

Trout Fishing in the Urewera Wilds.

BY C. E. S. GILLIES.

SO many rumours of the splendid fishing a few Napier sportsmen had enjoyed on the upper waters of the Rangitaike, near Taupo, reached us from time to time that at last an enterprising little fishing party, three in number, remained seated in the Auckland-Rotorua express as it left Okoroire Station, the favourite fishing district of the North.

Our fishing friends, who left the train at Okoroire, had a pitying expression suggesting, "Poor beggars, they are wasting their short holiday exploring while we have a certainty of good fishing," and one, who might have been of our party, said with sweet simplicity, "I would give anything to go with you fellows, only I must keep on the telegraph. Good luck." We knew what he really thought.

My previous exploration trips had all been bad, very bad. I had tried once where the fish were too young, and again where the mosquitos were too bad, and again where the hoppers were too active for any rest, and once again, the most cruel time of all, I had fished for two weary, blank days in a river, which I afterwards ascertained had never been stocked. In view, therefore, of bitter past experience, I had warned the Doctor and Globetrout, my mates, that we might get glorious fishing, or we might draw a blank and have a rough time. We resolved, however, to go, and whatever happened we resolved to enjoy ourselves. Globetrout was solemnly warned that if he growled at the lack of fish, or the tucker, or the fleas, or his downy couch, or anything that turned up crusty, his relations in England would never see him alive again. There was no need to worry about the Doctor, whose genial spirits would, I knew, carry him through anything.

After dinner at Rotorua we started in great form in our buggy, "special" for

Waiotapu, twenty-two miles distant, and reached the comfortable hotel about nine p.m. The thermal wonders of the Waiotapu Valley did not trouble or interest us. We were after trout, brown trout if we could not get "Rainbows," but all our inquiries were directed towards "trout."

Stories of the quantities there must be in the Rangitaike and of the size of the fish were offered us wholesale, but as old hauds we listened to them and swallowed them with as many pinches of salt.

Next morning we were routed out early by our driver, "Dick," who was a great believer in early starts for the sake of his horses and himself. Dick was a bit of a wag in his way, and would insist on calling Globetrout "the Mushroom." When we asked him why, he said: "Doesn't a mushroom never get up till it's forced? That's like him, and no offence, Mr. Globetrout."

After a long uphill drag we came to the level summit edge of the vast Kaingaroa plains some two thousand feet high, and a glorious panorama unfolded itself. There was the giant Ruapehu, with his eight thousand feet of snow-capped grandeur, eighty miles to the South, and next him his active brother, Tongariro. In the distance Lake Taupo lay at the foot of Tauhara, the lofty sentinel of the great inland plateau of the North Island, while the valley of the noble Waikato River filled the middle distance. Eastwards stretched the dreary plateau of the plains, over whose edge the blue bush-covered hills of the wild Urewera Country appeared in jagged array. To the north the steam of the region of the eruption showed up in puffy clouds, and the great eruption rift cutting into the heart of Tarawera Mountain was plainly visible.

It was a grand scene, and the freshness of the mountain air added to our enjoyment.