



TROUT FISHING IN NATAL

CHAPTER XVI



It is a shallow as well as a dismal scheme of life which ignores or undervalues the importance of recreation. In these days when Colonial business life is becoming more engrossing and the pursuit of what is called pleasure more laborious, it is more than ever desirable to find occasional change of scene and occupation which shall be really refreshing; which shall at once recruit the energies of the body and give free play to faculties and feelings which are shelved during the daily routine of working hours. Mere locomotion is not enough: our thoughts must be turned into new and pleasant channels, and we must seek places suited to new phases of agreeable activity.

It is of course true that what is recreation to one man might be weariness to another of different tastes and habits, who feels the strain of overwork in different functions of body or mind. A well-earned holiday may be employed in fifty different ways, each having its own fitness. But in comparing various recreations we may fairly

give the palm to that which suits the greatest number of cases; that in which a large proportion of intelligent men find healthful bodily exercise, combined with light yet interesting occupation for the mind.

Perhaps none satisfies these conditions more completely than angling. In its most refined form, fly-fishing rises to the dignity of an elegant and ingenious art, combining in a singular degree the active and the contemplative, the practical and the scientific element.

NATAL—THE ANGLERS' PARADISE.—Just as Durban has been steadily growing in favour as a seaside and holiday resort with the visitors from the inland provinces, so the rivers in the midlands of Natal have become increasingly popular with anglers hailing from the Transvaal and Orange Free State, and indeed from all parts of South Africa.

"One of the saddest moments when packing up to move to this land," writes an Army Officer, in the *South African Field*, "was when I came to my fishing rods, and surmised that they would, probably for years, hang idly on their nails; but reality has proved far different, and I can now say without exaggeration that the man without well preserved water on his own land has out here a better chance of sport than he has in Great Britain."

