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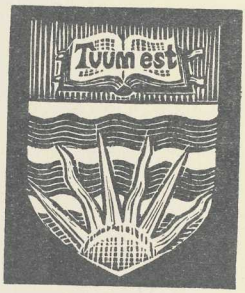

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PIKE FISHING

RED LETTER DAYS—AND OTHERS
WITH HINTS ON SALMON FISHING

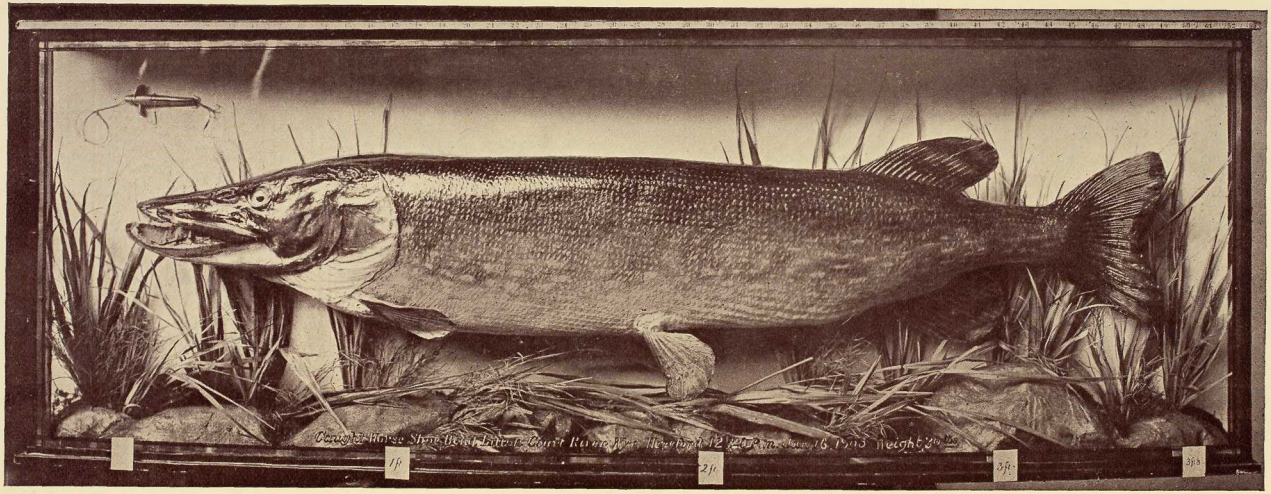

Photo : C. Speight, Kettering.

THE BIG ONE.

Frontispiece.

PIKE FISHING

RED LETTER DAYS—AND OTHERS WITH HINTS ON SALMON FISHING

BY

TOM SECCOMBE GRAY

("Silver Devon")

With a FOREWORD by R. B. MARSTON

Editor of "The Fishing Gazette"

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To
MY FATHER

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

In the Book of "the Preacher" it is written: "Of making many books there is no end."

Surely this is true, and very true of angling. However many books could a man acquire on our most fascinating sport? But the word "sport" does not truly describe it. Only a part of it. Fishing is more than a sport, it's a hobby, a solace, a recreation, an intensely interesting portion in a man's life. Perhaps outside the greatest things, the most absorbing interest in life there is.

Books on fishing! What on earth do you want to try to write another for? you may well say.

One has been trying to catch the feelings of writers of books. Wondering how, and where they write. What on earth do they put in the preface. And so on.

Well, I don't know. I do know just this, that, in one's own mind, for example, an edition of the *Fishing Gazette* with an article on pike fishing is a "best edition." Often enough it has to be put aside till "a more convenient season," but the more eagerly looked forward to because of that article.

Somehow one has the idea that this truly sporting fish has been slighted and never put in his due place of honour. Moreover, there was an inclination that,

however futile, an attempt at a book in praise of pike should be written.

Then one day, one of the best anglers I know said to me, " Why don't you write a book on pike fishing? You know something about it." And the resolve was almost made.

But was " You know something about it," sufficient excuse?

Anyway, here's the attempt. But other questions still lie behind. The publisher first, and the readers second. And what of them?

Clearly the one thing to do was to try to go on with the resolve.

There is, however, cause for encouragement. The Editor of the *Fishing Gazette* has kindly given his permission to reproduce some articles and sketches which have already appeared in the *Fishing Gazette*. The " O " cast, rod rest, spinning lead, have appeared as articles in his widely read paper. And, moreover, he has consented to read the manuscript of my book and, *best of all*, write a foreword to it. For all of which I tender him most grateful thanks.

So I went on in hope : in the hope that this piscatorial and editorial assistance, kindly given, the book might pass through the publisher to some readers.

If, as I hope, the script ever attains to the dignity of printed pages within covers, then I trust my readers may catch something of the joy of pike fishing which I have known in writing these pages on a favourite hobby.

I would like to thank my friend George for his great assistance in the matters of typing and encouragement,

and for his co-operation and help with the suggestions for the drawing of wrapper on the cover.

There may be the thought that the title wording of one chapter in this book is suggested by a recent work of a famous fisherman.

It is not so; but it *is* true to say that the idea has been borrowed from "the words of Agur the son of Jakeh, the oracle."

The thought of the gameness of Esox Lucius, some of whom I can remember that fought like a salmon, makes one inclined to add a few words on the gamest of fish.

Everyone who has killed a game pike would like to compare him with the king of fishes. The chapters on Salmo Salar are added in the hope of arousing interest to some and recalling happy memories to others. I have met so many pike fishermen who have longed to kill a salmon that perhaps the two chapters will not be inappropriate.

Happy is he who has a vast pike set up in his den, and treasured in his memory. But happier is he who has stood upon the banks or waded in the pools of a lordly stream and cast his fly or spinning bait for the loveliest, gamest, and most sporting fish that swims in all the waters of the world.

My experience has been that most anglers have a devouring appetite for reading of our hobby, and this work is penned in the hope that it may satisfy this appetite which most anglers know.

The incidents recorded in this book are taken from real happenings, and are recorded in the volumes of the fishing diary.

Fishing itself, may, perhaps, without irreverence, be described in King Solomon's words, " Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace." Certainly to the angler with seeing eyes, many, very many most interesting incidents, scenes and pictures are shown : and the fisherman is surrounded by the constant series of revelations of a greater Love than he can, at present, fully comprehend.

I come last to what was finished first. That is the dedication. There was only one to whom it could be dedicated, unworthy of him though it is. To my Father, the very best of fathers and most skilful and happy of fishers is it done. To him I owe the gift of what has been a source of unfailing recreation and refreshment, and a true happiness in hours of worry and anxiety no less than in hours of ease.

He taught me all I know of angling although I was able to hand some of that knowledge back to him, as it were, in this particular branch of fishing.

He taught me, not only to fish for trout in our Dartmoor river, but to fish for fish of all and any kind which can be angled for with rod and line, wherever one chanced to be.

TOM S. GRAY
(" SILVER DEVON ")

HUNGERFORD VICARAGE, BERKSHIRE,
1923.

P.S.—To my joy I have found a publisher! I happened to find in my Mother's drawing-room that very

excellent book by Major J. L. Dickie, " Forty Years of Salmon and Trout Fishing," and read it with great delight. I looked at the imprint on the title-page, and wished that the same should appear on *my* title-page.

I therefore sent the manuscript to Messrs. Heath Cranton Limited. After revising it somewhat, according to their reader's suggestion they undertook to publish it. So here it is. And I am grateful to them for their part in the publication.

T. S. G.

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FOREWORD

It is a pleasure to write a few words about this book on Pike Fishing because the Author is so keen and knows his subject so well. Mr. Gray has had a long and varied experience with what he calls " the poor man's salmon," and holds, as his pleasant pages show, a high opinion of the pike and the sport he gives. Having had a great love for this branch of the sport all my life, and having fished with many famous pike anglers, including my old friend the late Alfred Jardine, whom our Author with justice calls " the greatest of all pike fishers," I can endorse his wish that his readers " may catch something of the joy of pike fishing which I have known in writing these pages on a favourite hobby." One often hears a salmon or a trout angler speak disparagingly of pike fishing. I think this is in a great measure due to the—one may fairly call it terrific tackle which our pike angling ancestors considered it necessary to use when on the war-path after pike. The old angling writers followed each other in describing the strength and ferocity of the " fresh water shark." The young angler of those days must have borrowed his father's or his uncle's pike rod and tackle, and begun his pike fishing career with something like fear and trembling. By the way, what a blessing it is to have a father or uncle or a big brother who loves sport with gun or rod or both—one is glad to read our Author's loving acknowledgment of his debt to his father in this respect. I must have had a curiously unusual experience—almost the beginning of the world for me, so far as memory goes, was being taught how to fish in a Shropshire pond by my father, and then later to cast a fly in the trout brook. Then for many years the cares of business gave him no time for sport. When more leisure came I taught him dry-fly

fishing, and there never was a keener enthusiast—as the many little books by " The Amateur Angler " testify. From his sixtieth year up to a year or so before he died, almost in his ninetieth year, I doubt if he enjoyed anything so much as smoking a good cigar, kneeling down below and very cleverly casting up to a good trout or grayling in the Itchen or some other good trout stream. I remember one lovely autumn day when he and I and our dear old friend, Wm. Senior, were fishing for grayling in the Itchen—but I am not writing my reminiscences.

" The Amateur Angler " was one of those anglers who do not like the pike, and care nothing about fishing for him—as his books show—but he *never caught a pike in his life.* If—much virtue in " if " as Shakespeare says—if in early life he had enjoyed some good pike fishing he would have been as keen as Mr. Gray is, or as I am, and it is not as though we had had no experience of other fishing—including the best of it—salmon fishing, as Mr. Gray's pages prove. I used to think before I took up salmon fishing—I used to fear almost—that it would spoil one's zest for the trout, or pike, or roach, or sea rod. Not a bit of it, and thank goodness, for salmon fishing is more of a rare " Sunday-go-to-meeting " business—it costs more money—much more.

Refinement of the gear has made all the difference between the days when anglers were few and fish plentiful, and our days. This is the case particularly in pike fishing. Jardine's great success—his record of a brace of English pike, weighing 36 lbs. and 37 lbs., is not likely to be beaten—was due to his life-long experience of the habits of the fish, and to the extremely fine tackle he used, and his skill in using it. We always fished for pike when they were in prime condition—from November to February. He was a delightful angling companion, and from his nearly seventy years of fishing in all parts of the kingdom for all kinds of fish, from salmon to roach, he always had some experience to relate after dinner when the fire blazed brightly in the cosy best room of some fine old English country-town hotel or Angler's Inn—or out in the punt on some good pike river

or big lake when the fish were " off." Except my wife I have never known an angler who was so indifferent to the weather—I have been out with both of them when a bitter wind with driving sleet and snow threatened to swamp our punt or boat. Next to fishing he liked shooting. He always used one rod for pike—a light three-joint one of about eleven feet—the butt and second joint of whole cane with two greenheart tops, a large light Nottingham reel, and a fine dressed line—almost as fine as the taper of a trout dry-fly line; he made up his own fine salmon gut traces and flights. Being an old Thames trout angler he of course knew how to mount a natural spinning bait—and I never saw anyone do it so quickly—of course beginning first at the tail which is the secret of getting the good quick spin which he liked for the shallower water; for deep spinning and slow he did not object to a flashing wobble. Live-baiting with float and his famous Jardine snap tackle he did to perfection, but if the conditions suited it I think the single hook paternoster was his favourite method. As he said, you " searched " all the water, and in the deepest parts got your bait right down within some eighteen inches of the bottom, and then there was the fun of playing a good pike on a single small hook. I dislike using double hooks, and still more triangles—they are unfair to the fish, and a survival from the unsportsmanlike gorge bait times. The single hook is just as deadly, and if a good fish breaks your line you know he will not die a lingering death from lock-jaw or lock-throat. I have known too many of such cases where triangles have been used—two or three single hooks can be used tandem fashion for spinning or live-baiting. As to what the single hook will do, one square bend-hook only half an inch across the " gape " from point to shank, and only ¾ inch long in the shank, on single gut paternoster, was the tackle Jardine and I preferred. I have the set-up head and shoulders of a 26½ lbs. male fish I got on it; Jardine had one 19½ lbs. same time. I see we took in two days over two hundredweight of pike, " chiefly on paternoster," i.e., single hook—returning the greater number. Of late years my son, R.L.M., and I have preferred to go very

lightly equipped for pike, with the American Multiplier reel and one of their short single hand rods. I have had good fun using a 5¾ oz. split cane fly-rod and a "wagtail." But the chief thing in angling is to please yourself, and not be bound by other people's ideas. Our Author gives you plenty of choice of methods and tackle, and there is plenty of room for working out your own ideas.

Shakespeare was so full of knowledge of every aspect of life, that all claim that he was a master of their particular art or craft or profession. We anglers have good proof he was an angler, and certainly for pike. His early life was spent in Warwickshire, famous for its pike lakes and rivers. It has always been a great satisfaction to me also to know that Shakespeare and Walton's friend, Ben Jonson, "Brave Ben" as Walton calls him, was a keen pike angler. I know no tribute from one mortal to another equal to the few words in Jonson's dedication of the First Folio to Shakespeare. We may yet get evidence that the great and greatest of our dramatists went pike fishing together. How one wishes Dr. Jonson had written, as he had proposed to do, the "Life" of Walton. Not a word except in favour of angling is to be found in any of Jonson's writings. Even the late Dr. Birkbeck Hill—greatest of Jonsonians—thought the doctor was the author of the well-known libel on angling. I challenged him to find it; he had to admit he had searched in vain. We anglers ought to treasure these things in our hearts to throw at the heads of those who condemn angling on the authority of the Great Doctor.

"One of the Most Noble of Fish"

Debate on the Pike in the House of Lords, June, 1923

I told Mr. Gray if I had exceeded the amount of space his publishers, Messrs. Heath Cranton,[1] could spare for this "Foreword," at any rate not to cut out this reference to the recent debate on our splendid Salmon and Fresh-

[1] We anglers owe Messrs. Heath Cranton thanks for other good books on angling.

water Fisheries Bill for England and Wales in the House of Lords, 7th June, 1923. This Bill, which the anglers of England and Wales have made a great fight for, of course provides for keeping down pike in private trout waters. Earl Beauchamp, while candidly admitting he knew nothing about the matter personally, moved, as he had been requested to do by some anonymous body, that pike angling should be allowed during the fence months in public waters. The Earl of Ancaster, who referred to the pike as " one of the most noble of fish," and Lord Desborough made such a spirited defence of the wishes of the great majority of coarse fish anglers, that Earl Beauchamp withdrew his amendment. Lord Desborough said he agreed with the views of those who " would not like to see the pike treated merely as a fish of prey but rather to put him in the category of those which afford most excellent sport to the angler." I can see the author of this capital book throwing up his fishing hat, and, in the name of all pike anglers, saying " hear hear " if he had been present in that august assembly of the Peers of the realm. After Lord Ancaster's tribute we might call our pike—like the Americans do their great fish—" Esox nobilior."

R. B. MARSTON.

SURREY LODGE,
DENMARK HILL, S.E.5,
11th June, 1923.

Photo : Heath & Stoneman, Plymouth.

MEAVY BRIDGE.

To Face p. 25.

PIKE FISHING

CHAPTER I

IN THE BEGINNING

A lasting gift—Dartmoor—The Old Bridge—Blue-bottles and a pig—" The silly fool "—Too long a cast—Tragedy—My first rod—A lesson in casting—Two trout—A moated Hall—Roach and pike—The kitchen terrace—A curious noise—A bucketful of roach—An adventure—A big perch—Another tragedy—Mr. Pike two up—A great catch on the Norfolk Broads.

AMONG the many gifts a father may give his son, perhaps but few compare with the love of fishing and all that fishing means.

My father gave that gift to me, and many a time has there been cause for my thankfulness.

Childhood was spent on Dartmoor in as lovely and happy a home as the heart of a child could desire. On the village green there stands a noble oak, big enough in far-away days to be mentioned in the Doomsday Book. And hard-by flows the river which held the lovely trout of glorious Devon.

We fished for them off the Old Bridge. Alas! that dear old bridge has been replaced by a more convenient iron one of complete ugliness, by the County Council.

We used to fish off the bridge, dapping with natural flies : house-flies and others—for choice a green burnished-looking chap that settled on the granite coping of the bridge and on brambles near-by.

The art of catching those shining flies had to be learned, and there parental skill and instruction came in. Once, during a fishing season, a pig from a farm close by came to the green and rooted it up. We passed him one day on the way to the bridge, and the bridge lay between Mr. Pig and his home. The pig visited our lawn, too, with hideous result, so on this occasion I acted as " beater," and the parental boot was " placed " on the bridge. The " drive " was eminently successful. A resounding thump in the ribs, a satisfying bawl from the pig, and he came to us no more in the future. I can hear him yell, even now.

