

# A MAORI LEGEND.

## A NEW ZEALAND STORY.

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I spent a week in a pah down in the hot lake country, the King's land, New Zealand, a short time before the destruction of the Pink and White Terraces. One night as I lay in my thatched hut, with the boiling water singing and simmering on every side, an old Maori wise-man paid me a visit and told me the following story.

"A thousand moons ago my people came over the sea in great canoes from the islands. Then the Maori was like the white man of to-day, restless as the wind, ever roving to and fro from land to land. The canoes came ashore down at the coast and it was beside these lakes that the pahas were built because the fern root grew here in the warm, damp earth and the Great Spirit made the water boil, in which to cook it. Then our wise men said, 'Here is our home and this land was made for the Maori. Here shall be found that which we so long have sought.' All would have been well if our people had listened to these words. After a time there spread from ear to ear the story of a wonderful lake, hid away up in the mountains. No man could tell where the story came from, for no man could be found who had ever seen the lake. The mountains, or the lakes, or the boiling springs, or the pink hills, may have whispered it at night into some ear. It may have been a dream, but it came and at last that no man doubted it. Many a Maori set out to find the wonderful lake and wandered among the mountains, which grew blacker and blacker and higher and higher as he went on, but one and all came back telling of great streams, of jagged rocks, of dark caverns, but never catching a glimpse of the lake."

"Then our wise men held a council in the great pah, and day by day they studied and thought. At last it was decided that a venerable old man, who had never eaten of human flesh, should go forth alone into the mountains in quest of the lake. Much we wondered as he departed, for with him he took only a staff and no fern root or anything to eat. We bade him good bye with sorrow in