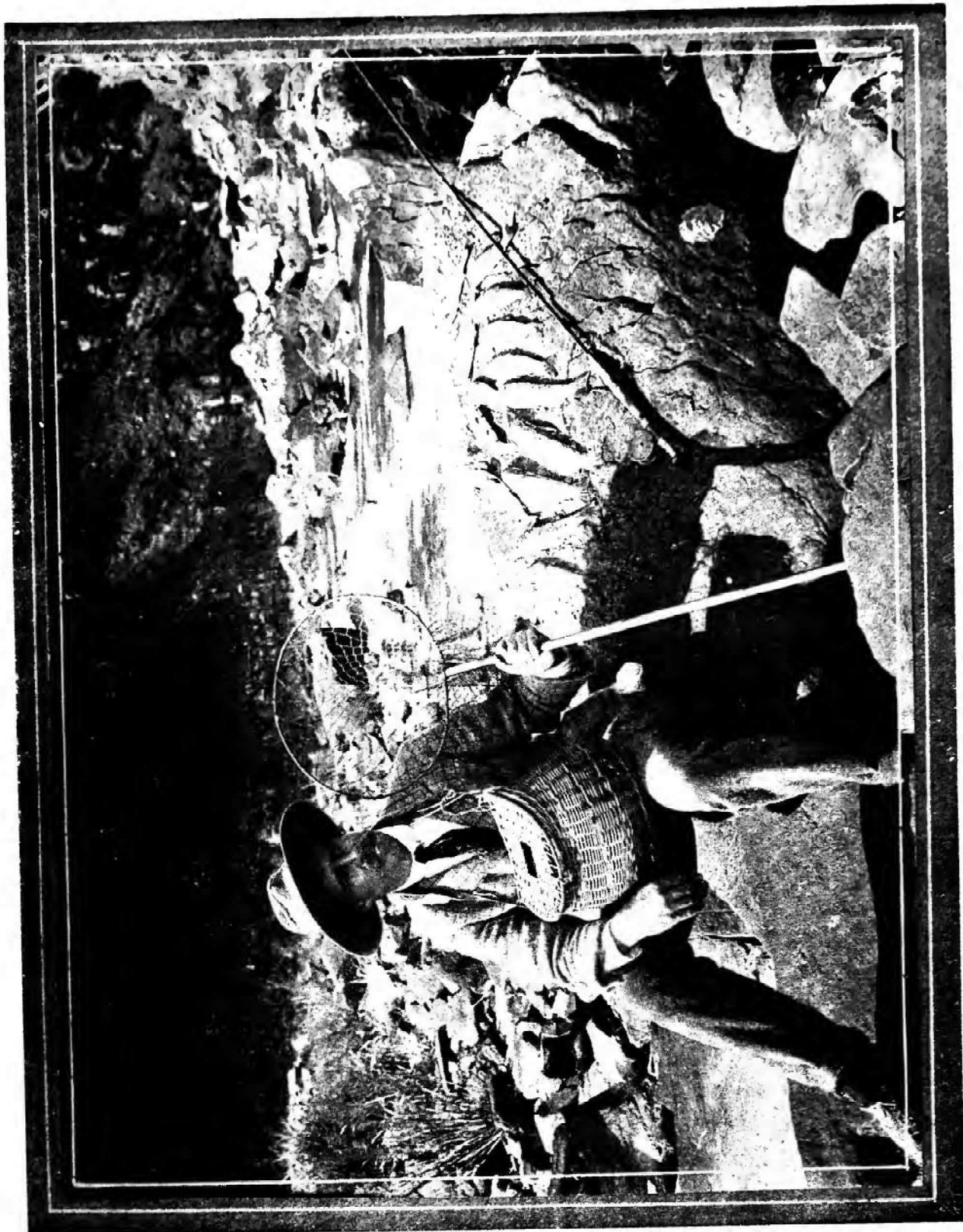


"Tidlers' Stretch," Mooi River

As most anglers know, trout have now been acclimatised in South Africa, and several rivers have been stocked for from five to ten years; the fry grow about an inch a month—at any rate in their first two years—so most of the Natal rivers are now at their best, and in all probability will continue to afford excellent sport.

THE TROUT SEASON COMES ROUND.—The bursting of the spring time sun which warms to life the tender off-spring of the kingdom of flora is also the time when the sportsman, angler and tourist and seeker after health and pleasure are on the alert to determine when and where to spend a brief holiday season.

To quite a large number of South Africans the early summer months are anticipated as one of the bright spots in the year, when for a brief space the cares of business may be cast aside and life given up to enjoyment.



Trout Fishing in Natal—An Early Catch

The daily improvements and increased facilities of modern travel, the easy accessibility of places which formerly were considered out of the way, render it constantly more difficult to determine which resort to select for holiday and sport, but notwithstanding the attractions of other districts, Natal will more than ever command the attention of the angler not only on the score of the excellent sport which her rivers afford, but for the historic interest of the territories through which these rivers flow, the delightful climate which prevails in the midlands of Natal during the fishing season and the conveniences of travel and hotel accommodation which are now available for the follower of Izaak Walton.

FISHING DISTRICTS.—Elsewhere will be found tabulated information as to the facilities available for the tourist and fisherman, but doubtless a little more detail in regard to the different Trout fishing centres may be helpful to anglers residing outside Natal.



Mooi River—The Upper Reaches

BUSHMAN'S RIVER.—This river was stocked in 1890, and in its higher reaches excellent sport may be obtained, but owing to counter attractions of the Big and Little Mooi Rivers it has not been fished so much as in previous years, although those who have visited the stream have had every cause for satisfaction: for if the fish run somewhat smaller, they are numerous and large enough to afford good sport to those who take the trouble to make the journey to this stream. Trout weighing up to 4 lbs. are found in this river. The river and its environment are well worth a visit apart from the attractions for the angler, and the lover of nature will be well repaid for a visit, the country being at all times beautiful beyond expression.

In order to get to that part of the river which is available to visitors, namely, that section which runs through Crown Native Trust Lands, it is necessary to ride or drive from Estcourt station about 20 miles, the distance being about 25 miles from Mooi River station.

A stretch of water in extent about ten miles is under the control of the Natal Anglers' Association. Permits to fish and all necessary information as to facilities, etc., can be obtained from the local Secretary to the Association.

No hotel accommodation is at present available near the river and it is necessary therefore, for visitors to provide themselves with tents, or obtain accommodation at a store close to Ulundi Drift.

At Estcourt the "Railway" and the "Plough" hotels afford adequate accommodation at reasonable prices.

Horses, conveyances and mule transport can be obtained in Estcourt or at the Argyle Hotel, Mooi River.