We children knew all the trout above, below, and under the bridge " by sight, but not to speak to." There were names for some of them : one, " the silly fool," lived on a stretch of fine gravel in the strong light : a light coloured fellow. We dubbed him " silly fool " because he would always come up and inspect a fly, but never take it. Then there was an enormous fellow—" the three pounder." He lived in a hollow in the base of the bridge. We saw him very seldom, and he drove away sleep o' nights after we saw him. How could we catch him ? Could we ever land him ? If we hooked him, one would run home for Dad and his net. Then there was another fellow, a three-quarter pounder—probably nearer eight ounces. He poised in mid-stream just above the bridge—he was nearly mine. But parental

advice was not followed, and that glorious nine-foot fly-cast was not shortened as advised. "Tom, that cast's too long." It was—about a foot. As you guess, I did hook him and play him. And tried to swing him up on to the roadway. He hit the top stone of the bridge, and fell back. That resounding splash and the tragedy are with me still.

Then came a glorious day when I was ten years old. Dad took me to a shop in Plymouth—a wonderful place where one bought, if one was old enough, rods, guns, cartridges, whistles, cartridge extractors, flies, and reels. A magic spot! And THE ROD was mine! A trout fly-rod, ten feet, greenheart, and with fall-down rings. The brass reel at home was sure to fit. And a new line he bought me, too!

When we got home I had my first lesson in throwing a fly. "Now, a stickle like this is where you find feeding trout"—a spot in between big alders. "You hold your rod—so: close in to your side—so: and work from your wrist—so. Then you cast—so: and when you see a rise, you strike—so." And, by Jove! there were two trout on the grass—one to each fly. So, clearly, the artificial had points over the natural fly.

From that moment the love of fly-fishing was given me. And that rod, an old one now of over thirty seasons standing, is still on the active list, and got me my best basket of trout not many years ago. Best for average weight. Two-and-a-half brace: weight 15¾ lbs.; best one 4 lbs. 12 ozs.

Then there came soon after the gift of the rod, a wedding in our family. That meant a visit to a house in

Suffolk with a moat round it. The moat was full of roach, and we heard there were pike there, too. We saw thousands of roach, but no pike. Pike were to be desired, being a fish that grew to a large size, weighing several pounds. My room was over the terrace outside the kitchen, and that first summer morning when I awoke, I heard a curious sucking and splashing noise. Out of bed on the instant, and the mysterious noise was explained. Cook had cut off two or three rounds of bread, and each piece was in the moat surrounded by feeding roach—pushing and nibbling—making that curious sound.

After breakfast the little archery room was turned out. And among bows and arrows, paddles, and so on, some pieces of rods were found, and one complete—one fit for roach. A tight line, the whole of a wine-bottle cork tied on as a float, a small hook, dough and cotton wool kneaded together—and further verbal and practical instruction. Then after the Governor had landed two with the first two casts, the rod was handed to me to my complete satisfaction. And many a fine roach pulled that cork right down. The one fly in the ointment was that Cook wouldn't cook them!

The memory of the early morning brought me with my rod and a bucket to the kitchen terrace. And in less than twenty minutes that bucket was full—overflowing. Another bite and another fish, and, as a boy would, I walked up and down the terrace, dragging the roach in the water. Suddenly something happened! The strain on the rod became terrific and it was nearly pulled out of my hands. And swirls and boils appeared, and then,

whatever it was, the big fish let go and there were bleeding tooth-marks on the roach, which was about eight ounces. A hurried recital to the elders, and Dad said, "That was a pike." And from that moment a pike fisherman was I. If a pike could pull like that, he was more worth catching than a bucketful of roach. No attempt could be made for him then, as there was no pike tackle, or rod complete, at the Hall.

Soon after, I was staying there again, and tried the river. And with a worm, landed a perch I have never beaten since—1 lb. 10 ozs.—with my greenheart rod. Then a friend gave me a Cartman spinner, and I had brought my greenheart rod and reel. So the Cartman was spun over the wall near the billiard-room for a start, and I hooked my first pike. About six or seven pounds, as far as my memory can judge. He was lightly hooked in the lips. Shouts brought no assistance, and an attempt to lift him up the wall ended in another heavy splash—and tragedy.

The first two rounds with Mr. Esox ended in favour of the fish.

Holidays on Dartmoor gave us no chance of pikes, but Oxford did. While I was up, I saw in a North Devon Hall, a beautiful pike of 23 lbs. in a case. He was one of a take of six. Mr. L. used to say, "I shall never see the like again. The three of us at the end of the day had six fish weighing over 120 lbs. This was not the biggest. We were fishing on the Norfolk Broads." Private water, I think, if I recollect rightly. I do recollect that one of the big fish was hooked and lost in the morning, and hooked again and landed in the

afternoon, with the hook he had gone off with earlier, in his mouth.

I used to go and look at him each night of my visit and wish I had one like him. Well, I have beaten him since then, but I often think of that other when I see my own. For some reason that fish always spurred my imagination.

CHAPTER II

JOHN PIKE

A twenty pounder—A hasty fish—" Loaded like a Breton ass " —The poor man's salmon—The roadman's sockdologer—Size limit—Preserved waters—Pike and trout together—Netting—A worthy quarry—An eighteen pounder—" Hup 'e comes "—Perseverance—The fish of your lifetime.

THE pike has always been a fish of mystery—you may have a big chap in your water and never know it.

Only last week a pike fisherman friend in London said, " If you had been up yesterday I could have shown you a pike! A twenty pounder. He was caught in my water and I didn't know there was one anything like so big. And the man who caught him didn't want him! So he shot him on to me! And I said, ' Well, we can't let a fish like that go,' so I am having him stuffed."

The big fish are not like big trout: you may spot your trout—count the spots on him—but John is a horse of another colour. Last season one of nigh hand 20 lbs. missed my live-bait, and snapped up my float. I thought the best in that particular beat was nine to twelve pounds.

He is a " man-compeller," as the author of " Super Flumina " calls him. He will make you carry more in order to catch him than any other fish. We cheerfully hump a two or three-gallon bait can when after him. He's a fine sporting fish—one gets sport with a pike of

seven pounds and upwards that would not shame a salmon. And talking of salmon, it has always seemed to me that pike fishing is the poor man's salmon fishing, and the poor man's chance of a big fish.

I remember being in a shop once, adorned by a twenty pounder in a case, and a working-man came in to buy a " twopenny snap-hook." " Going after pike? " " Yes, sir." " Ever kill a big one? " " Yes, sir," pointing, " I killed that one, sir, but couldn't afford the mounting." So he had, the shopman told me.

No fish, they say (whoever " they " may be), has had so many lies told about them. And it is a precious poor fish, by some, that doesn't put on weight after death. But other fish, I fancy, do the like. I had a real big 'un stuffed, and the head of the taxidermy department at the stores where the work was done was saying, " Well, they say all fishermen are liars, but I don't know. I think the shooters beat 'em." " How so? " " Well, sir, we get an order, ' Mount a tiger's head on an oak plinth and write, " Shot by Mr. So-and-so," and send it to Mr. What's-his name.' "

Well, we were speaking of the poor man's salmon fishing. It's like the great game inasmuch as it is the poor man's chance of a big fish. But with this difference —when salmon fishing you may kill a brace of twenty pounders in " Greenbanks " to-day: go down again to-morrow and get a heavier fish or two. But pike fishing: go and kill a brace of big 'uns to-day—and they are gone. There is no sea to send you some more by the next rise of water. No, the big ones take a long time to grow, and are mighty scarce. If you fish a canal or a

small river your fifteen pounder is worth a case; and unless it be in Ireland, your twenty pounder is worthy; and if you have the luck to get one of thirty pounds or over, well, you *ought* to stuff him.

Good pike fishing is now very hard to get, and a definite size-limit should be fixed and adhered to. And in the writer's opinion nothing under five pounds should be retained. A man said to me one day, " Had a nice take o' pike the other day—got five, and the best very near two pounds! "

But your five pounder, put back with care, will be seven or eight pounds next time you have to do with him.

This applies where pike are preserved. When pike are in trout streams it is another matter. The presence of pike in a big trout stream presents a very interesting problem. There is one river where pike are, so to say, natives. Here, one reach holds pike, some of 'em big fellows, and big trout—four pounds, five pounds and over. A few odd miles higher up there are practically no pike or only very few; more trout, but your three pounder is *rara avis*. How, and how far do pike affect the trout? I am inclined to think that pike and really big trout do go together. One thing the writer is convinced upon: if he had a good bit of trout fishing and pike in the water, a net to net out pike should never go in; nor trimmer either. The net takes up the trout as well as pike. Out comes the drag net with fish, sticks, kettles, etc., etc., all mixed up; therefore trout must be damaged. They get their gills caught in the meshes of the net, and have to be man-handled. And though they may not die, yet possibly their after-growth is checked.

The pike is worthy of your steel, even in a trout stream. Kill all and any; spin, live-bait and wire. For wiring small jack, unravel a piece of picture wire or rabbit wire. Use a single strand and you can wire jack of the length of a pencil. Those small chaps are well out. There's a pike of 18 lbs. and over, here in the gun-room. She was a marked-down fish. A most clever fishery owner was asked to net the river where she was. "Well, sir, that big jack was in the pool all right. 'E went down and see the stop-net. Hup 'e comes and finds the drag-net. Back 'e goes to the middle of the pool and muds 'isself! Twice we puts the nets over 'im and never gets 'im."

A few weeks after, she took my spoon for the second time, and I got her—18½ lbs. She was a picture, and fought like a salmon, almost.

They are rum fish, are pike. You can't make 'em feed: you must wait till they want to. There's one golden rule in pike fishing. Go, and go, and go again; and some day or hour you'll find them on the run.

I know of nothing more deceptive than the way of a pike with a float—bait from his point of view, float from ours. One gets runs that simply *must* be, to look at, from the fish of a life-time—and find a two pounder has got the bait by the tail!

If one's luck is in and one does get the fish of a life-time—25 lbs. or over—then one should case him. And when he returns "a thing of beauty," full many a time, beside the fire, with pipe alight, one will fight the battle again and feel anew the thrills of our mutual struggle.

If you want to judge of a pike's power of fighting, and

you can fish a river holding pike, you may find out. Take your fly-rod, go to the river and look for pike. Put up an inch Alexandra. Look! there's a five pounder or so, lying on the edge of that shelf of gravel. Cast in front of him, downstream; work your fly in jerks in front of his nose. And look out for squalls!

If you hook him and have the luck to land him you will never say a pike cannot fight.

CHAPTER III

THE ROD

Something like a rod—Expert roach fisherman—The first three—Differing styles—Designing a rod—John Bull—A sure seller—Kennet and Dartmoor—Dry-fly tackle—Function of a pike rod—One or many rods—The best—Ouse—Spinning—Split bamboo—Greenheart—Whole cane—Greenheart and lancewood—Hardy Brothers—Rod tops—Splices—Single handed—Action—Spring and give—A valued friend—The grasp of the rod—The right one—Why change your hands—One hand idle.

SOME fishers, and would-be fishers, have the idea that anything in the way of a rod, or even something *like* a rod, will do for pike.

A very great mistake: for two good reasons. First, a pike rod is a special kind of rod for special purposes; and secondly, if you are indifferent as to your rod, you deprive yourself of much enjoyment that might have been yours.

If I were asked who deserves the palm for care and pains taken with fishing tackle, I fancy I would give it to the expert roach fisher, and the dry-fly trout fisher next. There be others, but perhaps these two are top of the class. The salmon angler runs a good second. These two are almost bracketed first.

Get hold of a good roach fisherman; talk to him on ground-baiting, Sheffield, Nottingham, and Boston styles,

hook models, casts, their colour, composition, and length, the different rods, rod versus roach-pole, and why. You realize here's a man with a vast store of knowledge and experience, implying care and judgment. A field, maybe, laid bare to you for the first time.

Once I heard two good roach fishers designing a rod, 15 or 16 feet, that was to combine the certainty in striking of the Lea man's pole, and the safety with big fish of the Nottingham running tackle. I spent a delightful hour-and-a-half listening. I have one of those rods of my own now. Showed it to a roach fisher who *rejoiced,* literally, in the name of John Bull. " Dear me, sir," he said, " it's a beauty. It's quite a fascinator." It fascinated him, and he took the name of the man at Oxford who sells them. It's a sure seller at competitions, and the aforesaid at Oxford often returns from a match with an order for two or three.

Then look at the dry-fly man. Rod, reel, line, floatant, everything : from his hat to his heels is thought out and planned. One rod for the Kennet, another for the Froome, another for the Dartmoor streams—reels and lines to match, and casts and points. Meet him by the river : clothes and hat of a colour to blend with his surroundings, so as not to scare the fish. Look at his rod, reel, line, collar, cast, point, and fly—all perfection in balance—working in smooth harmony, all to go " suent " as we say on the Moor. His fly-boxes, flies, all his tackle, are bought or made with care.

So should it be with the pike fisherman. His first care, the rod. There are three clear functions his rod must fulfil. Cast his baits, sometimes heavy ones; free

his tackle from weeds and obstructions; and kill his fish. And the last—except in the case of very heavy fish in dangerous places—the last and third is the easiest job.

I am pretty certain the casting throws much strain on a rod, and the weeds often an unnecessary one. It is better to hand-line your tackle, if you can, out of weeds, than strain your rod at it. It is most pleasant to have a good store of rods of different sensible lengths, but it may be the fisher says to himself, " it must be only one for me." In this case, buy the best you can afford, and get it of a length that will serve you anywhere. Ten or eleven feet—preferably eleven feet. And why? Because ten feet may be too short in some places. For instance, on rivers like the Ouse, you may have to fish over a bed of lily pads, and that eleven footer will have a bit more reach and control than a ten. And, mark you, this rod is for all places. And it will be right for spinning for salmon should occasion arise.

Of materials there are split bamboo with or without steel centre; greenheart; and whole cane butt and middle with greenheart or lancewood top.

The best and most costly is split bamboo. For the one general purpose rod, one cannot do better than Messrs. Hardy Brothers' " Murdoch " with steel centre. This is a heavy rod and will kill any fish that swims in rivers, while the materials and workmanship are all that should be, and the freedom from anxiety as to the possibility of breakage is a great consideration. It is a rod that will last as long as one man can live to use it.

Greenheart, too, is delightful timber to use in a rod. And the writer is inclined to think, that, while

greenheart tops to trout rods are apt to break at a sudden strain, in a pike rod top there's enough timber to prevent the likelihood of this. Among the many exceedingly good ones made, there is one, the " Grant Vibration," of Messrs. Playfairs, which is a beauty. Built originally for salmon spinning, it is excellent for pike fishing. You can put your live-bait or spinner where you want it. The rod is a spliced one, and so needs some care in putting together, and it takes longer than a ferruled rod. But when spliced it feels in the hand like a single stick, and is delightful to fish with.

Whole-cane and greenheart, or lancewood, come next. Choose a three-piece rod, with greenheart, for choice, as the top. It makes a light but powerful rod, and is cheaper in price than the other two. But in the writer's opinion it cannot stand the rushes of a really powerful fish as can bamboo built in sections.

One the writer has, had to have about four inches of the middle taken out after landing two heavy fish. There was ice on the water and sunken timber in the river at the time, so much pressure had to be exerted. Anyway, there it is. If you want a good rod get the best material, and that's split bamboo. The eleven-foot split bamboo will prove the best for all round work from the single rod.

We come, then, to consider single-handed rods. We think them a mistake for practical fishing. It seems you have not quite so much control of your bait and reel when one hand is doing all the work. And the left hand is most useful in controlling your rod. For boat work, may be, there's much to be said for the short rod. But

when a strong fish makes for under your boat, that extra foot or more helps to keep him away from it. Many single-handed rods leave but little room on the grip for your left hand when playing a fish. And the short rod is an infernal nuisance if there is a fringe of weeds on the water and you are fishing from the bank. Moreover, one has to remember that a short rod means a short trace, which is not always a thing to be desired. On the whole, for fishing—casting, playing, and landing fish—give me the double-handed rod.

Single-handed rods may be five to eight feet. And they are too short if they are the only rod you have. If you must have a short rod, have one about nine feet on which you have a grip big enough for both hands.

The action in your rod is all-important. A too stiff rod is abominable. A fish gets rid of the hook when he shakes his head, and you lose your live-baits in casting. It is an " uncomfortable " rod to use. You need spring and give to cast accurately and play your fish properly. In addition it must have backbone to stop a big 'un when you must. You want the reserve power although you may not need it, just as you do in a petrol engine. If you have spring in your rod, it's surprising how light a bait you can cast with it.

Treasure your rod as a valued friend. Hang it up in its partition bag when not in use. Carefully wipe and dry it when it comes home wet, and the case, too, if need be. Ferruled rods need a little lubricant on the ferrules. When disjointing or jointing ferruled rods, always hold the joint or ferrules by the metal parts.

The writer has an eight-foot split-bamboo steel-

Photo. G.E.A.

Grasp for MURDOCH ROD and SILEX No. 2.

