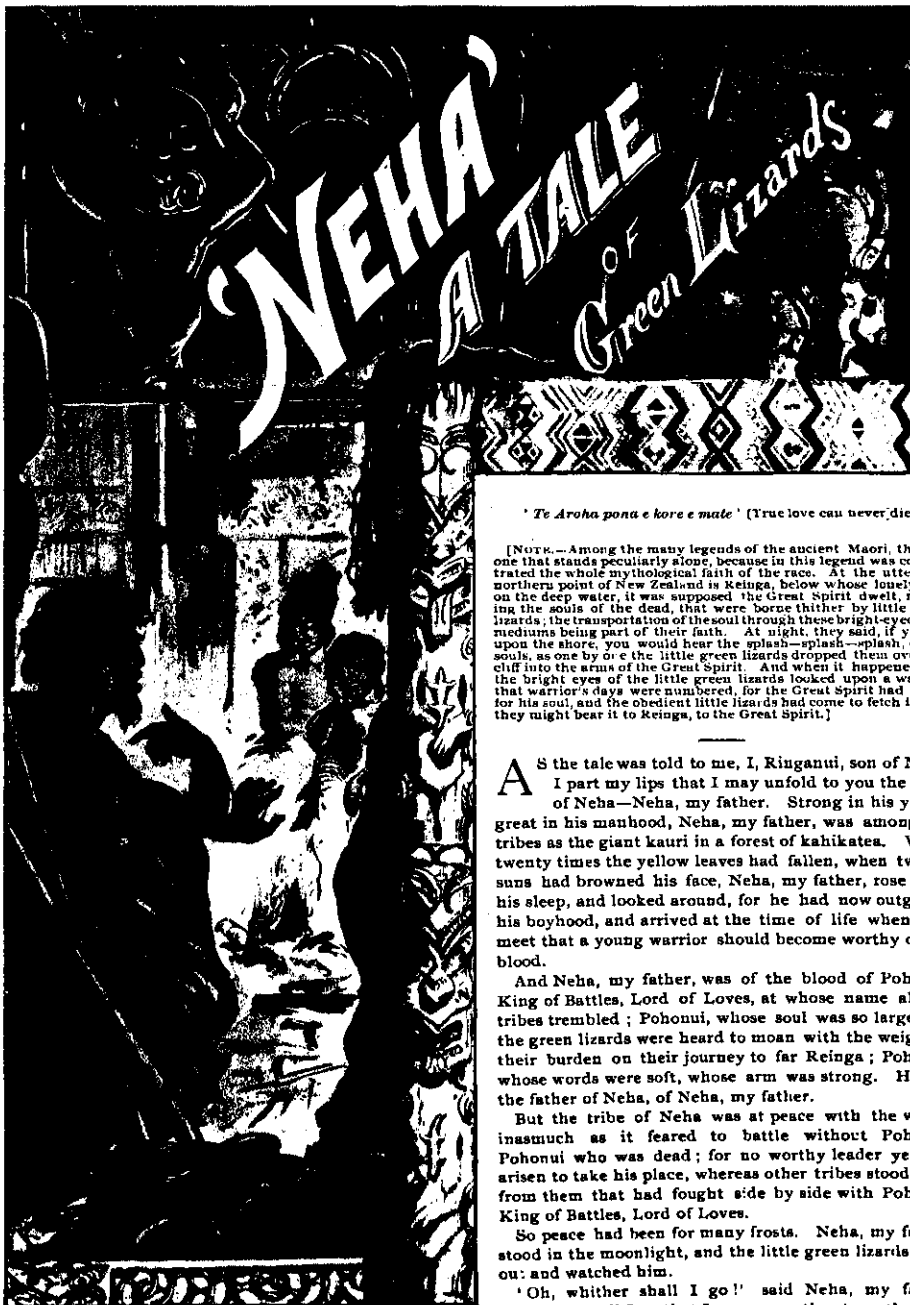


# THE NEW ZEALAND GRAPHIC

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'Te Aroha pona e kore e mate' (True love can never die.)

[NOTE.—Among the many legends of the ancient Maori, there is one that stands peculiarly alone, because in this legend was concentrated the whole mythological faith of the race. At the uttermost northern point of New Zealand is Reinga, below whose lonely cliff, on the deep water, it was supposed the Great Spirit dwelt, receiving the souls of the dead, that were borne thither by little green lizards, the transportation of the soul through these bright-eyed little mediums being part of their faith. At night, they said, if you sat upon the shore, you would hear the splash—splash—splash, of the souls, as one by one the little green lizards dropped them over the cliff into the arms of the Great Spirit. And when it happened that the bright eyes of the little green lizards looked upon a warrior, that warrior's days were numbered, for the Great Spirit had called for his soul, and the obedient little lizards had come to fetch it, that they might bear it to Reinga, to the Great Spirit.]