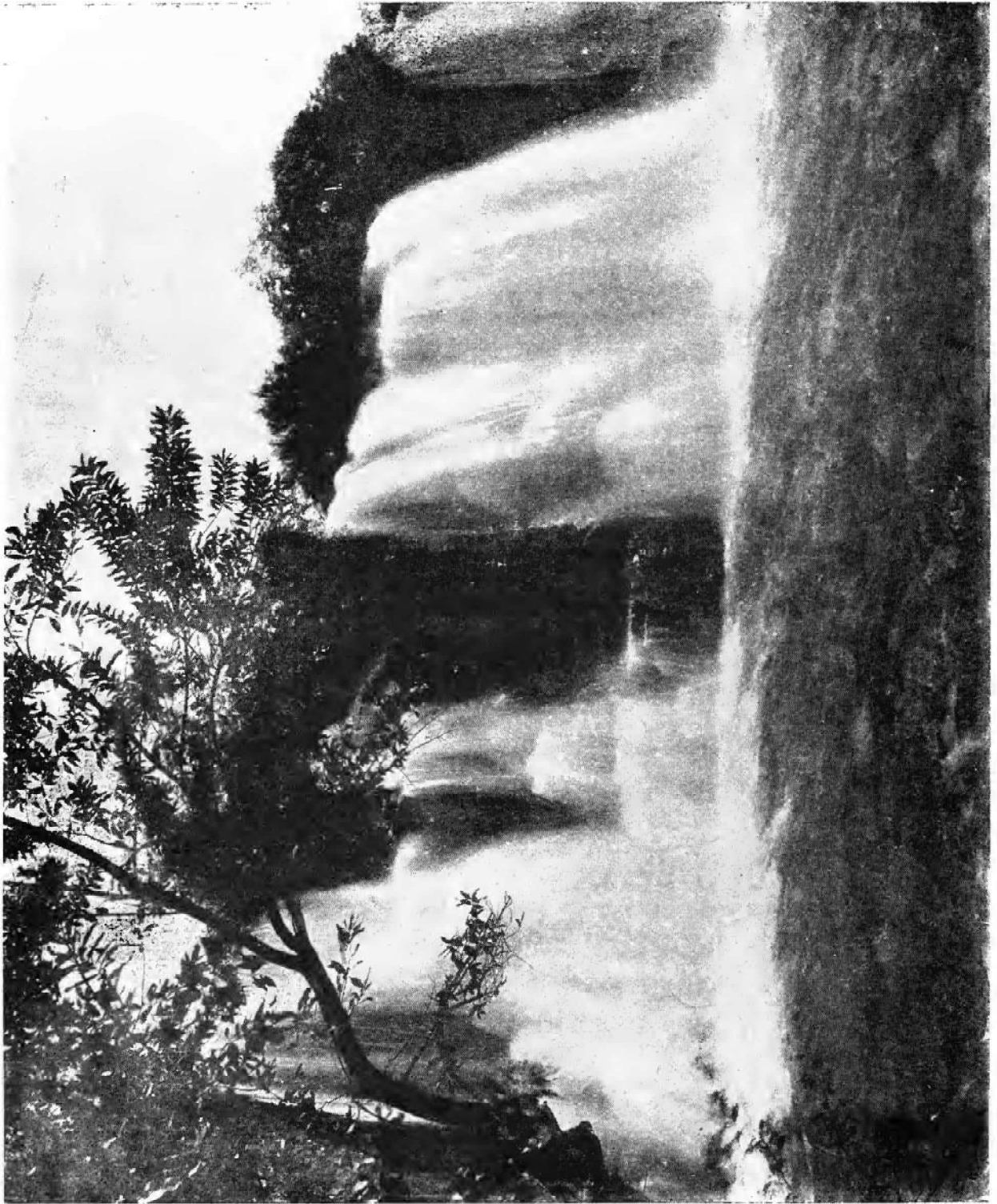
"Giant's Pool," Mooi River

MOOI RIVER AT ROSETTA.—Rosetta station is situated about four miles by rail to the north of Nottingham Road. A more secluded and prettier spot than the country surrounding Rosetta Hotel would be hard to find, even in the "Garden Province." The accommodation is excellent and the scenery leaves little to be desired. An ardent Transvaal angler recently (April, 1909) contributed to the *South African Field* a brief account of a visit to the Mooi River at Rosetta, which by the courtesy of that journal is quoted.

"You leave Park station at 8 p.m., and arrive at Rosetta at about 2 p.m. the following day, the hotel being a stone's throw from the station. The proprietor will arrange for your fishing rights over a distance of some ten miles or more of the river, which runs within a couple of hundred yards of the hotel, and for which rights no charge whatever is made.

"Saddle horses or a trap and horses may be hired at very reasonable rates, and the services of a Zulu or two are procurable for next to nothing.

"The climate here during the fishing season is perfect, the altitude being about 4,800 feet above sea level. The river, as its name implies, is beautiful, and is besides, a typical



Umgeni River

trout stream. It flows in a clear stream over a rocky bottom, the average width being about 30 yards. One of its best reaches is situated about three hundred yards from the hotel. This reach is about two hundred yards long, and this season produced a four and a half pound brown trout and a large number of brown and a few rainbow ranging from half to three and a half pounds.

"The banks of the river, and especially where the rapids and falls occur, are practically free from scrub and rushes, and the angler has in consequence no trouble in either casting or landing. About two miles up stream from Rosetta Hotel the property of that most hospitable and genial of Natal farmers, Mr. William Henwood, is reached. Permission to fish on this property, which embraces about four miles of river, will not be refused to any good sportsman. Here will be found a number of particularly good reaches, the drift at the homestead being exceptionally good. From these reaches a number of trout, averaging about three pounds, were taken this season. A pleasant recollection of the trout taken from this part of the river is their exceedingly good flavour, due, of course, to the nature and condition of the food supply.

"What to my mind is, however, the best reach of the river, and where the largest fish are to be found, is at a spot known as the Falls, a distance of about ten miles up-stream from Rosetta Hotel. Here, in beautiful scenery, the crystal water falls from a height of about forty feet into a large, seething and foam-bespattered pool, the water running off in a succession of splendid rapids.