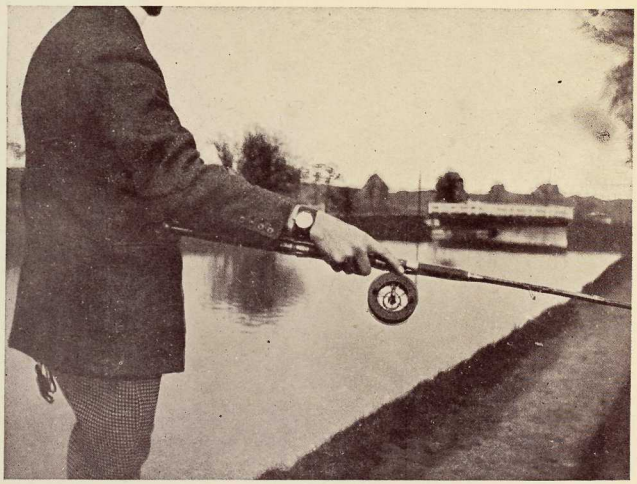


Photo. G.E.A.

Single-handed Casting. Coxon's Aerial Double Winch Fittings.

To Face p. 41.

centred rod with double winch fittings, so that it may be used single or double-handed. But it seldom comes out now, as a ten or eleven footer always does the fishing. And there is a deal of water where it's no use.

The Grip of the Rod

It is a valuable tip, this. Learn to hold your rod in a sound manner at the start.

It has always surprised me that it is nearly always an unchanging rule in books on fishing to advise the following: "Hold the rod in the right hand above the reel, rod top pointing to the right. Control the reel, which hangs below the rod, handles to the right, with your left hand. Cast, and *change your hands,* right to reel to wind in, and left above the right to position which right has just vacated." Double-handed casting, of course. But why need there be *any change of hands*? If there be weeds about that change is an obvious chance for your bait to sink and catch the nearest weeds.

Try this way: Left hand above the reel, right hand controlling reel, placed as before, rod point pointing to the *left*. Now cast, and instantly your hands are where you need them, and you have reached the spot just as neatly as from the right side that you sent your bait to. Weeds don't trouble you, for you can begin your winding in as soon as the bait hits the water.

I have been told it's "left-handed," "wrong," etc., but one maintains it is the right and the better way.

I could take you to places—but you try it.

To go back for a moment to our ten or eleven-foot

rod. If you do have but the one, and that the best, and feel you *must* have a short rod too, a good maker will make you a shortened butt to put the top and middle to, and there you have it. But have your butt big enough for two-handed casting. Personally, it's most irksome to have one hand idle, and it becomes very tiring. No, fish with your two hands engaged in your casting.

Of course, one knows that marvellously accurate casts are made single-handed. And one can admire the caster's skill and accuracy. But one can hardly imagine any caster going on casting at a mark only from morn till dusk. Maybe he will put in some hours if entering for a casting tournament. It always looks as if there was, must be, a vast difference between casting for casting's sake and casting to catch fish. Grant you there's amusement in both—but there's certainly sport in the one.

And at all events, fly-casting for tournaments does not call for *fishing* gear but a special thing of its own. And one feels, also, that tournament casting does something of the same.

CHAPTER IV

THE REELS

Modern reels—Spinning—Line capacity—155 paces—Wear and friction—Spare line—Wooden reels—Champion reels—Nottingham pattern—Aerials—Malloch—Silex—Silex No. 2—Multipliers—Spinning leads—On the Tavy—The Devon method—A tin—Silex reels—A stroke of genius—Malloch's patent—Kinking and unkinking—Care of reels—Reel cases—An umbrella ring—The new Eureka reel.

NEXT in importance, perhaps really before the rod, comes the reel. For almost any rod will do at a pinch, but any reel will not. The best reel is the most costly one—and it is *the cheapest*. A really sound reel will last a lifetime, or nearly a lifetime. Certainly get the best you can buy; then you will take pleasure in its use, for your casting, live-bait or spinning, will prove more accurate and easy. Cheap reels are an abomination—they warp and they break; fail you, likely enough, when you need them most.

Reels in recent years have improved out of all knowledge, so that one wonders what our father Izaac would say could he see and use them. They are of many designs and models, simple and complicated, running on ordinary metal bushes or on ball-bearings.

One can use a simple reel for live-baiting, for the

baits are comparatively very heavy and easily cast out well. But for spinning there's only one to be desired, and that the best of its kind and class. For spinning reels, remember, do for live-baiting, spinning being by far the more scientific method, needing by far the greater skill.

So get a metal reel, the best spinning reel you can buy, noting that you are buying not only the wherewithal to catch fish, but the means of the greatest pleasure that comes from pursuing your art cleverly and cleanly.

The line capacity of your reel, whether your line be fine or stout, should be 100 yards. You never know when you may need it. Personally, no pike has ever stripped more than 30 yards in one rush, from the reel. But on the other hand, a 13½ pounder took one along the towing-path 155 paces to the gaffing. This in a canal, with a fine line and a hefty fish. Had he been hooked in a lake he might have wanted a lot of line—and taken it.

And, too, you need some spare line, for much casting entails a great deal of wear on the end of the line. There's the frequent strain of the cast itself, and much friction on rod rings, and particularly in the angle the top ring makes. And you must break off a few feet from time to time—better do it yourself than have a strong fish do it for you.

There are plain wooden reels with the back and drum made of wood. If you must use one of them, varnish the inner side of the drum to protect it from the action of the water, or have one brass-ringed or lined. They will do for live-baiting and casting heavy spinners and leads.

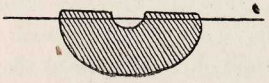
We now pass to the champions of the spinning reels—

Centre-pin Nottingham, the Aerials, the Malloch, Silex, and Silex No. 2.

(There are also the Illingworth and the various multipliers. The Illingworth is a reel with bobbin, and needs a very fine line. The multipliers are wonderful reels for tournament casting, but the enormous loss of power owing to the presence of the gears hinders the due working of the reel in playing a fish. Your spinning reel must kill fish as well as cast.)

In all the champion reels the drum revolves, except in the case of the Malloch. That means that when casting you have to overcome the inertia of the drum plus line, which is a consideration—a serious one with a big drum and heavy line. The drum of the Malloch twists to a position parallel to the rod, and you have only to pull off line—and line alone is lighter than line plus drum.

Now your Nottingham Centre-pin may have for its drum construction walnut and aluminium, or vulcanite rings and white metal spokes, or all-metal sides. The brake is applied with the point of a finger, or fingers. And there can be no question about this—no brake is so sensitive as the skin of the finger, though some brakes, automatic ones, are very sensitive. Four inches in drum diameter is a very usual size for use, and holds plenty of line. With any Nottingham reel a light bait often necessitates a lead on the trace. And a lead hanging below the trace prevents kinks coming from the spinning bait to the casting line.



But if your bait is sufficiently heavy without leads, work your swivels never so smoothly, you'll find your line kinking.

The lightest Nottingham reels are the Zephyr—which is really a bottom fishing reel, trotting for roach, etc.—the two Aerials, and other similar reels. Some of them have an adjustable brake worked by a screw, but of not much power.

Now spinning from the reel is far in advance of any other method. The other ways are to have the line lying on the ground or floor of your boat. But thistles, docks, twigs, "hard-heads," stones, thwarts, boot toes, anklet buckles, etc., etc., are there too, too tenacious of spinning lines! And a further way—of coiling line over fourth finger and thumb. I saw a man using this method once on the Tavy, and it was a treat to watch him. With his fly-rod he worked that silver Devon into every run and pot-hole, in and out, as it fished across the river. And it must have taken years of casting to do as he did. But the spinning reel would have been a cleaner and as accurate a job.

Some men use a tin or bucket strapped to the side to coil their line in. It must be an infernal nuisance among boulders and bushes. And always the risk of a jammed line as it flies up from the tin.

No, learn to spin from the reel and be free from twigs and tins. You have your fish at once where he's safest—on the reel.

Then we come to the Silex reel made in many sizes, the 4-inch being about the most usual. This reel, like the foregoing ones, has an optional check—and we like

a silent wind in while casting. Does the line, like most lines would, carry sound and convey to your quarry the click of the ratchet? I believe it does. But the Silex is a master reel, made all in metal: back and line guard made out of the solid. And it deals with the adjustable brake efficiently. The aforementioned have a semi-permanent brake. You put it on, and it's always on till you stop casting, and with fingers readjust or remove it. The Silex has an adjustable brake, meaning a brake-shoe governed by a spring. But—and it's a big one—you can, by a lever, lift it off while casting, and make a free reel. Personally, one usually screwed the brake right off and broke the reel on the rim where the line guard was "gapped" for the purpose. Unless the cold wind or weather numbed one's finger and the numbing caused over-runs. Then the brake was screwed on and the over-runs ceased.

Then we come to Silex No. 2. A wonderful reel. It has one lever to replace the button of the optional check and the lever of the brake. The reel is always ready for use, for this reason: The lever does five things:

(*a*) It throws the ratchet pawl out of gear,
(*b*) It gives you a free reel,
(*c*) It applies a gradually increasing brake,
(*d*) It stops your reel at the end of the cast, and when you let it go,
(*e*) It throws the ratchet back in gear.

Now, that lever is a stroke of genius—a "brain-wave." And the reel has an almost silent wind in (and can be got

with a silent drag), and a stiff check against the fish. We like the check. Who would be without that " song of the reel " which a strong fish makes, and which is so essentially a part of the game? I think that fish must hear that song of the ratchet—for who knows not the salmon which at a certain time cannot be reeled in, but which may be " led " in? Why? Sound or jar from the reel must surely be the cause.

This Silex No. 2 reel is " gapped " in line guard, and personally, when casting in a gale of wind the knuckle of the first finger of the right hand is brought to the gap to help brake the pressure of wind on bellying line. It simply comes to this—you work your brake and check with one lever instead of two. You may fish with your reel below the rod, or turning the handles to the left use it above the rod, and reel in with the right hand.

But it sometimes happens that you simply cannot get the necessary semi-circular swing for the Nottingham cast. A tow-path with high hedge behind—a piece of water surrounded by trees—a path just path-wide on the side of a high bank of a river or lake. What then?

Why, then is the time to use the Malloch reel. This reel is so well known beyond the Tweed that it needs no description there. But it is not so well known south of the Border. It has a drum which twists to a position parallel with the rod. And as you cast, the line uncoils and flies out through the rings. You have only to move the line, plus, naturally, overcome ring-friction—as in any case.

But as the line comes off the drum it automatically

kinks the line. And these kinks have to be dealt with. And a very clever device does this. A gun-metal button on a spring clips the drum in place. Press inwards the button, slip off the drum, turn the drum round and replace it. Now, however, you must wind in the opposite way. It is quite easy to do so. And the kinks will go. But there is one thing noteworthy. You may be fishing with baits heavy enough to use no lead on your trace. Now, a bait with a left-handed spin, i.e., top fin moving from right to left, will let you spin literally by the hour without drum reverse in the normal position : and a right-hand spin puts practically no kinks in your line when you wind in and cast with the reverse motion. 'Tis worth noting.

And just because you have, when casting, to move your line only, precious little swing is needed. And a flick with your bait plumb below the top ring will get you out a goodly distance.

There's one cast you can make with this reel which can be made with your shoulders touching a high wall stretching on either side of you, and you can get out 40 yards straight in front. I know I can't do it with a Nottingham reel.

All these good reels need and deserve the greatest care in use and after use. They should always be dried and oiled carefully after all the line has been run off on the line drier. For this purpose, a reel that is easily dismounted and taken apart is a great boon. We dislike rivets, and would rather have all parts fitted with screws. Working parts can then be got at and oiled, and if a break in a spring occurs it can be replaced by anyone

handy with his fingers. That is the worst of some good fly-reels, for instance, you cannot get at the working parts without a deal of trouble. A very small screw-driver and a bottle or tin can of watchmaker's oil are useful.

The leather boxes made for reels are somewhat costly, but they are a good insurance for your reels. Reels suffer at the hands of maids in hotels—they get knocked off the table or mantelpiece and bent. The safety of your reel and the certainty of the reel's readiness for work when kept in the leather box, make their use almost imperative.

It is a good plan to have different sizes of reels for different lines. And oddly enough, for some unexplained reason, some particular size of a certain reel seems to go better than other sizes.

We should choose a 4-inch Silex, 3¾-inch No. 2 Silex, and 2⅝-inch and 3¼-inch Malloch reels as being the best: and the smallest of the Mallochs rather than the next size. The Malloch needs a spring to send home the locking bolt when the reel is twisted into position after the cast. And for this purpose, on the 2⅝ size, the writer uses an umbrella ring, and it is most effective. On the larger sizes the ring does not work so well, as the knob on the locking bolt is too shallow. There is a new Malloch 4-inch multiplier. A splendid piece of work, the gears being manipulated by a crank handle. It has this advantage: you can use it as an ordinary reel—that is to say, one turn of the handle gives one turn of the reel, or one to three turns of the drum. But this is not needed in pike fishing, as it is intended mainly for salmon

fishing. You can, in salmon fishing, fish your cast with the one-to-one in use, finish out your cast and let it hang for a moment. Then by means of a knob put the three-to-one in gear and quickly reel up to be ready to cast again. Here, again, there is loss of winding power. For instance, put up a stout spinning rod, hang a six-ounce weight from each line and wind it up to the top ring with your geared reel and your simple reel and note the difference.

Since the words on the Malloch multiplier were written I have become the happy possessor of another spinning reel: Messrs. Hardy Brothers' 4-inch Eureka reel.

This, in my opinion, is the last and best word in Nottingham style reels. Drum and line guard cast in one piece, and likewise the drum. And the drum is very light with an overlapping rim, over the line guard, that is.

It has a wonderful four-sided nut, worked by the fingers, which gives you a free reel and three degrees of brake: light, medium and heavy. You may cast "free" or with a drag on.

And the reel is very pleasing to the eye. I know of no better reel for salmon and pike spinning. The line capacity is large enough for either. Personally I have been looking for the reel for twenty years, and now "Eureka" (I have found).

Again since the foregoing was written, Messrs. Hardy Brothers' 1923 Catalogue has appeared, and in this exhaustive publication this reel has been named "The Triumph."

A last word on the reel. When you are getting ready to fish, always be most careful to place your reel directly in true line with the rod rings. Both in spinning and live-baiting. This makes your casting more "suent."

CHAPTER V

THE LINE

Care in selection—Dressed—Undressed—Backing—Ring friction—A floating line—And a sunk—"Knocks"—Fine as you dare—Lily pads—"Spire grass"—Pike Pool—A weed bed—A Dartmoor trout line—A twelve-and-a-half pounder—Colour of line—Too obvious—Geen's colour—Plaited too hard—Test the end—End for end—Kinks—Floating grass—On Tweed—Castle Ashby.

HERE again, we need care in our selection. And the writer likes his pike line to do for live-baiting or spinning.

One has really the choice of two kinds of line, plaited silk dressed or undressed, and you need 100 yards of either, though you may, if you select a dressed line, have 40 yards of that and 60 yards of backing. Never be without plenty of line on your reel. You never know when that big chap is going to lay hold and bolt for all he's worth.

Now if you go for 40 yards of dressed line you must have it spliced to your backing. And that splice needs careful watching. Every time it goes through the rings it means wear. And a neglected splice has a nasty way of taking revenge on you when you are busy—hung up far out, or playing a good one.

A dressed line for live-baiting is pleasant to use: it takes the floatant easily. When a dressed line sinks, as it does readily enough, it's easily dried and rubbed over again. But it doesn't float like an undressed line.

For spinning, well, unless it is of the very best materials, your dressing will speedily suffer. Ring friction is, is bound to be, considerable, and the constant rush through the rings tells its own tale. Dressed lines are very, very costly.

Now to consider the undressed: the line par excellence, in the writer's opinion, for jack fishing. Comparatively it is much the cheaper. You can buy it in 100-yard or 120-yard lengths. It floats all day with one dressing, and you can live-bait or spin equally well with it. So your one line becomes the best for either method. Before—best of all, the day before—live-baiting, grease your line in the comfort of your own room—and take your time over it. And dress as much as you think may be on the water which you are fishing, and a little bit more. Pay special attention to the part within 30 feet of your trace. It *must* float between your float and your pilot-float, or tell-tale as some men call it. And if your float is a proper one, your live-bait will pull it down and submerge the two feet of line many times during the day. And if that's not properly dressed it will sink and your live-bait foul it, and the pilot will drift up to the float and foul that. It is most essential that your line should float, all the way, if you are live-baiting. You can pick it off the water easily, and get into connection with your float and fish.

Sometimes, however, a violent side wind makes it imperative, to avoid drift, to sink your line. And when you have to do so, remember you have handicapped yourself in the event of a " knock." Many a run or " knock " comes to nothing when the line is sunk. The pike seems to feel the weight of the line under the water acting on the floats and baits. He becomes suspicious, lets go his hold, and up come your floats, and you are left wondering what he was—if a big 'un—or whether he'll come again.

Always use as fine a line as you dare. Lakes and canals are free from obstruction—not many sunk trees, etc. But if the lake contains water-lilies—'ware the stems of those same leaves. They are very strong. There is another growth that is terribly strong, under and above water. This is the sedge, or spear-heads—" spire grass " they call them in Berkshire. Get foul of them and you'll break your line. I have a chance to fish the " Pike Pool " in a famous trout stream. The pool is very full of weeds, but it holds pike, big and little. A ten pounder, two over twelve, and another over eighteen pounds have come to my gaff in the pool and another just below it. And every one of them found sanctuary in those weeds. So a line suitable for canal fishing—and of course one means navigable canals—would not hold your fish in the Pike Pool. You need a much stouter line when fishing such very weedy places.

