

OUR ILLUSTRATIONS.

A Week's Holiday at Rotorua for 30s.

(Continued from Page 831.)

Alas, for the poverty of language. Alas, for the futility of pen and ink. Who could do honour to the dazzling who could do honour to the dazzling perfection of that radiant morning? Not a breath of wind stirred the surface of the lake which lay like some vast sapphire in its setting of purple hills and distant shores. The sun already strong, blazed from the cloudless sky with a splendour reflected, and shot back again and again from the gleaming waters; tiny puffs of steam rose lazily into the trembling atmosphere from the old township with its quaint mixture of wharves and cottages, and its fearsome boiling pools and cauldrons; while Mokoia seemed to stand on some thrice polished mirror so clearly were her hills and dales, and her subtle soft colours reflected in the motionless lake. The brilliance of the colouring in that flashing sunlight was almost inconceivable, and the whole picture was one to make one gasp with the joy of living and being able to drink in so much loveliness. Busy though both the "scribe" and his companion were, they were obliged to stop in their occupations to gaze on it, and so to say, shake hands with themselves in congratulation of so captivating a scene, and so matchless a morning. How delightful, too, was the heat! How, when packing the small boat lent us by Capt. McDonald, we hurried in it, though the perspiration streamed from every pore! What pictures we promised ourselves as we stowed away our trusty tent and the faithful billy, and nailed up our provision boxes and packed them away so as to the better trim our tiny boat. For to-day we were to start for Rototoi, where we intended to pitch our tent, and then to tramp to Rotoehu and Rotoma, the beauties of which had been much extolled to the party by a friend who explored them some years ago.

Ten o'clock is the time when the steam launch on Rotorua leaves on her various cruises about the lake, and we were promised "a tow" by our good friend Captain McDonald, providing we were at the wharf in good time. Be sure, therefore, our boat was safely astern with her tow rope securely attached to the Hamurana's stern, long before the passengers came trooping down the wharf from the various hotels and boarding houses.

Our tent, our provisions, and our unshaven and somewhat disreputably dressed selves, afforded evident amusement to these, and our intended amicable arrangements drew forth considerable chaff from those who had seen us wet through at Hamurana. At last we were off, and after a simply perfect trip up the lake were cast off at the mouth of the Ohau stream, which is the overflow of Rotorua into her sister lake Rototoi, the level of which is some two and a-half feet lower. It may be imagined, therefore, that the Ohau stream runs rapidly through its tortuous, willow-clad banks, and no little skill is needed to successfully negotiate the many curves. The stream is some two miles in length, but at one place is within twenty yards of Lake Rototoi. The heat is now intense, and so endless seem the curves, that the "scribe's" temper suffers severely, and he anathematizes the Ohau in general, and in particular with much fluency. The "photo.—Graphic" expert, who is acting skipper, and gives directions for keeping the boat on her course, endeavours to look shocked, but with indifferent success. To the heated and much directed "scribe," his obvious coolness is an aggravation. However, all things end at last, even the gyrations of the Ohau stream, and on emerging on to Rototoi, it is delightful to see the smart little steam craft which navigates this lake, steaming towards us. Our fire is soon aboard, and the tired "scribe" falls back in the stern and cries aloud for beer. This being forthcoming from a good samaritan, is enjoyed by all, the "photographic expert" drinking his with an insolent relish which is almost brazen, considering he has done nothing but talk and give directions. But, alas, the beauty of the morning was too good to last. The sky now becomes overcast, a smart gale begins blowing again, and before long, down comes a shower which suc-