"About five hundred yards from the Falls, and above them, is the homestead of Mr. Downie, a farmer and expert fisherman, who will put anglers up at a very reasonable charge. In a long rapid immediately below the homestead, Mr. Downie this season killed a magnificent 6-lb. brown trout, one of the largest killed in these parts. The favourite feeding ground about here, however, appears to be the pool immediately below the falls and the rapids below them. The best way to reach this spot from Rosetta is to hire a pony and proceed by road. A ride of an hour and a half will take you to Mr. Downie's homestead. The pleasure derived from a ride over those magnificent Natal hills is in itself worth the money.

"The progress of the trout down stream seems remarkably slow. From the evidence of local residents, the fish seem to have taken some eighteen months to two years to reach Rosetta from the spot where they were first put in. This may perhaps be due to the fact that most of the trout appear to be the brown, and these, I believe, although I am open to correction, do not readily seek pastures new.

"From Rosetta to within a mile or so of the Falls the trout will look at nothing larger than a No. 14. At the Falls and above them they seem to prefer a No. 9 or 10. March Brown, Zulu and May appear to be the favourite flies, at all events during March. In the dusk the White Moth is quite useful."

MOOI RIVER—NOTTINGHAM ROAD.—This river was stocked by Government in 1899, and on its upper reaches is undoubtedly the finest trout stream in Natal and one of the best in South Africa.

One great charm about this river is the absence of the great beds of reeds that fringe most South African streams. The fish are large and plentiful. The part of the river from which the best sport may be obtained starts from the falls, which effectively bar the passage of the scale fish or "Scaleys," and right up from there to its source, a stretch of something like 40 miles, the river teems with trout.

In March of last year three well-known anglers from the Transvaal visited these waters and the following report taken from the *South African Field* speaks eloquently of the success of their visit to this Angler's Paradise.

The party had capital sport during their three weeks trip, catching no fewer than 563 trout, some of which scaled $3\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. To those amongst our readers who have experienced the delights of trout-fishing in the Old Country, the catch will come as a revelation as to possibilities of the sport in South Africa.



"In the Net"



"Just Hooked"

Trout Fishing in Natal

The Mooi River affords some of the best fishing in South Africa at the present time. The particular reach which was fished by the party mentioned above is some three hours' drive from the Nottingham Road Hotel.

Number of fish and weights: Saturday, 6; Sunday, 6 (one 1½ lbs.); Monday, 12 (from 1½ lbs.); Tuesday, 10 (from 2 lbs.); Wednesday, 5 (from 2 lbs.); Thursday, 21 (1½ lbs.); Friday, 8 (2½ lbs.); total, 68.

Saturday, 5; Sunday, 15 (2½ lbs. down); Monday, 22 (2½ lbs. down); Tuesday, 4 (1½ lbs. down); Wednesday, 12 (1½ lbs. to ¾ lb.); Thursday, 9 (2½ lbs. down); Friday, 11 (2½ lbs. down); total, 78.

Saturday, 19 (3½ lbs., 2½-lbs., 2½-lbs. down); Sunday, 6 (1½ lbs., others 1 lb.); Monday, 20 (2½-lbs., 2 lbs. down); Tuesday, 10 (1½-lbs. to ¾-lb. down); Wednesday, 14 (1½ lbs. down); Thursday, 10 (1½-lbs. down); total, 79. Grand total, 225.

The flies used here with most success include March Brown, Zulu, Woodcock and Yellow, Hares Ear, Blue Upright, Red Spinner, Butcher, and Brown Killer. No. 12 hook.

The Mooi River is considered the most easily fished river in Natal, having low banks, while as already stated the absence of obstacles in the shape of reeds and trees leaves nothing to be desired as regards casting. Over and above the fishing, the scenery is magnificent, for the Kamberg and other mountains are in the immediate foreground with the noble "Giant's Castle" peaks always in view and within one day's riding distance. The district is one of the healthiest in Natal, being 5,000 feet above sea level.

There are several Bushmen's caves adjacent to the river, the paintings in which are in a fine state of preservation.

For the convenience of visitors and anglers, Mr. H. L. Singleton, of Nottingham Road Hotel, has erected a bungalow at the river side. Here accommodation, catering, and attendance on similar lines to that of a good hotel can be obtained. Terms are 15/- per day, which include rod, with special terms to sportsmen staying over a week.

It can be so arranged that each fishing party of three or more shall have a stretch allowed to themselves.

No artificial bait is allowed, except on certain portions of the river, which sections will be marked out with sign-posts bearing the letter "M."

No coloured people are allowed to fish.

Sportsmen are requested to put back into the river any fish caught whose length does not exceed 10 inches.

Conveyance to the Bungalow from Nottingham Road (about 2½ hours' drive) can be arranged at the hotel, charges being: Seat in trap 15/-; same charge being made on returning; if more than one rod a charge of 10/6 each person, or use of saddle horse 10/6; same charge on returning.