One fish of ten pounds got a weed-bed between himself and the rod. Then he rushed into the weeds towards the rod. One could only pull him further into it. There was the chance the thin wire trace would cut the weeds.

However, a steady but light strain was kept on him. And after a while he went out again by the way he went in; when clear of that bed the pressure was increased again. But any good fish in that pool will be certain to go for the weeds at some time during his fight for freedom.

On the other hand, a few weeks ago my father was fishing in the canal with live-bait, using a fine undressed silk line I had got for him to spin for Dartmoor trout with. He landed a fish in splendid fettle of 12½ pounds. In Pike Pool the fish would, likely enough, have smashed that line in a weed bed, unassisted by any tether from the rod.

An important item for spinning or live-baiting is the colour of the line. It is not a case of " any colour " in this case. One day, spinning in the canal, spinning in sunlight with a green undressed line, the line looked like an immense cable! Visible, only too visible, to any wary pike. Clearly something had to be done. And one wondered what a white undressed line would have appeared like! Home again, and in the gun-room one recalled that Mr. Phillip Geen has something to say about colour. So the books of his were taken down from the shelf and the passage found. " Dark Blue." A memory of a notice of it in some edition of the good old *Fishing Gazette* prompted a letter to Mr. Marston. A letter from him to Mr. Geen and a reply in the paper. Drummer Dye, Dark Blue, 4d. a packet, Directions on packet.

That's one of the best tips I know for line and colour. In a bright light a light line is much too visible and

your dark blue corrects the trouble. In a dull light it does not matter so much.

A very strong case is made out for the undressed line in that kinks don't injure it—they come out and you can't see any ill effects. But avoid a hard plaited undressed line that feels like wire in your fingers. I used one once for a week on the Aberdeenshire Dee after salmon. And the next time I used it for pike in England, I easily broke off 80 yards of that fine hard line. Luckily the rod was in the boat, and there was a spare line in the bag. For I would not have dared to use that line. There are big ones in that lake.

When you purchase, see your line feels nice and soft in your fingers. And don't forget always to test the point of your line for the length of rod you use, e.g., for ten feet or so. Better break off a few feet of line than lose a fish. And remember you have 300 feet on your reel.

Sometimes it is not a bad plan to turn your line end for end after using for some time. You have then your stronger end near your fish. And if a very strong-running fish strips your reel of a vast amount of line, you have the elasticity of many feet to compensate the weakness, if any, of the worn part nearer the reel spindle, and that should save your fish.

Talking of kinks in the line, my line kinked once on the Tweed in a flood, when I fancied reel, line, and leads made them out of the question. As the salmon spinning bait travelled through the flooded river, the line and trace collected floating dried grasses. These wound round the

swivels, completely locking them up and preventing their due working. Every cast the same!

Always after use, carefully dry your spinning line. There was a man went to Castle Ashby once, and he remembered he had not dried his line since his last expedition some days before. He had the pleasure (?) of seeing his float pulled about all day in the Lake, just out of reach!

CHAPTER VI

TRACES

Choose with care—Gimp and a thirty pounder—Twisted gut—Twisted wire—Single wire—Horwood of Killin—'Ware kinks—The glorious uncertainty—Swivels—Oval versus round loops.

Of equal importance with your line is your trace.

There are a variety of substances for use—gimp; gut single and twisted; wire, single and twisted; and gut substitute.

Gimp, well, I want to speak against gimp—but here over the fireplace is a 30-pound Wye pike. A real good 'un. Mr. H. T. Sheringham described her as " the best river pike he had ever seen." Good enough!

Well, a 3-inch silver Devon took her in 1905, and the silver Devon was mounted on gimp. Fortunately for me, that projection in the upper jaw of the fish caught the gimp and kept it from her teeth. And some of them stood three-quarters of an inch clear of the jaw. If the gimp had pressed on the razor edge of one of those!

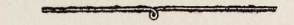
But in spite of gratitude to gimp and good fortune, never use it. A pike's teeth can cut it, and it's nearly always too thick for " good invisibility." Really it's not reliable.

Twisted gut is good, but as in the case of single gut too, gets frayed and the whippings need attention.

Twisted wire is good, too, but far stronger than need be.

There's one choice left, and the best of the lot. Single wire. You can get it, as they use it for salmon on Loch Tay, from Messrs. Horwood, of Killin, 50 yards of medium wire on a wood spool for half a crown—50 yard traces for less than a penny a-piece. Also, good enough!

Now this wire has one fault, and it may lose you your fish. If your fish can get a direct kink or turn over



in your wire it will snap like cotton. *But*—it don't often happen! Moreover, if you were dead certain of your fish, each one, where were the sport? Where that glorious uncertainty which is ours until the good gaff has got him and the "priest" put an end to our struggle?

Anyway, the advantages of this wire more than balance its one defect. And when all is said and done, how much of our gear *is* perfect? Perhaps only the rod—and some find fault with them.

Now the wire has these advantages:

1. 'Tis well-nigh, if not quite, invisible. Your spinner comes through the water and you can't see what attaches it to the line. Compare gimp, twisted gut, and some twisted wire traces.

2. It cuts through weeds like nothing else can.

3. It is very cheap.

4. You can make your trace any length to suit your rod length and the water you are going to fish. Compare bought traces—1¼ yards, 2 yards, 3 yards—and perhaps you want to fish 12 inches deep.

5. You can repair damages by the water-side, of the necessary length.

6. It snarls after playing a good fish, and therefore makes you renew it with strong, undamaged gear.

7. It makes rust speedily, and therefore makes you careful to have new traces. At a penny a time.

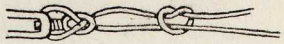
No, sir, you can't beat single wire for pike fishing. And, in live-bait fishing you can put your tackle on to your trace, and have, therefore, no loop near your bait to catch careful John's eye.

Swivels are another item needing care in selection and use. Keep 'em oiled : then you can use them on many traces and they will not play you false.

Steel swivels are best. And be careful about the rings they carry. Swivels are made with round rings and oval rings. And the oval ringed ones are the better. The loop of your trace will hitch up in the shoulder of the round ring, and your trace will not travel smoothly, and is apt to prevent the due working of the twisting or revolving portion. Whereas, in the case of the oval ring the loop of your trace lies in the extremity of the oval ring, and this allows your trace to be a continuous line, and allows the swivels to work freely. They are difficult to get, but you may get them with your wire from Mr. Horwood.

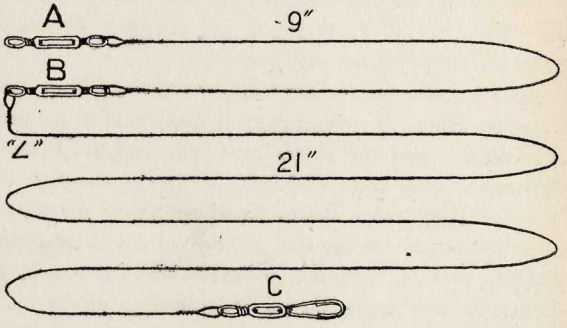
For attaching to the spinners use those with a spring-link, but see that the ring is an oval one. Have them in different sizes to suit your line. Don't use a swivel which has an oval ring which looks as big as a horse-collar when you thread your line through it. If your line fits your swivel ring nicely the ordinary figure-of-eight secures it well to your line.

The finest fisher I know taught me to attach my trace to the line with a double loop



and a thumb-knot made on the short end, worked down to the swivel and tightened securely. Both are good knots and hold well.

Your spinning trace may be made in two or three pieces with the necessary swivels, and your live-bait



30-in. SPINNING TRACE. Longer if desired. A B to be shorter by a good bit than B C. This keeps your middle swivel well away from bait, and so from the notice of pike. When the lead is used fix at "L," and arm at its "tail end" with No. 7 treble: add another swivel 6 ins. behind. You need not fear small size of the No. 7, it will hold a big one.

trace of three pieces. For spinning you have: spring-link swivel for bait; bottom length, swivel; middle length, swivel; top length, swivel for attaching to line.

The live-bait trace is the same, except that you can put your hooks direct on to the trace without using the bottom swivel.

CHAPTER VII

LIVE-BAIT TACKLES

Varying patterns—Daddy Deadman—A vigorous strike—Education in roaching—Godstow Lock—"I knowed 'e was there"—Alfred Jardine's pattern—"Trent Otter"—A slipping treble—Too near the heart—A good basket of brown trout—Care in making up your traces.

THERE are many tackles for arming your live-bait with, and quite roughly they may be divided as follows:

(*a*) Those carrying three trebles, for head, back, and tail.

(*b*) Those with two, for back and head.

(*c*) Those with one treble for back, back hooks, of course, being attached under the dorsal fin.

And there is, in addition, the lip hook, single or double. At Oxford there was an old Thames professional fisherman in undergraduate days—John Deadman, known along the river as "Daddy" Deadman, or "Daddy." He was a clever hand, especially at roach and pike. For pike he invariably used a double-hook tackle, back to back, which he made up himself. One day our striking didn't satisfy him. "You don't half tap the 'ooks into their knappers. You should see me hit 'em." Presently, to him came the looked-for run. He, with his lip-hook, let him run till he stopped. Then, "I reels up till I can just feel where he is. Now

I think he's turned it," and bang came Daddy's strike. The boat rolled to the shock, and he got his fish. That tackle was mounted on gimp with lead attached a few inches from the bait—I have some of them yet. But they were rather too visible for liking over-much. However, perhaps that back-to-back double hook slipped into his mouth more easily when he turned it than a treble hook.

To see old " Daddy " catching roach for bait was an education. He fished without a barb on his hook when catching bait. " What do I want to tear the baits' mouths for. I wants 'em to live, for baits." He would have three or four pellets of bait ready, lying above his right hand, on the rod butt. When roach were feeding well, as they were one day just below Godstow Lock, he kept up a running fire of comment, addressing every roach as it came ashore. " Oh! here you are then? " " Thought you'd like to join the others, did you? " " You didn't know there was a hook in it, did you? " " There's a lovely bait, sir." Something fresh for each one.

He struck repeatedly where my friend and I could see no movement of float. But he got his roach safely. " Why did you strike then, Daddy?—didn't see the float move." " Oh! I knowed 'e was there." And that just about described it—he knowed 'e was there.

Then we come to baits armed with trebles. That one armed with three allows you to strike at once with some certainty of hooking him. But if you are trying for wary fish I hae ma doots ye'll no get mony runs. There are too many hooks for the pike to see. And how

of the life and working of your bait with three hooks stuck into him, one of them near his heart. And where there are weeds!

The double treble tackle bears the name of the greatest of all pike fishers. It has two trebles, one for the head, made fast to the end of the tackle; the second for the dorsal fin, sliding on the wire or gimp, and adjustable. Mr. J. W. Martin, the late "Trent Otter," had a live-bait tackle of two trebles with the two triangles made fast. All right as long as your baits were all of one size and your tackle was suitable, but if they were various in size it did not fit either the large or the small, as the case might be.

In the case of the Jardine snap, with the adjustable top treble, it seemed that that upper treble was a weakness, for it "gave" to the strike. And sometimes slipped down in the ordinary course of fishing. And that treble near the head of the bait always seemed detrimental to the life and working of the bait—too near the heart. One day this two-treble snap was used on the Scotland Pond at C—— A——. Some twenty yards out in the lake there was a clump of rushes above water. A likely looking spot. Near it a dace was sent out to prospect. He worked away for fifteen yards and came to rest. So he was put back again. And there came an obvious run. But the float never went down—just bobbed a little faster and deeper than the bait could take it. An attempt to "tap the hooks into his knapper" failed, and when the bait came ashore it was practically dead, and its tail nearly bitten off. Not knowing then the value of a pike-scarred bait, it was taken off and

replaced with a fresh one. The previous action of the bait was repeated—he cleared away from the danger zone as speedily as he could, and came to rest. While the bait was being reeled in the fish rushed at the bait, and was hooked by the upper treble and landed, after a good tussle.

That incident remained in my mind for a long time. And other baits seized by the tail made one think that one treble under the dorsal fin might be effective. Certain things were considered: a tackle with three trebles was too much festooned with gear, a plaguy nuisance in weeds, and killed the bait: a tackle with two trebles was neater, but pike often avoided the head hooks, it killed the bait, and was troublesome in weeds. Why not, then, try one treble. Oddly enough, this single treble was first tried with live minnow for trout in a reservoir, after Jardine pattern and lip-hook had been tried too. On this occasion it was eminently successful: five trout, 15¾ lbs., best fish 4¾ lbs.

So it looked as if it might be the medicine for pike.

Now points in favour of it are: It gives the bait the best chance to live and work which can be given; it's not so bad in weeds, and not so many baits are lost from this cause. And you certainly, beyond question, get more runs with it, for your bait works more strongly and freely being hooked in the back only where he can use his strength; and there is less for the pike to see, for his back fin, in a certain measure, camouflages your small—it should be small—treble.

A pike may take by head or tail or back; in jack I fancy, with a lively bait, it's rather a question of getting

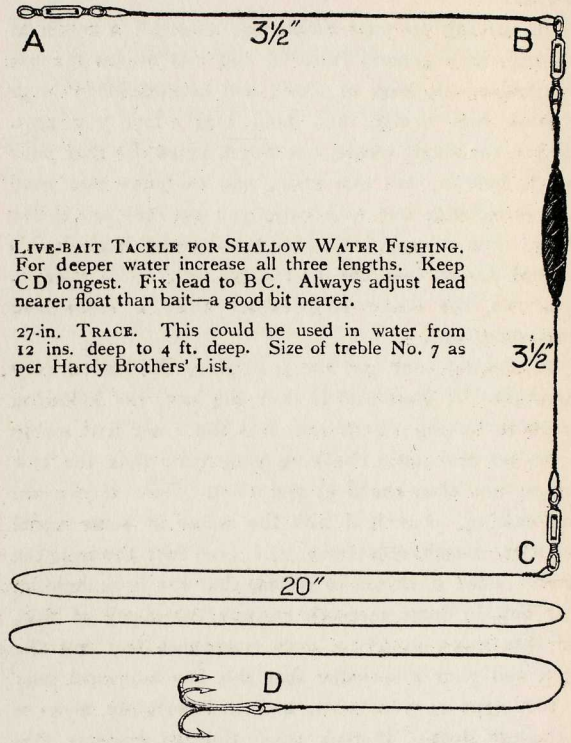
hold where he can—he would probably prefer him across the back, but may be he gets hold as best he can.

In making up your tackle use as small a treble as you can, as a general rule. A big bait means the use of a treble, one hook of which will be sufficiently large to hook him firmly, and hold him when you cast. Against the single treble, one would point out that your bait is held by but one hook, and therefore you need care in casting, but with care, you can get out thirty yards. Far enough. You have no second hook in his pectoral fin in case the first tears out. Use then, a treble on the small side rather than a large and conspicuous one.

In making your cast the position of the lead is very important. If your lead is near the bait, the following results in casting: Your lead hits the water first owing to the air resistance checking your bait, then the bait arrives, and then the float and pilot. Now, if you are long casting, your lead hits the water at some speed and with considerable force, and goes fast through the water. Then it stands to reason that the hook holding your bait in some measure absorbs the shock of this, and this shock-absorbing does sometimes tear out the hook, and your knowledge that this has happened may be the sight of your bait, and will certainly mean a motionless float. It took some time to discover this reason for losing baits after an apparently "suent" cast.

The following remedy was tried—the lead was placed, always, nearer the float than the bait, and the losses

ceased. If this is done the float absorbs the shock and the bait is spared it.



LIVE-BAIT TACKLE FOR SHALLOW WATER FISHING. For deeper water increase all three lengths. Keep CD longest. Fix lead to BC. Always adjust lead nearer float than bait—a good bit nearer.

27-in. TRACE. This could be used in water from 12 ins. deep to 4 ft. deep. Size of treble No. 7 as per Hardy Brothers' List.

My live-bait tackles are made in three lengths: two short and one long, like a "rowing start," the hook being placed at the end of the long, and the lead on the first or second length. A bullet or Archer lead can be

put on the wire trace. If you use pear-shaped leads with a ring, then you can conveniently use this method: Thread the wire through the oval ring of the swivel, leave three or four inches at end, wind round trace five or six times, still leaving a good end, thread end through lead ring and pull it up close to the former winding, and wind round securing lead near swivel.

I like my hook length to be nearly the length of the other two, and have no lead on it. Then, say you are four feet from float to bait, have hook length two feet. Your bait can now move four feet in varying directions free of lead and float.

Another point: say you are fishing, e.g., in water three feet deep. You can have your lead two feet eleven inches from your float, float properly cocked and carrying lead—of course, presuming for the moment a level bottom and no weeds. And your bait on a length four feet with eight feet to work in all directions.

And your pike bait, as we all know, very often works above the lead. Never mind if your lead hangs near the bottom—your bait will be above it, and he won't have to carry the lead.

And although your float may not go under, you will certainly be able to spot the runs. Unless you get a pike steal up and pouch the bait without due notice given. But you may have this happen at any and every depth.

