

"Our readers will be most interested."

"Yes," said the tuatara, "we can trace our ancestors as far back as that. Some of our family degenerated into common reptiles—there's the turtle and tortoise family, the alligator and crocodile crowd, and the snakes and lizards, but we tuataras, in a class of our own, we are the oldest of them all."

"Your eyes seemed very, very old I thought."

The tuatara looked pleased. "Once upon a time we had four eyes," she said, "two more at the back of our head. But our ancestors grew tired of the two back ones and began to use only one. Time passed, and from three eyes we went down to these two you see in front. Under my skin, at the back of my neck, you could find a little lump, like a tiny pine cone. That's what remains of my third eye. But very few people know you can find traces of my fourth eye. Another thing, too, you might like to know is that we have two sets of ribs."

"You look as if you've got no teeth."

"That's right. Just hard jawbones, with good rough edges like a fine saw."

"How can you tell the difference between a headache and toothache?"

keeps them dormant until spring. Then they start growing again, and hatch out in January. Simple, eh?"

"Thanks," I said, "but what about this? I have in my pocket a copy of the *Lyttelton Times* of 1903. Listen: 'The tuatara lizards at Opawa fisheries seem to be susceptible to music. They will come out of their holes in the rocks to hear a song when nothing else will induce them to appear. They prefer a good rousing chorus rather than a solo.'"

"Tell that to the mutton birds who live with us on the Chickens Islands," said the tuatara sourly.

"Where else do you live?"

"Karewa, Motiti, East Cape, and The Brothers Islands. And, ah, yes, Stephen's Island, where there's a queer little chap, the Stephen's Island frog, who hatches out of his egg a complete frog."

"Is it true you live up to three hundred years?"

"Time means nothing to us, and the *pakeha* race has not lived long enough in New Zealand to find out. But the Maori say we do. They gave us our name, tuatara, meaning 'spikey-back.'"

"But how did you get to New Zealand?"



The tuatara ignored this flippancy, so I went on hurriedly: "Er—forgive me, but how do you breed?"

"A reasonable question," said the tuatara grandly. "In November or December, we female tuataras lay from ten to seventeen eggs, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. long and with very thin white shells. We scratch earth over 'em. The yolks begin to develop until March, when the cold

"Millions of years ago," began the tuatara, ever so wisely, "New Zealand was part of a great southern continent. And this great continent was linked by land right up to Southern Asia. I have heard old tuataras say there was a time when New Zealand went far away west to South America, and even down to the South Pole. That was before the Great Snow and the Great Ice came. Then in