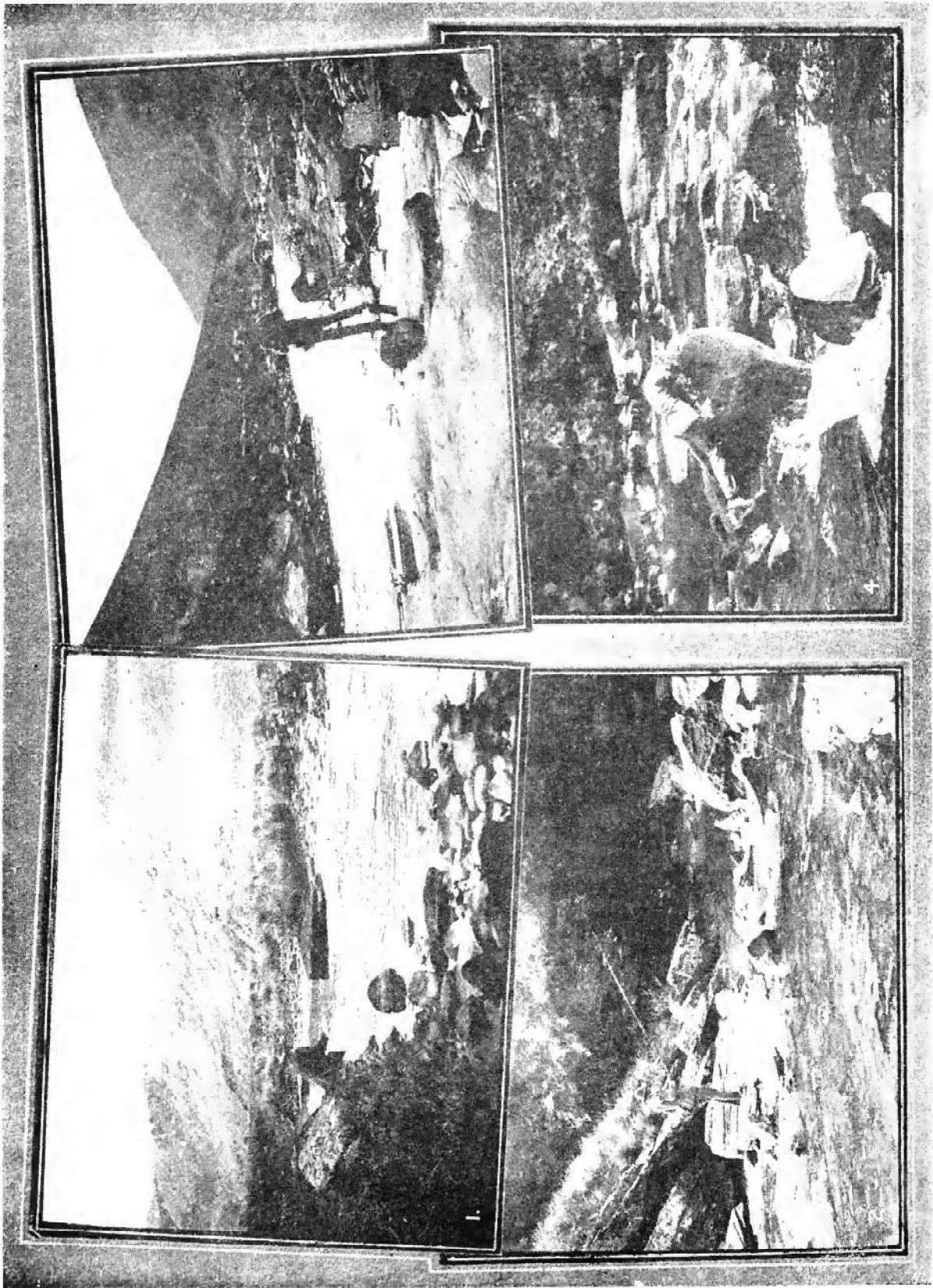
Fishers desirous of having the use of ponies whilst fishing can do so at the rate of 5/- per day. Also Gillies (natives) at 2/- per day.

A supply of suitable fishing tackle can always be obtained at the Bungalow.

All trains from the Transvaal and Orange Free State stop at Nottingham Road station by intimation from the passengers, and the Corridor trains stop at that station from October to March (inclusive) to pick up and set down Durban and Maritzburg passengers.

UMGENI RIVER—DARGLE.—The Umgeni River was stocked in 1890. The trout in this river have increased so rapidly that there is scarcely sufficient food for them. For some years excellent sport has been obtained and the fish have averaged from ½ to 3-lbs., though a considerable percentage are much heavier. There are about six miles of fishing available on one bank and three on the other.

The river is about nine miles from Dargle station, but conveyances are available and may be obtained at the Dargle Hotel as per following scale of charges:—



Trout Fishing in the Mooi River

1 and 2.—Below the Falls

3 and 4.—The Gorge Rocks



"The Gorge"

been proclaimed to be a close season for trout fishing in the Bushman's River or in any tributary thereof, and the period between 1st May and the 31st August in each year to be a close season for trout fishing in the Umgeni and Mooi Rivers or any of their tributaries.