Since the above was written the following incident has occurred. In February I was fishing in the Bason, where the water is eighteen inches deep. A pike struck the bait with a terrific swirl, the biggest I have ever

seen. The fish was safely landed, and weighed 14½ lbs. My Fishing Diary says, "Tackle, float to lead eight inches, lead to hook thirty-seven inches."

Now, had the tackle been of the ordinary pattern it would probably have been float to lead eight inches, lead to hook six or eight inches. And consequently the wary pike might have seen bait, lead, and float close together, and have been put on his guard.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FLOATS

Need for care again in selection—Colour, style, and size—Two points of view—Under water and above—Dry America—Old friends—Something to catch your eye—Winning colours—Tell tales—Two colours—Pot bellies and slender—*Fishing Gazette*—All down the lake—The best and perfect float—Into weeds and out again—End for end—Peg at bottom.

SOMETIMES fishermen do not take nearly enough trouble over this seemingly unimportant, but really very important item.

You have to consider colour, shape and size, and style. There's the question of colour. And that from two points of view: pike's and piscator's. Pike is concerned with the under-side, and the rule for that should be the rule for undergraduate's clothing: let it be of a sub-fusque hue. Green or blue are good, and chocolate not bad. Really any dark and quiet colour will do.

But, of course, John and Jack see many green things in the water. Some men swear by the natural colour of the cork. And in many rivers, lakes, etc., they see plenty of corks from beer and wine bottles, and are, no doubt, used to them. In passing one wonders how an American pike would view a beer or whisky bottle cork to-day!

But floats have a way of finding their place in the fisherman's liking; and he likes to have the aid of his old friend—and corks unprotected by varnish or paint are apt to lose somewhat of their buoyancy.

Piscator, on the other hand, is concerned with the above-water colour, and he needs something to catch his eye, something he can pick out in any light of day or dusk. And it proves a nice problem to spot the winning colour.

White, red, yellow, pink, black, have all been tried. And for the bait-float we prefer white.

There seems to be more general utility in that colour, and except where there is foam, there are not many white things float about on the water. Besides Aylesbury and swan feathers, may be.

One uses, as a matter of fact, a white-topped float, and sometimes near dusk the float is turned end for end and the dark blue under-side can be more easily spotted.

But the float does not swim alone. And in the attendant pilot or tell-tale we have the choice of another colour. Some men use the same on each. But this is a mistake. Have, for example, your attendant red at top, and another colour, e.g., chocolate at the bottom. Now if you cannot spot old white-top easily, you can probably "see red," and he leads you to see the white chap. And as long as you can find one quickly you can always tell where the other is. But have your tell-tale painted in two colours. For if this is done he will show you which way your pike is heading, if he is on the surface.

A pike will very often run from you, turn, and come towards you. And striking a head on pike is chancy work. The tell-tale is invaluable, especially in shallow water. But in order to do this it must carry two colours easily distinguishable, one on top half, the other on bottom half.

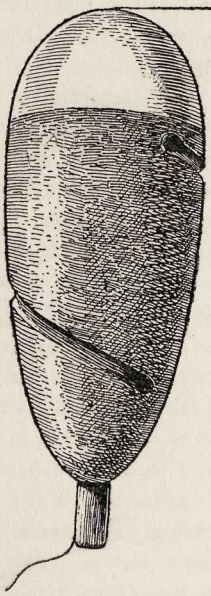
Then we come to shape. A most important point again. Shapes are tubby or egg-shaped, and slender or somewhat cigar-shaped. Some use bungs. There be some anglers who think that a big float helps to hook your fish for you, and there may be something in this. Possibly the strong upward tendency of a big submerged float may help to keep the hooks " home "—but again, when the pike turns the bait that tendency might lift the bait from his jaws.

But while there may be this possibility in favour of hooking or aid in hooking, against the big float there are two strong cases. First, it is bound to tire the bait, as he has so much to tow about; and secondly, if it will travel into weeds, which is doubtful, it is much more likely to refuse to come out in front of your fish at your tugging.

Then we have the *Fishing Gazette* pattern. This is of the tubby or chubby persuasion, and, when large, is difficult for a bait to pull down. It has a slit down the side through which you may pass your line into the correct position and depth. But this float will come off the line sometimes and float away. And this can be vastly annoying. I had to follow such a one of mine along the shore of a lake in Northamptonshire. I was very glad when the wind blew it on to the weather shore and I could get on with my fishing. I found that float

nearly eighteen years ago in a sedge bed on the River Thames.

Then we come to the best float made—the Jardine pattern of the slender shape. There are two methods of attaching this float. Through two holes, with a double twist outside; or in the central hole with a peg, which latter is beyond question the better.



THE PERFECT PIKE FLOAT. Drawn from "life." Actual size. "The Jardine." The groove and holes for fixing by one method are shown. The better plan is to insert line through central hole and peg firmly at bottom end.

All, too, is in favour of this float. Your live-bait can and does pull it about and under as if he liked doing it—down till he affects the pilot—but the float speedily returns to sight. But you know if your float bobs down to the pull of your bait when it's fresh, then it's not going to much hamper a jack when he knocks. And this float goes into and out of weeds more readily than any other. And you can, if the light prompt you, turn it end for end and have your float with a dark top, e.g., dark blue.

Here's a tip for your float—put the peg in at the

bottom. Not at the top: for if it's on top your float may twist, turned by bait or wind, and wind the line round the peg—to your annoyance and the fouling of your line.

And don't have too much showing below. And, too, if your peg sticks out at the top it's apt to get foul coming back through weeds and lose your fish for you.

Your pilot should have a peg too, which fits quite flush both sides and cannot catch your line. If it does stick out, have it on the top side towards the rod. Have one which projects an inch or so, and sometimes in shallow water it will signal a fish lying immediately below the pilot, the peg sticking straight up. Never have your peg projecting on the lower side.

Treasure your floats and they will often be in at the death with you. Paint and varnish them from time to time—care for them and they will serve you the better and longer.

Messrs. Hardy Brothers are making me some of the Jardine shape floats without the groove; and some an inch longer and more slender. These latter would be for large baits. Generally speaking the smaller float of about 3 inches is what one wants.

CHAPTER IX

SPINNING

Baits—Natural and artificial—Copying nature—Cords of memory—The joy of the salmon fisher's fly box—Fights and failures—The fish on the fly—Joy of the box of spinners—The poor man's salmon tackle—An eighteen pounder—A half pounder—A big catch on the Wye—Caledonian spinner and thirteen pounder—Sounds and sights of jolly days—Points of resemblance—Marking them down in July—Satisfying work—Half-circle swing—Reel control—Head shaking and jiggers—Pike Pool—" Pull him off his feet "—Leads—Finishing out the cast—Fishing in front of you—The grasp of the rod—Malloch reel again—The box of spinners.

Now we have our rod, reel, line, and traces purchased, and come to the consideration of the jolliest and most sporting method of taking pike. By spinning.

There is a diversity of opinion about the nature of our baits—shall they be natural or artificial? Many fishers swear by the dead natural and have no time for the artificials.

But, and it's perhaps a point, which is the more sporting, to fish with artificial flies or dap with the natural?

Granted, they both take a deal of doing. Which is it? Why, the artificial! You have to understand and copy nature: nature of your imitated fly and the nature

of your quarry. Even the fancy fly is founded on some natural one, and from the fisher's point of view it's an attempt merely to improve on nature and to consider the trouts' appetite. And so in pike baits—you imitate some natural lure and do your best to improve it.

And consider another and minor point. Natural flies are troublesome in a measure to transport, and so are dead naturals. And once in use is often enough, certainly so in the case of flies.

Now there be two things in a sportsman's fishing tackle which can stir the cords of memory. And they, the salmon angler's box of flies—and the pike angler's box of artificial spinning baits.

Listen to the lucky salmon angler: "See that ½-inch Silver Doctor—I got that ten pounder below the Brig with that little chap—a man came down from off the Brig and tailed him out. And the chauffeur and I spotted the fish on that big flat stone before I began. Look at that Gardener—got a 15½ pound springer in Greenbanks on him—an awful tussle he gave me—went right across the river three times before I got him in among the boulders below the hut, and W. nearly fell in as he gaffed him. Swung salmon and gaff out on to the bank. Thought my point had gone. That Mar Lodge killed my first salmon on the fly. And I smashed the point off on that fallen scree of rocks in Upper G. where I killed the salmon. Yes, thunder and lightning—lost a fish on him when nearly dark in Middle G. Got his head away and rushed out into heavy water and rolled about in that heavy stickle and shook out the hook, or slammed it out with his tail. But I got another in the same pool when it was nearly

dark on that 3-inch Gordon, and the village Bobbie gaffed him for me. Killed him with his truncheon like a good 'un."

And so he goes on—he sees the snow on the mountains and hears the whistle of the oyster-catchers, just through looking at and handling some hooks with feathers bound to them. But they are more than that. Trusty friends who have given him sport, and he prays that they or their counterparts may again.

And the pike spinner's tackle box is again the poor man's salmon fly box.

"See that spoon? Brought me several jack. Yes, No. 4 Bar Spoon—and not expensive. Yes, up there, in case with the eighteen pounder. Yes, she took that spoon on 26th December, and spat it out again." "A Christmas pike?" "She would have been. But she took that spoon again on the 26th March following, and kept it. And I kept her. Fight? She did, and weeded me, but that single wire trace cut the weeds like a knife, and she came out. Gold and silver Devons? Yes, look at that 4-inch golden Devon. Got a pike of eight ounces on that in the Thame. Had to kill it, it was hooked so badly." "Best?" "Well, they are both good. I say silver is the better. A 3-inch silver Devon got me four on the Wye. Yes, the big 'un. There is the Devon, in the case. You'll see two broken hooks. She broke one —felt it give, and her mate of 16 lbs. broke the other. Fight? Like a salmon: half an hour to land. That's a Caledonian—yes, good baits—especially first time over your water. Big ones? Well, that chap took a 13½ pounder in the Canal. Followed it five times and

took quite gently. Yes, some way—155 paces to the Lock, and wanted to go back to the Bason. Stopped him and gaffed him there. That's a good one in low, clear water—good in September and October. Hardy's 3-inch Halcyon. Got me a six pounder lying in a narrow opening between two clumps of weeds."

And he hears and sees the sounds and sights of his jolly fishing days. No mere collection of odd bits of metal, rubber, and feathers, but sturdy working pals who have introduced him to their friends, the pike.

There is a point again of resemblance between salmon fishing and pike fishing. In each you'll save much time if you know the lie of the fish. You learn them from your ghillie or your own experience of blanks and successes.

If you have the luck to have a bit of pike fishing of your own—well, in July and August take your pipe, stick, and dog, and stroll along the bank on sunny windless days and mark them down. And you stop and say, "Hullo! he's 10 or 15 lbs.—no, he's 12." And when the season comes from September to March your rod will search his haunt and hover, his and others, too, and you'll find your sunny July days were well expended. Don't take any rod—your dog and stick, and maybe your field-glass, too. Don't, by the way, try to measure a pike's size through your field-glass I did once! but "that's another story!"

Now our tackle is planned and thought out. All balanced and fitting like our dry-fly brother's gear.

If we spin in the Nottingham style we need some room —but it is satisfying work, to cast exactly to the spot

aimed for, working our bait into each patch of clear water between the weeds. Along that hold in the hollow bank—near that patch of weeds.

And you need room for a " half-circle " sweep of your rod. Your right hand controls your reel. Holding it with the finger-tip to get the momentum, letting her run free a moment to get the necessary " travel," then skidding the whizzing drum harder to the final checking and stop, as the bait hits the water.

You must, in pike fishing, learn where to find your fish. As a general principle you may find them on the shallows in warm water, in the deeps in cold.

In lake fishing you must learn by experience (i.e., catching 'em), the favourite spots. Or your boatman may tell you. We know one big lake where the fisherman's knowledge in this direction is of value. " You are very apt to take a fish opposite those trees." And in another few minutes a fish proved him to be right. For some cause or another pike favour one piece of water more than another. Presumably they have their haunt, or hover where they are " at home." And, too, no doubt, they move away from it in search of food, and return again.

In canals the same kind of experience helps you, but your walks on sunny days in July and August give you good knowledge of the fish you have in store. Though not invariably. One reach comes to mind—" The Oak Trees "—a stretch with a bank high and wide, almost a spinney—carrying good oaks. That bank is a joy in spring, with unapproachable primroses and violets. A joy in autumn with its painted leaves. Under those trees pike have been spotted. Three, from 7 to 12 or

14 lbs. Yet 5 lbs. is the best weight from there recorded in the Fishery Book.

But in other parts the rule holds good : spot them in July and August and catch 'em later on.

Pike in a river are more easily detected. At the tail of islands is a very sure place—in the slack water on the edge of the merging streams. Lay-byes, slacks beside the stream, dead water in elbow turns, where water swirls up and round under the bank. The main current is not so likely. But it's worth a speedy trial. A cast every yard or two will do.

Pike, again, resemble salmon, and other fish, perhaps, as well. A lightly hooked salmon and pike very soon come to head shaking. A steady pull followed by a sturdy rush or run usually means a firmly hooked fish.

When this head shaking happens prepare to lose him. But pike, pike hooked well in the mouth, not well in necessarily, if you take my meaning—and even well hooked pike have sometimes a most puzzling habit they sometimes follow. They seem to stand upright on their tails, and, head half out of water, shake their heads, mouth agape and grinning at you. Like a terrier shakes a rat.

One has read that when this happens you should lower the point of the rod, give him slack line, and wait on him.

Well, a fish of eight or nine pounds one day in the Thame did this. Had we landed him he would have been the best fish caught during a residence of some months on the Thame. He did his stunt and had a prolonged attack of it. Big mouth open wide, and the red underside and

the red tag of the No. 4 Bar Spoon showing against the white. Lowered point, and patience, and out, three foot out, flew the spoon. Didn't somehow feel my mentor's advice was sound. Thought about it, and decided on a different plan.

Oddly enough the chance to use it was long in coming. Then a fish in " Pike Pool " on the Dunn gave me the opportunity. It's an awkward place. A row of pollard willows closely set together make fishing and playing a fish very difficult. This John was a five pounder—and he had two attacks of jiggers. Head well out, he did his best. The top ring of the rod was lowered to the water, and a strong sideways pull applied. Pulled him " off his feet," so to speak. This did the trick at once. Again he tried, and so did the rod, and had the better of the argument. You try, and see how it answers.

There's no doubt but there are few more dangerous moments than where your pike is " on his feet " grinning at you, trying to throw out your bait. Personally, the idea of Mr. Fish pleasing himself after his taking your bait is annoying. If you lower your point and merely watch him it's like one of those horrid events in nightmares. You feel the need of doing something. Swing your point down to the left, pull him right off his feet, and do something.

We said earlier in the book, kinks will be the spinners portion. And how to deal with them has been a pretty problem.

No drum working on the Nottingham principle puts kinks on your line : and on the other hand, no Notting-

ham drum can take them out. With these reels there are two periods when your line may be kinked. During the flight of the bait to its destination during the cast, and working home for the fishing portion, through the water. In a measure, but probably only a small one, these two passages of the bait may counteract each other. Think how a Devon spins as it flies through the air. And how many dozens, scores, or hundreds of times it may

"SIMPLEX" LEADS for use with Nottingham style centre pin spinning reels. They are made in five different sizes by Hardy Brothers. There are other patterns, but these are good.

revolve in the stream of a river. The bait, by pulling against the swivels, must, to an extent, affect the revolving of them—and if your bait spins faster than your swivels, your line becomes affected. And kinks will appear.

You may have your baits with left and right-handed spins. And, if you have not left " the opposite number " at home, you can change and get them out. Or you may have an appliance fitted to the head of your minnow which will allow of your altering the direction of its spin, and you need not change.

But all this may be rendered unnecessary by the use of a lead on your spinning trace. But in order to be effective the bulk of its weight must hang below the line for Nottingham reels.

And here, with a lead, we are met with two difficulties.

Take it Mr. Pike is at " the ready "—looking for a quarry, seeking what he may devour. You are going to show him two moving objects. He sees your lead first, and your bait, presumably in pursuit of it. Albeit a somewhat hesitating or cautious pursuit. Now, he may " take " your lead or he may take your bait, or neither. He's taken my lead before to-day and regretted it—for I have armed it with a treble hook.

I feel fairly sure that fishers, using leads, when they complain of fruitless pulls have really had their leads attacked. And do not know it.

I was fishing on the Kennet one day, and I saw at my feet a small jack go for the lead, viciously. On my next visit I armed the lead—an Archer. " Oh ! " you say, " thought you said the bulk of the lead must lie below the trace." True, for Nottingham reels. But I was using a Malloch, and a lop-sided lead don't do for Mallochs in my experience—they stop the effect of reversing your drum. Of which, more later.

I armed the lead with a treble at its end. And I got three small jack on the lead. One at the second cast, after lead and Caledonian spinner had passed him once.

And here, it is very much worth while to remember this. When spinning always bring your spinner out as near the extreme edge of the water as you can—always. Often there's a pike behind it. You probably watch your spinner? Well, glance two or more feet behind it, and sometimes you see a long, dark shadow behind—following and watching.