AS the tale was told to me, I, Ringanui, son of Neha, I part my lips that I may unfold to you the story of Neha—Neha, my father. Strong in his youth, great in his manhood, Neha, my father, was among the tribes as the giant kauri in a forest of kahikatea. When twenty times the yellow leaves had fallen, when twenty suns had browned his face, Neha, my father, rose from his sleep, and looked around, for he had now outgrown his boyhood, and arrived at the time of life when it is meet that a young warrior should become worthy of his blood.

And Neha, my father, was of the blood of Pohonui, King of Battles, Lord of Loves, at whose name all the tribes trembled; Pohonui, whose soul was so large that the green lizards were heard to moan with the weight of their burden on their journey to far Reinga; Pohonui, whose words were soft, whose arm was strong. He was the father of Neha, of Neha, my father.

But the tribe of Neha was at peace with the world, inasmuch as it feared to battle with Pohonui, Pohonui who was dead; for no worthy leader yet had arisen to take his place, whereas other tribes stood aloof from them that had fought side by side with Pohonui, King of Battles, Lord of Loves.

So peace had been for many frosts. Neha, my father, stood in the moonlight, and the little green lizards came out and watched him.

'Oh, whither shall I go!' said Neha, my father. 'Whither shall I go that I may prove the strength of my

arm and emulate the deeds of Pohonui, my father? Oh, Thou, who art all powerful, send me a sign that I may understand!'

Then the wind, that had been blowing from the North, on a sudden came from the South, blowing so hard that Neha, my father, was forced to go on.

'Lo! it is a sign,' said he, 'that north must I go. Yet will I take some followers, ten trusty men.'

But the wind blew harder and harder, which Neha, my father, knew was a sign from the Great Spirit that he must go alone. So he took his greenstone mere, and feathered taiaha and strode away northward. And the green lizards watched him all the way. Under the stones, under the trees, their beady little eyes glittered and shone, shone and glittered. Yet the soul of Neha, my father, was still his own. But the little green lizards waited all the same.

And it came to pass that on this journey Neha, my father, heard first of the maiden named Te Aroha, which is Love. It was whispered by the men, and (after their manner) slandered by the women. Then Neha, my father, went into the villages and asked boldly who was this Te Aroha of whom he heard, of whom they spoke in whispers. And the men said, 'She is beautiful.' And the women said, 'She is frail.' And the men said, 'She is holy.' And the women said, 'She is proud.'

But in the woods, as he walked along, in the home of the kiwi, in the haunt of the moa, everything breathed of Aroha, which is Love. The rustling of the leaves around him, the sighing of the wind behind him, and high up the tuis sang of naught but 'Aroha,' 'Aroha,' and all the woods re-echoed 'Aroha.' In the next village Neha, my father, heard the song of Aroha, which is Love:

Aroha! Te Aroha! fair as the sun is Aroha.  
Aroha! Te Aroha!  
Like looking in deep water is looking in her eyes.  
Aroha! Te Aroha!  
The music of their voices have the tuis given her.  
Aroha! Te Aroha!  
And the red pohutukawa gave its colour to her cheeks.  
Aroha! Te Aroha!  
And the sapling gave its litheness, for she bendeth with the breeze,  
Aroha! Te Aroha!  
Oh, her love is worth the winning, of all the fights that are.  
Aroha! Te Aroha!  
And blest be he who wins the fight, the fight of Te Ngahua.  
For he who wins Te Ngahua's fight, wins gentle Aroha.  
Aroha! Te Aroha!  
And he who wins sweet Aroha is the envy of the world.  
Aroha! Te Aroha!  
Te Aroha! Te Aroha!

After the song was done, Neha, my father, stepped in boldly amongst them that sang. And they were young men that had come from hunting the moa, whose flesh they cooked on the fire.

'Tell me of this Aroha! Where is she to be found? And what fight is this ye sing of?'

And it came to pass that all the young men turned and looked on the form of Neha, my father, as he stood in the light of the fire, and they felt that the sight was as a feast to their eyes, inasmuch as the limbs were big and the eye was bold, but the hearts of the young men were jealous, and they cared not to tell him, fearing that his heart would be fired when he rested his eyes on Aroha, which is Love, and might join the fight of Ngahua and overcome them. For they knew not that Neha, my father, was young in the art of battle.

But the old men had seen that the green lizards followed Neha, my father, and they laughed softly to themselves, for well they knew the mission of green lizards. And they advised the young men thus:

'To the stranger that hath come amongst us, tell ye of