THE FLY.—For the Natal rivers the best size of hook is No. 12 and the flies used with most success are March Brown, male and female, Zulu, Woodcock and Yellow, Hares Ear, Blue Upright, Red Spinner, Butcher and Brown Killer.

NATAL ANGLERS' ASSOCIATION.—The Natal Anglers' Association was formed in the year 1901, a time when trout fishing was practically unknown in the province, and it may be claimed for the Association that, during the past nine years, it has been the means of disseminating information which has resulted in the provision of excellent sport for residents of the province, as well as giving trout fishers from other parts of South Africa and the Homeland an opportunity of enjoying their favourite pastime.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE IN NATAL FOR THE FLY-FISHERMAN.—It will be interesting to South African anglers to learn the dates on which certain of the Natal rivers have been stocked with trout.

1899.

STREAMS STOCKED WITH TROUT FROM HATCHERY AT TETWORTH.

					Brown Trout.
Lower Umgeni, below junction with Karkloof	...	...	...	...	500
One caught the following season.					
Karkloof and Yarrow	...	...	...	...	427
One of these grew to be 14 inches long.					
Lion's River (Lidgetton)	...	...	...	...	500
One caught nine inches long next year.					
Little Bushman's River	...	...	...	...	...
No report.					
C. B. Lloyd—pond	...	...	...	...	100
Mooi River—Game Pass	...	...	...	...	400
These are the parent fish of the trout in the river at the present time. It has been said that the Mooi River is the best trout stream in South Africa. It is estimated that the value of the fishing to the district is not less than £300 per annum at the present time.					
Tetworth	...	...	...	...	50

These seem to have given place to the rainbow trout.

1900.

BROWN TROUT RECEIVED FROM CAPE PROVINCE. APPLIED FOR BY
J. H. MORTON, ESQ. FRY DISTRIBUTED.

J. J. Morton, Karkloof	...	...	...	...	1,000
G. McKenzie, tributary Umgeni	...	...	...	...	200
J. Trotter, Yarrow	...	...	...	...	500
A. S. Parkinson, Shafton	...	...	...	...	250
Tetworth	...	...	...	...	250
W. Trafford, Little Mooi River	...	...	...	...	200
Government Ponds	...	...	...	...	50

Out of this lot only those taken to Little Mooi River did any good. One caught in 1906 weighed 6-lbs. This year (1909), one weighing 7-lbs. 5-ozs. was landed.

1901.

Rainbow
Trout.

Umvoti River, near its source	...	...	...	...	700
None of these ever seen again.					
Umsindusi, Edendale	...	...	...	...	400
Seen the following season.					
Ipolela	...	...	...	...	530
Reported doing well for two years, then they disappeared.					
Tetworth	...	...	...	...	40
One of these trout was killed on March 10th, 1903, 16½ inches long, girth 9 in., weight 1-lb. 12-oz. The progeny of this fish are to be found in the stream at the present time. They breed freely, but none are ever found below Tetworth in the Karkloof.					

1902.

RAINBOW TROUT FROM CAPE PROVINCE.

Camperdown Reservoir	...	...	...	...	1,000
None of these were ever seen again.					
Eland River, Boston	...	...	...	...	500
None of these were ever seen again.					
Ladysmith Reservoir	...	...	...	...	—
None of these were ever seen again.					
Mooi River, Hlatikulu Branch	...	...	...	...	350
One of these was caught, weight 2-lbs., and returned to the river. Reported by Mr. Russell to be in the river in 1907.					

1903.

During the year no streams were stocked. First attempt made to rear Natal bred ova.

1904.

RAINBOW TROUT FROM CAPETOWN.

Stocked Umkomaas above Impendhle	...	...	...	...	500
Insinga, tributary to Umkomaas	...	...	...	...	250
Tugela, at Bergville	...	...	...	...	300
Lembonjwa	...	...	...	...	250
M'Weni	...	...	...	...	250
Incandu and Ingogo	...	...	...	...	900
Ixopo	...	...	...	...	250
Illovo	...	...	...	...	200
Little Umkomaas	...	...	...	...	200
† Shelter Spruit, Howick	...	...	...	...	65
† Hutchinson, Balgowan	...	...	...	...	200
Lower Umgeni, 10 miles below Howick	...	...	...	...	200
Umlaas, above Nel's Rust	...	...	...	...	200
† Tributary, Impolweni	...	...	...	...	102
† G. Simon's dam, Karkloof	...	...	...	...	50
† Lower Umvoti, Kearsney	...	...	...	...	655
† P. D. Simmon's dam	...	...	...	...	175
† Yarrow	...	...	...	...	50
† Umgeni, three miles above Howick	...	...	...	...	131

† These did well.

‡ Tetworth Ova,

1905.