Pike will take right at your feet, as close as a fish can come.

One incident comes back. Spinning in the Canal with a metal " D " phantom, a 4-inch blue and silver. Landed a fish of 6½ lbs. on it: he took within four inches of the bank. And the very next cast a pike a little larger took again right in close. The " D " phantom was armed with two tail trebles on gimp. In playing No. 2 he cut the gimp above the outer treble and departed with the hooks.

Sometimes you see your fish slowly following, and he'll take. Sometimes he does it with a rush right close in. He seems then to feel it's a case of " now or never." If you neglect this you may lose the chance of the only fish you'll move.

In spinning in canal or lake or river, try to fish in front of you. If you can avoid it, don't move on in walking and spinning and cast behind you, and, as it were, bring your bait in and past your body. Cast in front, in the direction of your walking, and then hold your point low down and bring your spinner in in front of you as you face your direction.

If you do this, your fish is not so likely to catch sight of you. He has to come within ten or eleven feet of you —and he may not notice you.

Whereas if you cast behind you, in the direction of whence you have approached, and bring your bait across your body, as it were, then he has to come nearer to you on the bank, and sees more of you.

The rule for spinning is: spin as deep as you can: as slowly as you can. You may want your spinner ten feet down or six inches—deeps and holes, shallows and weeds all hold pike.

It may be that you are fishing in deep water, and you may have, having cast, to pause before you begin to reel in.

Now a point to notice here is the grip of the rod. Cast from left side : left hand the upper, right controlling reel. If you do this your bait can be made to travel without a moment's pause, for both your hands are ready. While if you must change your grasp—well, your bait is in the weeds.

The necessity of spinning over the top of weeds is sometimes mentioned as a case against the Malloch reel. But it is not. For see, with the recommended grip your hands are where you want them. You cast—your spinner drops on to the water. The first finger of the left hand clips the line against the rod, and you swing your point, the top ring 18 inches to your left. As you do it you change your reel drum back—your elastic band shoots home the locking bolt, or your thumb does, and you are reeling in.

Shallows and weeds need be no hindrance to the use of the Malloch reel. And for this reel again, we can make a strong case, and it's this. One on the question of kinks.

Your Nottingham of any sound master pattern *and* your lead can deal with kinks and stop 'em. Always provided your swivels are new ones, or duly oiled and functioning : but how of your lead in the weeds? Usually your lead is lower than your bait in fishing flights; of course, not always. If your bait spins clear of weeds, very likely your lead will pick them up. And if your gear is travelling, then your quarry have three moving

things to notice: lead, with weeds, and a following bait.

But suppose your baits and your water combined won't allow of your lead? And your tackle dealer supplies you with baits that spin only one way?

You'll see what I saw. An angler on the Thame, some distance out from the river. Rod on grass, line at full length, and the fisher running it through his handkerchief or towel again and again. He did: and pike were running at spinners. He was using one of the very best reels made at Nottingham—his tackle all you could wish.

Now the Malloch has this great point in its favour. It admittedly puts kinks in your line, and you only find trouble if you try to stop it. But—and it's a big but—it takes them all out again. You can reverse your drum and put on counteracting kinks, and your line shall be as level as when it was plaited.

But personal experience has taught this: if you use a lop-sided lead, for some reason it will hinder the due dispersal of your kinks. If you must use one, use an Archer (and arm it with a treble: it's worth it).

The Malloch is the only reel which will take out kinks *while you go on fishing*.

Now we know and have thought something about our rod and reels and traces.

What of our box of spinners? Any general rule to be followed? Yes, the rule of variety. We probably have a store or reservoir which holds our baits at home, in the gun-room and rod-room.

There are spoons: copper and silver, golden and

silver, silver, all copper, silver and red, red and golden, silver with green bars. Spoons with two trebles, spoons with one, pointed, kidney, broad and narrow. Colorado and bar spoons, collapsible spoons.

Devon Minnows: silver, golden, golden and silver, blue and gold, blue and silver, brown and gold, brown and silver.

"D" phantoms of metal, colours as above for Devons, Clippers, Holroyd Smiths, roach imitations, dace, trout, gold fish, gudgeons: Caledonians, green backs and silver bellies, yellow and silver, brown back and silver, and wagtails.

Feather baits: halcyons, feather for bodies with metal fins; mussel's shell, real and imitation. And feathers made to spin with fans attached.

All in varying sizes, and we want, say, half a dozen for the day.

What shall we take? Well, we have had some rain we'll suppose, so we take the larger sizes. That bar-spoon, Nos. 4 and 6 had better go, and a copper; no, not gold to-day; silver and copper will do. A good phantom, say brown and silver; and a big aluminium Devon. A clipper? Yes—that should do.

Or the water is fine and clear. Well, halcyon should do for one. Remember the ten pounder the Major got? We'll certainly take that; small golden and copper spoons and small gold and silver Devons.

We are off and at it. Look! here comes one to the "D" brown and silver—no, he's turned back; again—four times he follows. Now try a small silver spoon, and ten to one he'll fasten.

We remember one chap about ten pounds—swirled at a bar-spoon—so when he wouldn't again, we tried a brown and silver phantom. He took and fought well, but we lost him. But it showed the value of variety.

Again, if your pike are used to the sight of a spinner, a really new and fresh pattern bait often proves successful.

Further, as to baits and spinning baits—some seem to be designed for catching not fishes but fishers, or rather, their coin.

For natural dead baits there are many tackles invented. But perhaps among these the Crocodile, which holds baits well and pike better, comes first. There are, of course, others, and among them very good is the Abbey Mills tackle.

Personally we prefer our box of artificials to the bottles of dace and roach, eel tails and sprats, with the impedimenta they entail.

Ten pounds is our best on a bleak—" tailor blay " as she's called on the Thames. But the artificials have a heavy and better bag: 12½ lbs., 13½ lbs., 16 lbs., 18½ lbs., 30 lbs. And look at the Irish Giant Pike of 1921. 53 lbs. 10½ ozs. on a 2½-inch silver spoon with a trifle of 30 lbs. as a thundering and wonderful second to make up the brace. Brother pike fishers, a brace of 83¾ lbs. —53 lbs. 10½ ozs. and 30 lbs.! It is beyond the dreams of the probable.

On the score of expense, which score one has to consider, the artificials beat the natural. You can use the former over and over again with care, and catch many

fish to each one. They don't perish, and only need re-arming from time to time, or colouring.

The hooks on your spinners, spoons especially, need a deal of care.

Often enough the hooks supplied are faulty. See this one, a white steel treble, see how the hooks at point seem to lean outwards? Now that hook will not hold him properly. Go to a first-rate house and get some eyed trebles of the size to suit your spoon and replace with a better hook.

I learnt this tip from a pike of 18½ lbs., and have been very grateful for it.

Red tags, again, are very pretty, and may tickle a pike's palate. BUT they are grand things to rust your hooks—fatally, because you don't see it.

Another pike taught me this. In the Kennet, he took most savagely, rushed away, and with a head-shake broke off the hooks of an old trusted spoon. "He's fourteen pounds, that 'un, sir; I knows him."

My spoons very seldom carry a red tassle now—if they do it's taken off and renewed—and I don't think I get less fish for it.

Any difference between the value in catching of baits? What is the best bait?

Devons and spoons we fancy are first. Devon will kill by river, by lake, and by canal. And especially in rivers which carry a heavy stream: in such water they prove deadly in holes and lay-byes, and at the tail of islands. For lakes and canals perhaps spoon comes first—but not much.

Devons as a whole, unless the lighter aluminium ones

are used, spin deeper than spoons; and spoons unless the heavy leaded Colorado is in use, spin shallower than Devons.

In its course a spoon " carries " a lot of water. If I was limited to one style of bait for all pike waters I might hesitate. Having done so, I'd choose the Devon.

One last word on spinning, and an important one. I have seen so many casts spoiled for want of attention to this detail.

Whether you use a Malloch or centre-pin it makes no difference. As you make your cast swing your bait back and do not " come forward " until your bait is taut behind the rod point: when it is taut swing forward and your cast will go suent and smoothly to its destination.

I have seen men cast with their spinner hanging straight down below the point of the rod, and they invariably made a poor cast only too naturally. The rule should be—steady back, no real pause, and swing forward. The *point of the rod* should pause to allow the spinner to swing right back, but the bait should not stop.

This is one of the best tips I know in making a good cast, and has been of service to several anglers.

CHAPTER X

WITH LIVE-BAIT

"Hang it over your fish"—Expectation—The pilot's signal—Contemplation — The kingfishers — Varied movements of the float—"When must I strike?"—Difficulty in getting baits—The bait can—Rod rest—Always carry your gaff—A lay-bye on old Thames—Float paternoster and boom.

NEXT to the spinning bait comes the live-bait. Delightful as it is to pass along the bank, spinning rod at work, live-baiting undoubtedly has a charm all its own.

By spinning you surely show your baits to more fish, and may, over a greater area of water, search for and find the feeding fish. While you can, by frequent casting and varied baits, stick to one fish and ring the changes of variety, yet by live-baiting you surely, too, "hang it over him" as the salmon fishers say, better and longer.

Provided your baits are fit, strong, and lively, you are constantly on the tiptoe of expectation. At any moment that float may disappear and bid its pilot signal to you, and then, perchance, follow.

It, does this method, belongs to the contemplative side of our fascinating sport. You may carry your shooting stick and sit down to it. You shall certainly see waterhen, coot, and dabchick "on their lawful occasions"—unlawful too, perchance, if fish eggs are in abundance.

The kingfisher becomes your friend : a flashing, shooting, living gem, stabbing your mind with shafts of memory. " Saw one that day across the Horse-shoe Bend. Flashed over the ice amid the snow. And we felt more cheery for its passage." Or, we see again that one drying after its bath on the plank bridge on the Kennet. Where did this one go?

" Hullo! my float's gone and pilot too! "

Now when September comes, the pike rod gets to business—the light floats of minnowing days give place to the pike float proper.

We have used those days in July and August for spotting purposes—we know where to go.

" Harry, there's one here about 5 lbs. Try him."

" Gaff, please. I've hooked him. Yes, about right, 5½ lbs."

" Now come here—there's a six pounder here." And again Harry is successful. This one 6¾ lbs. This little incident happened on the Canal. Harry was a prisoner of war, one of the immortal " Old Contemptibles." Now safe back home with a long row of medals on his breast. Like the good sportsman he is, he put back that second fish as he " only wanted one to take home." That 6¾ pounder should be a good fish next time he comes to bank.

As a general rule again, you should seek your fish with live-bait in shallow water when relatively that water is warm, and in the deeper parts when it is cold.

Perhaps the charm of live-bait lies in the varied movements of your float. Your bait should easily be able to lug it well down—nay, in his first rush, carry it fifteen

feet along, just under the surface. And you can contribute to this end by placing your lead nearer the float than the bait. Use that single wire for trace—with three swivels—and see that your hook-length to the first swivel is long enough to give a wide range of action to your bait. Make it all as easy for the bait as you can. Avoid anything that may hamper his free movements.

And a further charm lies in discovering the answer—if there is one (which one doubts)—to the question: "I say, when must I strike?"

Some men answer "Never," but they mean don't "strike" by a violent knocking deed: they mean "tighten" or "get hold." But the question comes again: "When should I get hold?"

And the only answer one has reached is this: "When you feel that the right moment has come." We leave this for the moment till a later chapter.

Live-baiting, like most mundane affairs, has certain points not too strongly in its favour.

One is the great difficulty of obtaining the needful baits. Pike have a way of coming on the feed when Tom and his friends want roach. And feeding pike make wary roach uncommon shy of feeding. Or for some other reason the roach won't bite, and you can't get 'em. Or the netsman can't find the shoals. The surest way is to purchase them from those who sell. And here, again, we are faced with expense. Live-bait, like all else these days, are up in price.

Dace, perhaps, come first as bait: roach, grayling, gudgeon too, will find you fish. Gold-fish are deadly, so one hears—"too golden" also perhaps.

There's another bait : better perhaps than these. But why should one tell all one has learned !

Your bait-can is a bit of gear worth a few careful thoughts. Single or double cans may be used. You may get a toffee tin, for " that waterproof toffee " as it has been called, and a stout wire for handle, and make your can for next to nothing. But it's nowhere beside its brother, the can with the inside strainer.

First, the double can prolongs the life of your baits. You can raise a few inches, the inner perforated strainer, and lower it sharply, and thereby to an extent aerate the water. You can, while fishing, lower it by the zinc chain on its handle, into the stream or lake, and give them better water. By the way, that zinc chain. Get a light zinc dog chain : replace the bar by a second spring swivel and your baits are safe. The inner strainer of mine rests at the bottom of M—— Lake, because I trusted a stout cord over long.

And on cold, frosty, blustering days, in nipping, piercing cold, oh ! that plunge of the hand into the icy water of a single can. Whip out your inner strainer and select your bait in the comparative " dryth "—and keep some warmth in your hands to slip that treble under the dorsal fin.

There's no comparison, then, between the two, and we are thankful that we spent those extra few shillings on the double can.

And it's a good plan to have two cans. Enough room for 12 baits, or 30-50 baits. A 10-inch or 12-inch can, and another to hold two or three gallons of water.

You may have half a day's piking for your own rod,

or a day with two or three friends. And the big can is over large for six or a dozen baits.

A useful gadget was given to me by a very skilful angler, well known in his own district, and one who has figured well in his club's list of the season's specimen fish. This is a rod-rest for live-baiting made of two 5-inch tubes of zinc : not quite a T shape, but a ⊤ with a sloping head. A nice slope to keep up the point of the rod. You fit this T-piece to a broom-handle 4 feet or 4 feet 6 inches long, and after you have made your cast slip the butt into the head of your rod-rest, fixed near the water's edge. If you have a button on your butt you must unscrew it.

Come with me to the muddy edge of a sedge bordered pool or lake. See how it keeps from the mud and tangling oddments your reel and line. No, you needn't stoop—your rod's held ready for a knock. " Have you got one? " Then push the butt 6 inches forward and your rod is ready in your hands.

Mine is fitted to the top of its shaft and held secure by screw-bolt and butterfly-nut, and the inner side is lined with leather. This prevents the loss of your T-piece, and facilitates taking apart when travelling. The point of the shaft is made more serviceable by giving it, with knife and glass-paper, a flat-sided or spear blade point. A cross wind will not easily blow round the outstretched rod if this is done.

A golden rule of pike fishing is *never* be without your gaff—have it hanging by your side. Even if your pal is with you and has his, still have your own close handy. He may, too, be in a fish when you need his help. And see that it is not too wide in the gape of the hook. Two

or two and a half inches are big enough : and perhaps the first is the better size.

Your difficulty will be, not to gaff a big one, but with the fish that are just too big to lift out on your trace.

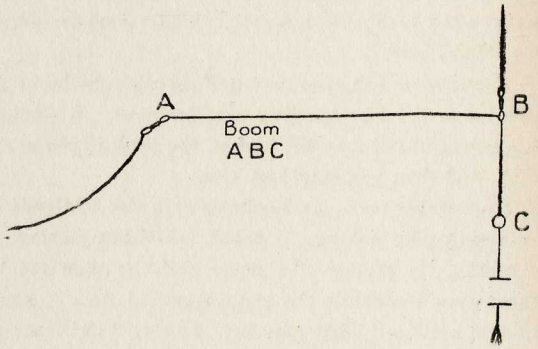
With a real big fish we prefer to gaff 'em where we can : across the shoulders for choice, as he is more likely to be yours if you can get him there. But a stroke there makes a sad gash ; one, however, which a good taxidermist can always hide.

For smaller fish, you may gaff through the lower jaw, mindful to lift him speedily out, however. A stroke of that powerful tail may lift him off the hook if you are not wary, and then you may lose him.

I remember once, a schoolmaster in the Midlands was discussing pike fishing. I asked him what pattern gaff he used. He replied, " I never saw the pike yet into whose eyes I couldn't put my finger and thumb, and so lift him out." " That may be," I said, " but some day you'll get a pike and be unable to reach him." This was on a Thursday. He was going after the long-noses on Saturday, and the following week we met again. " Do you remember what you said about the gaff last week? I thought of you on Saturday. We were fishing in the lake at B—— and my friend hooked a splendid fish of about 15 or 16 lbs. Got him right in—and I lay down to lift him out. But the bank went straight down for three feet or more, and I couldn't reach him. He gave a tremendous plunge and was gone! If I had had a gaff I could have got him easily, as he lay under that bank for quite two minutes." I believe the pedagogue carries a gaff since that.

All metal telescopic gaffs are very good : and you can carry them in a 2¼-inch harness ring on a strap. But at all costs, *carry* it : don't leave it lying with your bag or in a tree.

A butcher's meat hook, properly hammered and fixed to a broken golf-club shaft makes a handy weapon.



The boom has a long arm, AB, with a spring-link swivel at A if you like, to which you attach your single treble live-bait tackle; and a short arm, BC. At B you may have an ordinary two-ring swivel to attach your trace, and to C you attach your leaded thread. The upward thrust of the sunk float tends to keep your arm BC perpendicular, and so keep A well away from the line. See that your hook-length is shorter than arm AB to prevent your bait fouling any portion of your tackle.