cessfully wets us through. Not for three days do we get dry again. Some two miles down the lake a halt is made at a sulphur spring, and our friend of the launch suggests this as a good camping ground. It is, however, not far enough down, and we decide to go on. From this point the scenery, which is uninteresting at the top of the lake, commences to improve. Picnic Bay is the next stop. It is some four miles from the mouth of the river. This is a delightful little place, of which more anon. All land from the steamer, and after discussion we decide to go still further with the launch, though this is in many places an ideal camping ground. Empty beer, wine and mineral water bottles galore testify to the numbers of people who have daily landed and lunched at Picnic Bay during the recent season. Why, one wonders, do not people consign these to a watery grave. Empty bottles are unattractive objects at any time. Scattered about a beautiful spot such as this, their ugliness becomes an offence. From Picnic Bay to the head of the Lake Rototoi, the scenery is very fine, and arouses bursts of admiration from all. Huge bluffs, clad with dense bush and lovely ferns of very imaginable description, rise sheer from the water's edge, the rocks in some places having the appearance of having been shaved off by hand; so clean and clear cut are their surfaces. Just at the very head of the Lake, under a gigantic bluff, some 3000 feet high, we give our steamer friend the signal to cast off. "Better come to the other side," shouts the steamer skipper. "No, this will do," we yell back. "All right," he says, casting off, "but you will be eaten alive with mosquitoes," with which cheerful remark he grins and leaves us to our fate. It is too late to repent; we are already afloat, and the steamer a lessening object in our view. We row ashore in somewhat pained silence, and on landing glance round apprehensively. It certainly looks a likely spot for mosquitoes. However, there is no time to lose in hunting round, and it is useless to repine, so we select a spot for the tent, and proceed to erect the same. Neither the "expert" or the "scribe" have ever put up a tent before, and—well, the less said about that tent the better. A more disreputable, foppity, tumble down canvas tenement has surely never been seen. Happily our eyes were the only ones to behold it, and we were too tired and wet (for down came the rain) to care so long as we got shelter. But if damp outwardly, we were still enthusiastic, and in hopes of better weather on the morrow. Not a sound broke the stillness of the night, save the softly falling rain. Our camp fire shone cheerily in the gloom, and we seemed to be thousands of miles from our fellows and from civilisation. We were alone with nature—and mosquitoes. These last, however, had been libelled. Either it was too wet for them, or they had proper ideas of hospitality and respect for explorers, for they left us in peace. Not so, however, the sandflies. These torments nearly drove the "scribe" mad, and as they are absolutely ubiquitous in the Lake district, he had a lively time of it with them during the entire trip. Being determined to make an early start next morning, we make enough cocoa for breakfast as well, determining to have this cold, rather than waste time lighting a fire. Biscuits, tinned meat (why do all tinned things taste exactly the same, by the way) make a frugal meal, which is repeated at 5.30 next morning. The walk along the beach is pretty but heavy, and the outlook so far as weather is concerned, is not encouraging. The hills are enveloped with swirling cloud mists, and the sky is leaden. Half-a-mile or so brings us to the Maori settlement, whence we are guided to the road which leads to Rotoehu. This road, which has skirted the right bank of Rototoi all the way along, here plunges into the bush, and is one of the most beautiful the writer has ever seen. Rata, rimu, tawa, and other forest giants, meet in a glorious avenue overhead, and the air is jubilant with the notes of a thousand birds. Neither the "scribe" or the "expert" will readily forget that enchanting walk. Driving, it would have been fine, but driving one might have missed some of the loveliest bits which we could walking turn round and admire again and again. The road, by the way, is perfect, either for walking, driving, or cycling, and it is a wonder more tourists do not make the trip.

About an hour's easy walking brings us to Rotoehu, a long winding lake of considerable beauty, though it cannot compare with the third of the chain, Rotoma. The road follows round the lake for a mile or so, and then strikes inland. About a mile of this is very uninteresting, but this only serves to heighten the pleasure of entering the bush road of Rotoma. The Rotoehu bush-road was lovely, but this is incomparably more so. No pen can give even the faintest idea of its beauty and luxuriance. On and on we go, through its leafy aisles, finding every moment some beauty greater than the last. Tourists at Rotoma may think this a long journey, but it is worth any journey to enjoy that superb road.

It is with sincere regret we emerge at last, though the sight of lovely Rotoma, spreading her length in front of us, quickly brings consolation. Nestling at the exit to the forest, is as picturesque a group of wharves, and with a trim cottage as the heart of an artist could desire. There are more over abundant evidences, not merely of civilisation, but of refinement. The large vegetable garden is fronted by flower beds gay with sunflowers, and one wonders amazedly at this air of care and comfort so far from civilisation. We are bid welcome by a charming lady whom we find to be Mrs Fitzwilliam, with her husband and children, lives here in the heart of the forest. With that warm hospitality which is so delightful to accept, she bids us come and have a cup of tea when we have finished our work, and having promised gratefully, we set off in search of pictures. Rotoma is the smallest of the lakes, but it is also the prettiest. If its beauties were known, there can be little doubt that boarding-houses, and perhaps an hotel would be established, and the lake would become the most popular resort of tourists to the Lake district. As it is, few, very few tourists even see it. It winds in and out almost like a river, and abounds in exquisite views. A more perfect place to camp for a holiday would not be imagined. Unfortunately, the sun sullenly refused to shine, and such photos as were secured are therefore somewhat flat, and fail entirely to give any idea of the loveliness of Rotoma, with its fern and bush-clad banks, its out-of-the-world air of solitude, and its exquisitely tender colouring. For several hours we tramp about, keenly enjoying it all, only regretting that there is no boat in which we could explore bays and coves inaccessible from the road. Early in the afternoon we again present ourselves at Mrs Fitzwilliam's. In the most spotless of rooms, decorated with pictures from illustrated papers, and furnished with a formidable array of fire arms, she provides us with a sumptuous repast of sardines, scones, delicious butter and jam. How we did eat! Surely, we must have astonished our kindly hostess, who plies us perseveringly till at last even we have to call, "Hold, enough!" All our holiday was enjoyable, but neither the "scribe" nor the photographer enjoyed anything more than the rest and entertainment at Mrs Fitzwilliam's pretty bush home, and the thanks of both are here recorded.