†Tributary, Lion's River, Newstead	...	...	...	250
†Dundee Reservoir	...	...	...	212
These grew to be fine fish. Escaped in 1907.				
Sunday's River	...	...	...	545
No report.				
Wilge River, near Harrismith, O.F.S.	...	...	...	830
Lower Umkomas (Major Silburn)	...	...	...	565
Most of these died in journey.				
T. Mackenzie, Lower Umgeni	...	...	...	205
Dam burst, fish escaped.				
Elands River, Inewadi Station	...	...	...	200
No report.				
†Little Tugela, Courton Bridge	...	...	...	(Brown) 335
† These did well. Above, all Tetworth ova				

1906.

Flood. Stock ponds 18 inches under water. All the Rainbow trout escaped.

Stocked Umsindusi, Taylor's station	...	...	...	Brown Trout. 150
These did well.				
Inkonka, Dronk Vlei	...	...	...	160
No report.				

1907.

CAPE OVA.

				Brown Trout.
†Yarrow	...	...	200	Ipoela (Richmond) ... 400
†Newstead	...	...	102	†Larana ... 200
Umvoti (Blackwater)	...	...	600	Incandu ... 420
J. J. Morton	...	...	100	Ingogo ... 620
Pivaan...	...	...	100	Kearsney ... 410
Dundee Reservoir	...	...	240	Umlaas Reservoir ... 400
Tugela, Lembonjwa	...	...	250	Umsindusi ... 450
M'weni	...	...	250	Impolweni ... 150
Little Tugela, Winterton...	...	...	190	Rooi Spruit ... 100

† These did well.

NOTES.—With the exception of the Umgeni, Mooi, and Bushman's rivers there is no definite information with regard to the success, or otherwise, of the stocking of these rivers. There is, however, no doubt that the three rivers named carry an abundance of fish, and it may be stated without fear of contradiction that the Mooi River affords better sport than any river in the Province, and in few rivers in the British Isles can better sport be obtained.

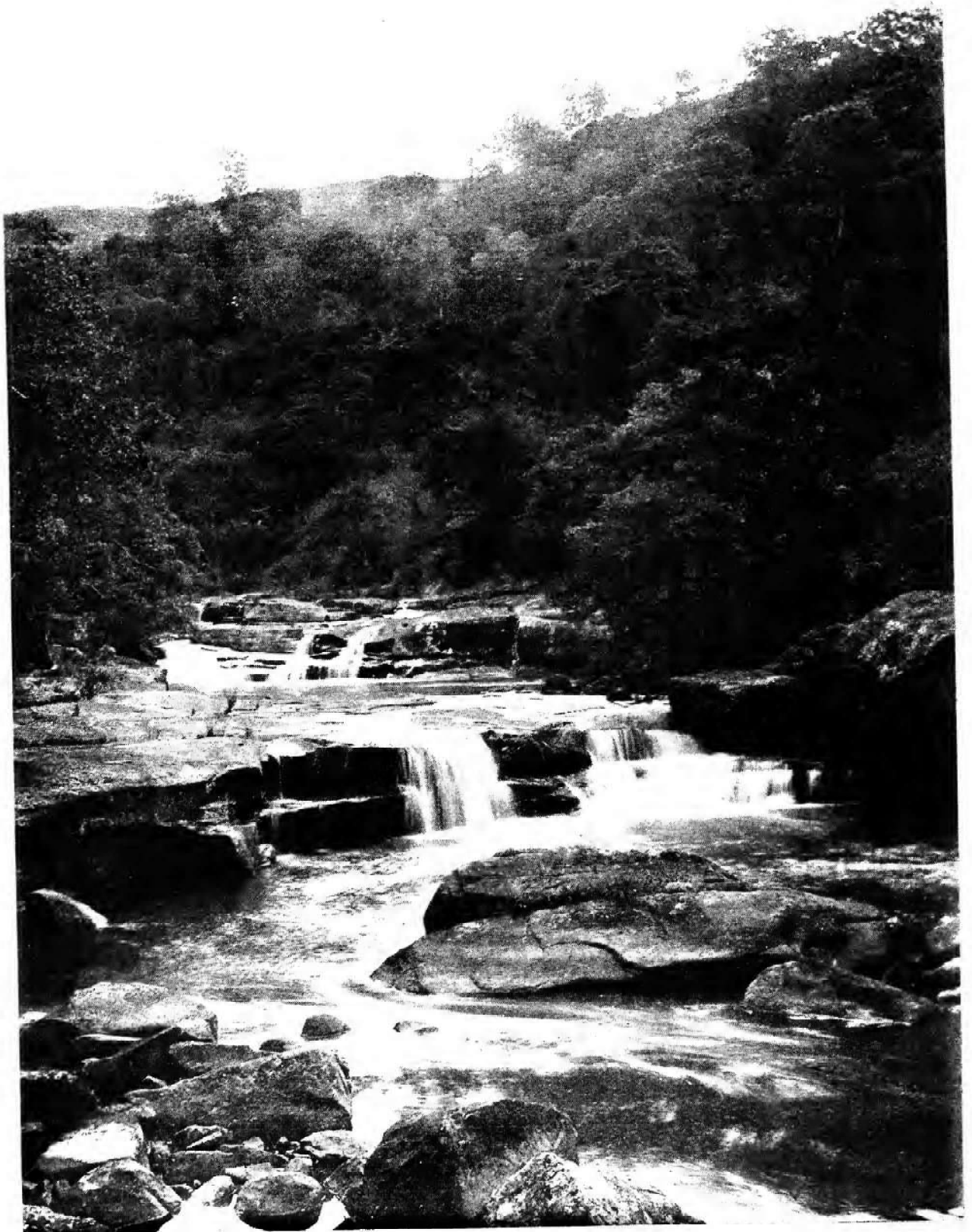
The lands abutting on the Mooi River are held by private owners and certain of these owners have leased their fishing rights to Mr. Singleton, of Nottingham Road. Mr. Singleton, of course, makes a charge for fishing in these waters, but he has entered thoroughly into his work, and provides comfort and good sport for his patrons.