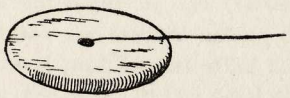
Old " Daddy " Deadman, of Oxford, years ago taught me how " to get down to 'em." Sometimes, he said, pike lay near the bottom and you must get your live-bait down to them. His method was to tie a piece of thread two feet or two feet six long with an eyed pear-shaped lead at its end, above the bait, so that the bait was 18 inches above the pear-shaped lead.

This additional second lead carried down float and pilot, and kept the bait anchored in one place : 18 inches, and, with movement of the bait, a little more, from the bottom.

He and my friend W. were so fishing, above Oxford, while I was " floating " a lay-bye higher up. I went back to find that W.'s rod had nearly been pulled into the Thames out of the punt by a fish of 5½ lbs. " Daddy " always said that pike came into these lay-byes out of the push of the river, to rest a bit. " Pull, why 'e pulled 'arf the rod in the river."

This method has been improved upon by the " Float Paternoster." In addition to the tackle already mentioned you may have a wire boom and a flat float.

So much for below the surface. Above your fixed float you have a flat biscuit-shaped round float with a hole plumb in the centre.



This float has no peg, and the line slips through it, so that whether you fish in six feet or twenty feet of water your biscuit float is always on top. It lies quiet, except for a gentle sideways movement in answer to the movements of your bait.

But when you get a run it has a most pleasing method of cocking up on its edge, after the appearance of the rising or setting sun. And if your pike is running from you it will slowly travel away still on edge, and then you feel the lugging and tugging of your quarry. As a rule,

we have found fish so taken are well hooked. It is a useful method to try when ordinary float tackle is of no avail. And where you are uncertain of the depth.

A ghillie in Scotland was once asked by the "rod," who was fed up with fruitless casting, and lying inert in the shade of some trees, "What do you consider the best salmon fly?" The questioner was swiftly answered. "Aweel, the best flee is the flee in the watter."

And equally the best live-bait is the one that is "trying." And of those with which you fish surely none so deadly as the pike bait scarred with the teeth of pike. If you have a run and don't land your fish, but the hooks retain your bait, and that bait is marked, don't throw him away—throw him out again and you'll be pretty certain of another "knock" to it.

There are other methods of live-baiting. With paternoster and by ledger.

Both are useful, and paternostering is valuable in holes and clear patches between the weeds. With your paternoster, lead below and no float, you can search the water, fish deep holes and the river-bed, and in a surer way than by any other method.

Ledgering too; running lead above your bait, ensures your bait staying near the bottom where you fancy pike are lying.

Both these methods have the advantage of doing without a float.

(There is still another way: a grim and nasty way: gorge fishing—*fishing* so-called. If ever you think to follow this, take "Punch's" advice to those about to marry—DON'T.)

CHAPTER XI

THE WAY OF A PIKE WITH A FLOAT AND THE WAY OF A PIKE WITH A SPINNER

How will he take?—" Properly "—The Silver Devon—The punt and the snow—Behind or left or right—A gentle strike—Head on—What is one to do?—The bellying line—The big 'un—The bow wave—Old John Willett—John Deadman.

ONE of the charms and problems of spinning is the question, " How will he take? "

You perhaps have been fishing for some while, hooking an occasional weed and freeing your spinner of it. You note birds and flowers, a wee jack by the side. A kingfisher, a heron. An aeroplane hums overhead. Many things you see, and they lead your thoughts apace. Wonder, you say, what a fish feels like when he lays hold, and then—bang! there he is!

No doubt about this chap: he's running like mad. Right at us, and the trusty rod is bent right over to try to hold the hooks home. A check, a mighty swirl, and away he goes downstream. Across, up, and down again. Slap into those weeds, bother him. Deeper and further in—but see, that wire, aided by his strength and the rod's, is cutting through. No doubt about that one: took, as we say, " properly."

Or again: a silver Devon swings in under the boughs

of a big willow—it really did—and stops. Stops dead. And that silver Devon has no doubt found a big root of that willow and got hung up. What's to be done? Empty the big punt of snow and ice and go across, for it's the only silver Devon we have, when the " root " moves —it really did—and sails away—a big one, commencing her death struggle in which victory came to the rod through the silver Devon. No doubt about her! She took properly.

So did that big one on the edge of the ice—with a bang and a rush.

But a pike may take in so many ways. He may come from behind, or left or right. He may go for it *from* you, against the travel of the bait. He may come fast or slowly; he may strike vigorously or gently.

Two instances of a gentle strike are in the Fishing Diary. In each case the bait was the same. A No. 4 Bar Spoon : both in the Canal.

The fish came at the spoon sideways—took and remained quite still. An attempt to tighten merely pulled the spoon away, and John moved off, nor would he come again. Eight pounds he seemed. A week later we were there again, and a fish was taken, taking properly, of 8¾ lbs.

The second fish was in the next reach : in the Wide Water, whose name proclaims its feature. The spoon was travelling through a long cast, and behind it on its course, a patch of bubbles came to the surface. Clearly a big chap, just got up from his bed in the weeds. Did he see the spoon? Another cast fished through the same water, and a big fish took the spoon—slowly came from

the left, took, and was still. Again the spoon came away. The fish was clearly three foot in length. Ten days later my partner in this fishery took a pike at this place: a picture of 17¼ lbs. He now adorns his house. I was away pheasant shooting.

Another fish was noticed, in the Canal again, lying tail towards the rod. The bait was cast over and beyond him—a blue and gold "D" phantom. Mr. Long Nose rushed at it—and the line, or trace rather, must have ridden up his snout, for the tail treble got him in the nose, outside, on the roof of his mouth.

What to do with these pike which take gently and then stop, frankly one does not know. Next time, perhaps, if one can see him, one will wait on him.

And I feel pretty certain that at times a pike comes up from behind, takes and comes in in the direction in which the bait is travelling, and at about the same pace. Likely enough you hardly feel him, or don't feel him at all.

Have you ever watched your bar spoon while it is spinning? It will touch a weed-stem, "fall over," and spin the reverse way, and for a brief moment you feel not any of the tug of the spinning spoon. I have noticed this, and have been puzzled when the spoon was visible as to whether it might be this that caused the sudden and momentary cessation of "pull" on the part of the spoon.

It's jolly hard, I am sure, to tell when a pike does come up behind, and take, and come in, bait in mouth.

Watch your line: there's a sag in it made by the wind, which sag suddenly increases. It may be wind even if

you don't feel the extra pressure of wind, or it may be a pike.

I was spinning a Caledonian in the Canal. When it was twelve or fifteen feet from the bank I saw a trout take it, saw the greater droop in the line, but I never felt the fish. He had the bait long enough to be hooked, but I didn't try as it was in the fence time for trout. But I wish I had tried and landed him, to be put back.

One should always hit out at a sudden stop in the tether of the bait. With a spoon there's usually some good measure of pull on the point of the rod, easily felt. But other baits travel with little pull against you, made by the spinner.

No doubt the most pleasing and fatal strike is one when he seizes it as a terrier seizes a rat, and is off, hard as he can go. But few things can give such an exciting thrill. And if you see his " bow-wave " as he comes, all the better.

One day in October, a Monday, the spinning rod was busy and sport was brisk. A would-be fisherman was a spectator, with a view to taking up angling.

He was fairly caught and confirmed. The Fishing Diary says, " Six pike : 3 lbs., 9 lbs. 2 ozs., 6 lbs. 8 ozs., 3 lbs. 8 ozs., 2 lbs. 8 ozs., 4 lbs., were landed," two being retained. Then came a sight of a fellow who would have topped the bag " handsome."

He followed the bar spoon time and again : not as big as an airship, but he looked a very torpedo as he swam bow on. Again and again he followed, and at a change of bait, too. But no!

He was somewhat in mind, and on the Wednesday an

hour could be spared for his opportunity. He was lying that Monday in the Bason—in shallow water on the edge of the deep, towards the middle. A halcyon was tried on Wednesday at the same spot. A fish of about 7 lbs. was seen—but there was no more to the halcyon.

A Caledonian was put on unleaded. Can we get out far enough? A move was made to the western end to see if we could get his length. The wind had almost gone as the trial cast was made.

Hardly had the "Caley" begun to spin than there came a tremendous V-shaped wave from the western end. But he didn't take: turned and went back. Three times he made that wave, and twice more we saw him. And it was him, or her, rather, as we learnt later.

Then came a puff of wind from the south-west, and a nice small ripple. This time there was no wave but a gentle take. "Two pounder" one thought. But it was a 13½ pounder.

Anyone who does live-baiting knows the funny days when you get runs but no sport. I stood beside a pike fisherman one day. He had eleven runs and landed one fish. Oh! yes, I have been there too, and so, perchance, have you.

Now if those fish had run at a spinning bait there might have been a chance to land more than one. But you cannot say for certain.

And so we leave the spinning bait and pass to the float.

Surely one decided delight of live-baiting is the way of a pike with a float.

How vastly different are the indications that it gives you. There's the proper float that dips under to the

working of your bait—and really, your float does not leave you here room for doubt. "Oh! that's the bait," you say; and it is.

But your float may glide down—shoot down, as though a sledge-hammer had smitten your bait.

It may give those knowing little two or three bobs, and then sink down like a flash—and those are the runs we like best.

Or again, your float may be dormant, showing its white top motionless, and then it's GONE! Like old John Willett speaking of Hugh—"You look at him and there he is, and you look again—and there he isn't."

Sometimes you are fishing in a spot near the haunt of a giant. You saw him last July and are sure he's a good three feet or more. Your float, after bobbing, disappears. Your pilot shows its course. Fast away, ten, twenty, thirty, fifty feet, and you are dead certain you have to deal with "herself." Your pilot stops, you tighten up, strike, and lift up a two pounder.

You cast again with a bait to replace the one the two pounder has robbed you of. Your bait works well and then quiets down. Another slight movement of your float. Slowly it goes down a foot, you can see the white top showing. You tighten again, and what you feel then makes you hope "This is a better one." It is: "herself." Twelve pounds and three feet long.

And again, as we said just now. You get many runs. You let 'em run a yard and hit out at—nothing. Your bait has gone. Well, next time, you resolve, you'll give him longer. You do: and the same thing happens again. "Well, you shall have it as long as you want

it." Down again, and slowly off to a weed bed. White top just showing. He *must* have turned the bait by now. You reel up to find to your disgust he's killed your bait and left it.

Another day you are out. Six baits in your can. Hoping to run out of bait by two o'clock. Half-a-day's fishing. You do: you can't do wrong. Nay, you catch seven fish to your six baits, and two are sizeable—7¾ and 6½ lbs.

What's your rule for live-baiting? The best advice is, " tighten on your fish when you think he's got the hook in his mouth, and hold him hard to drive in the hooks."

Old Deadman used a lip-hook, a double one. He said, " Wait till he's turned the bait." He would pick up his rod at a " knock," let him run, then very cautiously reel up his line till he could just feel where he was, and wait till he felt a jerk. To him that jerk seemed to mean that the moment for action had come.

Personally, I am rather inclined to think, that if you use a single small treble under the dorsal fin and your bait is not more than five inches or maybe six inches, then any sizeable pike of five pounds and upwards, has *probably*, but only probably, got the hook in his mouth, and you may fasten on him as soon as you like, provided he's running more or less away from you.

But it does not by any means follow that because he's sizeable he *has* got the hook in him.

Very likely the turning and twisting of a tethered bait makes it very difficult for John Pike to pick his hold. He may have to take his chance—and that chance may be his

tail. (Then the double-trebled Jardine snap would be of no better avail.)

But I do feel pretty sure that a big one manages to turn the bait more readily than his smaller brethren.

With small fish, however, you may wait for " Daddy " Deadman's jerk and then be too early.

The other day a run came to the white-tipped float, and the pike came in near the bank. The sun was down low in the west behind me. A small jack had the bait by the shoulders, between back fin and head. He jerked that bait seven times, visible the while, before I fastened on him and got him.

Probably they kill the bait, as a rule, before they pouch it. A lively, kicking bait in the belly would be likely disagreeable.

There's a likely spot on ours called the Thorn Tree. Deepish water close in, under the towing path. We were filling a pipe when the float shot down a good two or three feet, and bounced up again to stay motionless. Jack had come hard and fast and pulled the bait off the hook. So another bait was put in that same spot. It moved away and shot down. Tighten and tether : a good fish rolled about and we caught a glimpse of a thick broad side, and then up went the point. Treble and about four inches of single wire had gone.

He got that fatal kink in it. " Harry, what do you think of that? " " Oh! a good one—looked ten or twelve pounds." " What will you do now? " " Why, make up another tackle and catch him! "

This was done, and twice the new bait moved fast away from the hover of this fish. A third time, and then

slowly and quietly down went the float. Got hold of him again: a good fight and the gaff into a fish of 6½ lbs. Short and thick. "No! this isn't the one."

But it was. I got my lost hook out of the roof of his mouth, well down. If I had not got him, should have fished the Thorn Tree feeling sure there was a good fish there. It just shows how easily a lost fish is over-estimated, and how very much on the feed pike may be. But three baits in ten minutes is pretty good going!

We have tried a single hook in the dorsal fin. Unfortunately pike have been off each time when we have. You'd need a nice sneck to the hook, else it might slip through his jaws.

The single trebles frequently, but not always, get the fish in the corner of the mouth. One has to mind two facts: less pressure needed to get the hooks home; less holding space when he is hooked. Too much vigour may pull it out.

On the score of visibility the difference between the single hook and the single treble is in favour of the single hook, though you may need a slightly longer shank for the single hook. In baiting with the single treble be careful to get the barb through the skin on each side. You may, with the point of the hook, remove a couple or three scales at the point of the hook's entry.

Another delightful way of a pike with a float is the knock that is noisy. When you can *hear*, on a quiet day, your floats pulled down. A noise somewhat similar to a big trout noisily taking May-flies. It comes but seldom. Once on M. Lake our party was in two boats. We cast out and turned round to watch the others in the second

boat. And the splash of floats recalled us. There were two big rings, like big "rises," and a 7½ lb. pike paid the penalty for his theft of my roach.

One of the most puzzling fish to deal with is the pike which takes and comes towards you—sometimes right to your feet. We know a man whose first run was like this. It completely nonplussed him, and he had not the least idea of how to deal with it. An experienced fisher was luckily with him, and he advised patience: fish was struck as it moved again, this time away.

We know one clever pike fisher who, when he answers a knock, keeps his top ring down near the water and so hits him. Capital plan if your line has sunk, which, normally, is not fitting; but we certainly prefer to deal with our fish point upwards. It may, however, be a better plan to keep it low, at any rate if we have much line out.

There is not the least doubt but what pike do feel the weight and draw of the tightening line, especially if one has made a long cast and there's a belly on the line. To a certain extent it may be camouflaged by the struggling of the bait.

Once on the Thame we saw our roach bait lying belly upwards, motionless. Cautiously we began to reel in, and immediately from right below him came a pike and took him. Made one wonder how long he had been there, watching and waiting.

Again, float tackle was under the boughs of a maple bush, bait working a little. A pike slowly swam up to the bait and slowly inspected it from each side. "Now I wonder what's up with you?" he seemed to be

thinking. " Oh ! I see ! a hook in your back—but I don't see one at your head. ' Silver Devon ' out again I suppose. Well, good-day to you."

This fish looked nine or ten pounds in the gin-clear water, and though we moved the bait and drew it a few inches he was not to be tempted. Hadn't reached that weight without some knowledge of fisherman's ways and dodges.

We want to get 50 or 100 marking wires and test the weight and growth of these Canal pike. And another point, their powers of memory. In the course of some correspondence with the Editor of the *Fishing Gazette,* Mr. R. B. Marston said, " Some pike are very wary They seem to have longer memories than trout."

Surely they do !

CHAPTER XII

NOTES FROM A FISHING DIARY

The Fishing Diary—Oddments—Weather, glass, and wind—Falling acorns—Tables—The fisherman's prayer—On the Thames—Wye—A greedy pike and a salmon—A cork taken—A lost pike recovered—And two others—An eager hungry fish—A fool of a fish—A jigging spoon—Line round the gaff shaft—A speaking silence—A troublesome ten pounder—The Brigadier, Dilly and Dally—A piece of mischief—Hooked three times.

THE heading of this chapter makes one think of a thing so jolly to keep, and one which few men do. A fishing diary. It's a bit of a nuisance, certainly, and means the pen in hand at the end of each day with rod in hand. But it's very much worth while. *Put the day down at the close of the day*: better not leave it till the morning. You may be going fishing to-morrow: you will be if you are on your holiday. And then you'll mix the two days up.

A friend has had some good days with good pike, but they are all a jumble in his memory. Now he keeps a log; even to the number of knocks; good, bad, and indifferent.

There are so many things to put in. Your own doings and your fishes'. Your fights and your failures; weights and lengths. You'll have something to refer to as to weather and barometric conditions. Fishing in

frost? Right-ho! We have records of two very good days in frost. North-east wind? Never mind, don't you remember? Well, look, here's the entry. We got those good fish in a north-east wind.