Much rested and refreshed, we tramp back towards camp, stopping once in either bush to take photos, which do not turn out well, by the way. The rain comes down before we get home, and we are again dampened after walking our boots nearly dry.

Having bought a few potatoes from a Maori we boil them for tea, and being rather tired of our former diet—biscuits and tinned meat—enjoyed them thoroughly. There are few better things in this world than healthy hunger, butter and potatoes. Next day we spend in the Rotoehu bush and round Rotoehu Lake, till, in the afternoon, we strike camp and remove to Picnic Bay. This is the best known bit on Rototoi Lake, being, as already indicated, the luncheon place for tourists going the day's trip round the lake. It is a very pretty little cove, admirably sheltered, but, with our fearful luck so far as weather was concerned before, a drenching rain sops everything. The tent is, however, pitched "to rights" this time, and with potatoes for tea again we make shift to spend a comfortable enough night. Next day, for a wonder, breaks gloriously fine, and after breakfast we luxuriate in a sun bath and dry our goods and chattels. The day is spent round Rototoi, and in the afternoon the launch again calls for us, and we

again reach the Ohau stream. All our lives we will remember that two miles against that detestable current, which swirls one's boat into the bank if one dares to pause a moment for breath. The mate gives us kindly help, but it is a heart-breaking business, and we are pretty well done when we emerge on to the placid waters of Rotoma. The captain of the Hamurana affects an air of surprise on seeing us turn up, and says level money was offered in the township on our chances of surviving the mosquitoes. All's well that ends well, however, and we are soon snug and well at Rotoma, where for a change we allow ourselves the luxury of a night at Lake View Hotel, one of the most comfortable hostels in it has been our lot to stop in. Then, alas! we return to town, having bestowed the remainder of our provisions on the Maori.

Nw, as to how it was done. First of all, the fare was 14/-; then, the provisions, the share of boat hire and incidentals, was 16/-. There were seven of us, and this is what it came to each. Of course, we lived frugally. We had biscuits and butter, we had sardines, we had a little tinned meat—of which we did not eat much—and we had a few potatoes. For liquids, there was cocoa, there was tea, and there was coffee. The kindness of Capt. McDonald in giving us tows made it cheaper for our party, but the scribe believes it would be done for little more than the sum here mentioned by any party who did not want luxurious living and were willing to rough it in an agreeable sort of way. All the "scribe" hopes is that whatever party sets forth it may have as capable a "skipper" and may enjoy itself as well.

THE NUGGETS LIGHTHOUSE, ON THE OTAGO COAST.

The Nuggets light station, standing a little south of Point Molyneux, is reached from Dunedin by a dreary train ride of sixty miles and a drive of 12 miles, the only point of any interest en route being the lifeless, but celebrated prohibition township of Balclutha.

Nugget Point, which derives its name from a number of curious rocks which are close to it, is a long, narrow, picturesque, rocky ridge, its sides being covered in bush, which is full of native birds. The lighthouse is at the extremity of the point, and is fitted with a stationary light. It is not a very important station, but is one of the prettiest, and it may be added, one of the coldest in New Zealand. The keepers are, however, provided with stone houses, and with the help of numerous fires and, possibly, a little Presbyterian cordial, manage to keep themselves from freezing into icebergs during the winter.

Close to the Nuggets is a collection of fishermen's houses. Hapuka seem the principal game, and large quantities are caught, and after having been sealed and cleaned in a rough and ready manner upon the rocks, amid thousands of sea birds, are sent by rail to supply the Christchurch and Dunedin markets.

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