The lands on the Umgeni River are also held by private owners, and the Association has up till now leased their fishing rights over two farms on the Umgeni, and it is being considered as to whether leases should not be terminated, and so give an opportunity to the owners of these rivers to undertake the management and the fishing on the rivers.

The Natal Anglers' Association has the right of fishing over all waters flowing through Location lands for a nominal rental. These rivers include the Bushman's and Umsindusi.

There is excellent fishing on the Bushman's River, and there is every reason to believe that there is trout in the Umsindusi, which is near to Pietermaritzburg and easy of access.

The Secretary of the Natal Anglers' Association is Mr. J. L. Watson, Pietermaritzburg, who will gladly furnish particulars regarding the Association to any one interested in its work.



"The Home of the Trout"

General Information for Anglers

Stations.	Rivers.	Fishing Mileage.	Distance of River from Station.	Distance of Hotel from Station.	Hotel Accommodation.	Nature of Fish.	Class of Bait.	Facilities available such as rod, tackle or other conveniences.	Best Season.	Weight of Catches.	Whom to apply to for particulars.	Distance of River from Hotel.
DARCLE ROAD	Umgenti ...	6 miles one side 3 the other	11 miles...	9 miles ...	Darcle Hotel, trains met by appointment; tariff: £2 2s. 1/2 week, £8 10s. 1/2 month; conveyances to river for one person 5s., two or more 2s. 6d. each.	Trout ...	All information may be obtained from Hotel Proprietor.	No tackle stocked.	...	Fish very plentiful—catches up to 3 lbs. each day.	(Fishing License 5s. per day from Hotel Proprietor)	Quite close
BALGOWAN ...	Jackson's Spt. Methley's Spt.	...	Curry's Post district about 4 miles.	...	Mrs. Jaffray ...	Rainbow Trout	...	None ...	...	Fish up to 2 1/2 lbs. Good baskets daily.	A. C. Lee and Partners.	...
NOTTINGHAM ROAD	Mool River ...	Upper Reaches 40 miles	2 1/2 hours' drive	Close ...	Nottingham Rd. Hotel, and bungalows for the accommodation of anglers	Trout ...	Good Flies, the Butcher, March Brown, Yellow Body, Brown Killer, Coachman and Woodcock, & Hares Ear are sometimes used with success.	Conveyance to river bungie 1s. 1 person 15s. each way, 2 or more 10 6 each way.	Sept. to April	Fish up to 2 1/2 lbs. Occasional fish up to 7 lbs. Fine specimens plentiful.	G. H. Berman, C. G. Jones, S. T. Nansen, W. Metcalfe, H. S. Jackson	2 1/2 hours' drive
ROSETTA ...	Mool River ...	...	1/4 mile ...	Close ...	Ample ...	Trout and Scale fish	...	...	...	...	...	Close
ESTCOURT ...	Bushman's ...	...	20 miles...	...	Store at Ujundi Drift (Railway & Plough Hotels, Estcourt).	Trout ...	March Brown, Butcher, Zulu and Coachman.	...	Sept. to April	Average 2 1/2 lbs. Occasional fish up to 3 lbs.	M. F. Jackson, Estcourt Fish and Game Club	...
WINTERTON	Little Tugela...	...	1 minute...	2 miles ...	Springfield Bdg Hotel, 10s. day.	Trout, yellow and scale fish.	...	...	June to April	Up to 2 1/2 lbs.	...	Close
	Sterk Spruit...	...	2 miles ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2 1/2 hours' drive
	Lembongwa ...	...	14 miles...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1 1/2 hours' drive
	Bergville ...	...	16 miles...	16 miles...	Hotel ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2 1/2 hours' drive

Streams stocked with Trout include Ingogo, Incundu, Unkomatse, Isopo, Poloka, Inkonzani, Lumbani, Pagan, Aveland, Dwyer, and Little Tugela.



On the Banks of the Tugela