These are things to note: weather, wind, glass, and temperature. The last but newly begun: and we think you need temperature of air and water, and of the day before to be really able to judge. And temperature may be taken in deeps and shallows: should be. Some fish, bream for example, are very susceptible in their feeding to water temperatures, and they are deep water feeders in rivers.

The observing of the glass has made me pretty sure of one thing. And that is, that a rising glass is good for pike fishing.

Have only just begun to test the temperature in 1922 so cannot say anything about it.

And another weather condition one likes, is a steady spell of weather—of the same kind of weather—two or three days before one goes out. Am inclined to think that very changeable weather, altering every few hours, is unfavourable.

Don't mind frost or snow—no, don't mind snow, but snow broth in the water may be very much against your getting fish.

Then you can put in notes from the many excellent books on fishing; sometimes pages of them. Letters, licences, photos and pictures, press cuttings, flowers of rare sorts.

Note the sight and arrival of migrants and rare birds. Anything out of the ordinary. They help to bring a day

back to memory wonderfully. For instance, the sound of an acorn falling " plomp " in the water recalls a good day spent with an officer home from France. They—the acorns—were falling at intervals all day long from a tree overhanging the Oak Tree Swim.

Put down your blanks and your good days. Record each incident of the fight with a pike of a lifetime. Leave it for ten years, then read it up again. It will all come back. Some trifling incident you had let slip from your mind will return clear cut.

Set down each fish you catch, sizeable or no. You may be seedy and sick. Unable to fish, you say, " Now, shall we catch fish in the Dee—salmon; or have a turn at the tench in Coate Reservoir; spin for a Dartmoor salmon and get him; try for a Wye pike and gaff him; or shall it be a day in the quiet Canal? " Any and all are yours: birds and flowers—hopes realized or fled.

If you are fond of figures you compare your years of sport. Find out how many, what they weighed, the average, the best fish. And then why are the records so dissimilar. Methods, waters, seasons, all affect the total. It's not uninteresting. There be some who affect to despise such reckonings, but they do help towards the understanding of one's hobby and one's sport.

Pike fishing, if you follow it for any length of time, brings all sorts of queer happenings to your observation. Some of them scarcely to be believed: certain to be disbelieved by sceptics, that is, non-anglers.

In the Fishing Diary there's a postcard which came under cover of an envelope, which bears this pleasing verse:

THE FISHERMAN'S PRAYER.

Suffer me to land a fish,
So large that even I,
In speaking of him afterwards,
Shall never need to lie.

You may think of any fish you like. Pike will scan, and possibly that Irish Giant of 1921 fits the part. Yes, I think 53 lbs. 10½ ozs. would do. I like that " ½ oz."

On the Thame one day, a fish of 6 lbs. came ashore. He had something in his belly we could turn over. It was a roach; head and shoulders digested. The sound part weighed half a pound.

Again, on the Wye, a silver Devon brought a big pike to shore. A visit later with permission to fish was so eagerly sought. It was granted. The agent said, " Ah! sir, you got the biggest of them. We got one in the net the other day—22½ lbs. with a 6 lb. salmon botcher inside him."

One day on M. Lake an ordinary wine-cork with a slit in it, line fastened in with a pin, was on duty as pilot. The bait seemed dead, so was being drawn in. " There's a nine pounder—he's there, sir." There came a swirl and the cork disappeared. To soon reappear. Inspection showed that the line immediately below the cork was nearly severed. Now, what on the water? A duckling or a dab-chick chick? Or just because it moved?

On the Canal we met once on a day, a father and son lamenting. The son had been broken above the float by a good fish which sought sanctuary in a bed o' weeds three hundred yards from where he broke the line. The spinning rod and bar-spoon were in use, and soon the spoon was sent beyond the float. The splash moved the

fish, and out he came. A cast ahead of him as he travelled, and the spoon hooked the line below the float. He jumped and shook the spoon off. A second cast and the gear was hooked and the fish landed. Six pounds odd he weighed!

Now it chanced that the angler who lost the fish, or to be quite exact, his brother, was able to help us in a difficulty. About the time he helped us, he and his father and a friend went to fish our Club's private water. Part of it lies near a railway whereon there runs daily an express with a world-wide reputation. Father and I were coming up by this train on the day the three rods were fishing there. Our word to him was, "If you get a decent fish hold him up to us as we pass in the C.R.E." We looked out o' window. Up went his arm, with a goodish fish hanging from his fist. Later came word of it. "My friend hooked this fish on live-bait, and was broken above the float. I cast a spinner over it, and landed it." Well, that was twice. The next time I went fishing I took another friend, George, and he hooked a nice fish, and when I tried to gaff him I muffed it—the line caught in the strap of my whistle—my pointer, "Moss," was with me. The line broke above the float. After working for an hour and a half my friend succeeded in getting his spoon over the tackle, and landed him. He was a very restless fish, moving off almost directly the float was marked down. He was 6½ lbs. Our limit that year was 7 lbs. But I killed the fish, for the angler deserved him!

Other incidents with floats occur. We went where we believed, my friend (he of the last event) and I, that

a good fish lay. Some years before, he, George, had hooked and lost a fish he put at 9 lbs. So we had expectations, not " great expectations " perhaps, but still, expectations.

The old rod, reel, and tackle were ready. A roach put on and cast out near some lily-pads. Stooped to close lid of bait can : a mighty swirl and he missed the bait. Stood up, loosening strap of salmon bag and again he struck, and again he missed ! But we saw his jaws close on the blue-and-white float ! Down all went, pilot just showing. Two good jerks to the pilot ; and then, reeling up and just beginning to tighten, the cut line brought in the pilot. Had he " turned " the float and pouched the float and then the bait ? Or had he spat out the float and taken the bait ? Cannot make out what he did save that he cut the line practically right through. After an hour or so, " Why, there's my float," says I. In the midst of a lily-bed, 50 or 60 yards away. High bank opposite—cross lock-gates, and walk round and see his nose showing beyond a lily-pad. Fixed a weight and a big treble to the line and cast with 2⅝ Malloch. After following him to and fro from side to side, crossing by the lock, during which we had some good views of him, we got the big treble across the line, but the strain pulled the float off the line and we lost him. Eighteen to twenty pounds we both put him at. Since when we have fished there with " great expectations."

A few days later we were fishing again, with George and my small son, in the next reach. The same good float was looking after the bait, and the same pilot, too. Suddenly came a tremendous splash close to the white-

topped float; float and pilot were carried down. As the rod came from the rest we saw him. He had the line in his mouth 'twixt float and pilot. The float under his ear, as it were, and the bait on a level with his tail. He, too, had evidently rushed up at the bait and missed. His jaws closed on the line instead. And although he had only the line in his mouth, he made the reel scream. And was actually pulled out of two beds of weeds.

Then he ran in to the near bank—right in, nose in. Stooping down, stretched out the gaff. George came running up. "Let me." But I wished to gaff him, for George didn't know what had happened, and I'd no time to tell him. He weighed 7¾ lbs. And his lower jaw had hardly one of those usual big teeth in it.

I have a piece of trout fishing of my own—the water holds pike, and the pike rod attends to their fancies at times. The other day a bar-spoon came spinning upstream. And behind it a small jack. The water was crystal-clear, nearly four feet deep. John was opening and shutting his mouth as though it watered over the silver and red lure. But the cast came to its natural end and there was no chance to go on with it. So the spoon was jigged up and down eighteen inches or so. He rushed at it, and was duly captured: 2 lbs. 2 ozs. Big enough to be up to mischief in a trout stream.

Few things be more annoying than to bungle the gaffing. One instance has been mentioned, and there are other "regrettable incidents."

Now it is bad enough to make a hash of your own fish —but to do so for a friend is beyond all power of expression.

A fish of six or seven pounds was being played, and duly brought to the final act. An indecisive stroke with the gaff, and a plunge on the part of the person most concerned, between them wound the line round the shaft of the gaff. It was all mismanaged, for the fish was not ready for gaffing, and was still full of fight.

Here we are, then. Rod in left hand, gaff in right. And a strong little fish on the end of it all. You try to make the line run off the reel with your left hand, you try to let it travel smoothly round the shaft, and at the same time untwist it from the gaff. We got him—6½ lbs.—but we most certainly did not deserve him. And a fisherman looking on in a "speaking silence."

We had another slice of undeserved luck. It was in Pike Pool. Just before our fishing, "Bill," the signalman, had been over trying to lessen the number of pike in the Earl's trout fishing. Now Bill has an allotment near handy to Pike Pool. Sometimes he leaves the rod and tackle to fish for him while he looks after the needs of his bairns in the garden.

Bill did so this time. When he came back from doing "a bit of Adam," as Pecksniff said, he found his float in a weed bed 50 yards from where he left it, and a vasty pike rolling about close to it. After much labour in hauling he got his line away from the weeds and his pike out of them, and proceeded to play his fish. There was a large bunch of weeds on the fish's head. But he got him in to his feet, and was clearing away the weeds to put his fingers in the eye-sockets when there was a mighty plunge, and Bill was left lamenting. "Well, he

was bigger than your eighteen pounder!" From the same water.

Naturally it was that fish one was after. The forenoon was fruitless—float and float-paternoster were tried. And after ninety minutes of the latter, the second lead was taken off and the float pushed along to 12 inches from the bait, and the pilot moved suitably. A cast upstream into a run between two weed-beds, and down goes the float. Up, alongside another bed of weeds, and a jerk at the float. Tightening on to him there was a heavy plunge from a good fish. You may picture Pike Pool—"pike" although there are good trout in it—a boggy morass on the south—mud waist-deep—and on the north a row of pollard willows. The pool simply seems to be made for pike, but it's not easily fished—you may know what close-planted pollards are like. Well, Mr. Fish did all he knew—weeds and other coverts were all tried, hollow bank, and so on. Then he came in. The bank sloped a thought steeply, and was wet and very slippery. Water was high, and there was a row of stout sedges two feet out from the water's edge.

They had grown very thick, but the fish came in through an opening in them. (You need to remember the float was but 12 inches from the bait.)

To gaff was very bad: slippery, treacherous bank. Telescopic taken from its ring and extended—then rod and a willow branch in left hand, I reached for him, and thought I had got a good hold. But the point of the gaff reached only to nearly the end of his bony cheek—not beyond it as I thought. So one merely scratched him hard and made him furious. He gave a furious plunge

and went left-handed through the sedges and wedged my floats in them. Then he jumped five feet away, and was gone. In fair despair I laid down the rod. " Now I must tell Bill I got him to the gaff and lost him. After what I said about gaffs, too! "

So I set about retrieving my floats. Couldn't handle 'em without getting wet. When I pulled I found the line running through them! More than 12 inches—several feet! And good luck, just beyond them up came the fish's back! So the line travelled through the floats and held him. No care for wet feet now. Gaff at once. But it got only a light grip. As I lifted him up he fell off. Lashing and kicking at the water's edge he fouled the loose line. Gaff in under the back-bone this time. But now I was still in a pickle. Fish firmly hooked—line from him to jammed floats—loose line round and round him, and round the gaff point.

It must have been ten minutes before it was clear, and fish in one hand and rod in the other (paying out line through floats still in the sedges) I made my way to the bag and priest and killed him. Ten pounds he weighed. Was more than thankful there were no spectators.

On the 13th March we were having a final go on the pike fishery. We had three fish marked down. One about 11 lbs., yclept " The Brigadier "—he was the biggest—and two of about 7 lbs. apiece we called " Dilly and Dally " for an obvious reason, for we knew them well.

We saw a roach about 12 ozs. in weight come swimming feebly along level with the towing path about six or seven feet out. Immediately behind him came

" Dilly "—or t'other. He let the roach gain about two feet, and then lunged after him. Following thus for several feet. Presently he got lower, submerged, so to speak, right below the roach, and struck up at him. And we saw him lying there, roach held across his mouth. Presently he went, and there on the bottom lay the big roach! A deliberate piece of mischief.

One rainy day on the Thames, " Daddy," of Oxford, took out two of us—another man from Devon. He hooked a small pike three times and lifted him from the water twice before he got him into the boat! To be returned, of course.

A likely spot on the Kennet gave one a hint. It was a place where a good one should lie. There came a slow, deliberate run, and he came towards us. An attempt to hit him only pulled the bait away. Then a small one came into view, turning from side to side, obviously wondering what on earth (or in the water) had become of the bait. Dropped it in near him, and he took at once: with the treble in his mouth. Summary justice for him for being in a trout preserve.

So made up one's mind, if one loses a fish in that way, give him another chance to retrieve his fortune (and incidentally one's own), at the earliest moment.

Of course, if it's a little 'un, you wouldn't give him a chance, unless it was in a trout stream where the best pike are dead pike.

CHAPTER XIII

RED-LETTER LEAVES FROM A FISHING DIARY. BY RIVER, LAKE, AND STREAM

16th January, 1905

Frost on Sunday—Fish on Monday—Just in time—A bitter night ride—Cold, colder, coldest—The early train—The baits have come—Scottish firs—Forty-five foot deep—A game covert—Covered with ice—Too slow a spin—" When you hook a big pike "—" She's coming in "—Line frozen in rings—A mighty leap—Lunch snowed in—Halcyon, a living gem—A big splash—A gag wanted—New whippings—An invitation to lunch—The snow-bound hill—Warm clothes and whisky—After dinner we fight our battles again—The village carpenter.

My friend and I were to join a friend of his on the Monday for a turn with the pike on what is probably the best river for pike in England. It always produces big pike every year—the very big ones of the twenty pounder class and over that—over 30 lbs., sometimes.

On the Sunday we went over to visit friends, and reached their place during the hour of service. They had a church in the park, and we were late—so late that the alms-bag arrived at our pew just after we had reached it. Our host was much amused to think we had got there so opportunely, in time for him to present the bag to us.

As we rode home that night on our bicycles it was

bitter cold. So hard was the frost that every obstacle on the road, some of which are normally soft, was frozen as hard as a brick, and it was well to avoid them.

Saturday was cold, Sunday colder, and Monday coldest. Some of the house-party were leaving by the early train so R. and I went with them to the station to see them off, and hoping to return with some spinners ordered by wire from Hereford on Saturday. We drove to the station, snow-flakes of small size falling. Saw our friends off, met others, but there were no baits for us.

Back to our breakfast, to start again in the thicker snow on push-bicycles. Another call at the station to find some of the ordered baits have come. A heavy, very heavy silver Devon of three inches, and a yellowish Caledonian of about the same length.

So, rejoicing, we carry on to the Rectory to pick up the friend who has got us permission to fish. We find he cannot come. 'Flu has laid a detaining finger on him. So we yarn and chat; big trout and grayling rise again, are played and landed. Tackle is turned out, and he lends us some gimp traces and a red-tagged spoon, which last he swears by.

After wasting (?) some time in this jolly way, we proceed more or less "according to plan"—"less," as there are two rods instead of three. Down a long hill bordered by gorgeous Scottish firs, wondering what that hill will be like when we face it and the wind later in the day.

Turn left-handed and come to the agent's house. Learn where our fishing lies and the way. "There's 45 foot of water there." Across two fields, down to the

Horse-shoe Bend. It's a back-water, more or less of a horse-shoe shape.

We go down a steep bank and find about 25 yards of it is clear, where one can spin. There's a big tree lying on the bank just here, swept hither by some hefty flood. The high bank shelters us from the stiff and "stern north-easter." Left and right and in front are trees. There's a covert opposite full of all sorts: pheasants, scores of wild duck, foxes, otters, and all kinds of game. Away on our left the water narrows, and across the entrance to the river willows grow. (On a later visit we found wire-netting stretched across.)

On that side there's ice: "half-mooning" across the water. Forty-odd yards in front is the covert. Smooth water at our feet, increasing ripples begin half way across.

On our right, half on the bank, is the huge estate punt. Mark me—it's not a punt, it's an "estate punt," and big enough for that! Half full of ice and snow. Then t'other side of boat are trees again, and out away on our right is open shallow water, where, in summer, lilies grow.

We arrived at midday. "I say, R., there should be some of the biggest pike in England in this water."

R. is fitted out with my second best pike rod, bought in dear old Oxford, and Mr. E.'s red-tagged spoon and gimp trace with two Hardy leads attached. R. at once commences operations: he's new to the job, and a Nottingham reel needs practice; he has had some, and gets some to-day. Incidentally, he spent most of his time looking on.

My tackle is put together—a 4½-inch Nottingham reel, a whole-cane and greenheart rod from Exeter, with the short top, a treble twisted gut trace, two big Hardy leads, and the aforesaid Caledonian, with side hook swinging loose.

When one is used to the spin of a Devon (and comes from Devon), the spin of a Caledonian seems to be slow. Perhaps, one thinks, it would spin better if the tail was straightened. An attempt to do so breaks it clean off! "Well, I don't care what they say about spoons—I am going to pin my faith in the silver Devon."

On it goes. The extra weight of it makes the reel more lively, and needs a bit more "ginger" in the cast. The first two casts reach mid-water. The "ginger" is administered and out flies S.D. and leads. The willow opposite has one bough hanging somewhat far out. The silver Devon flies in under this—drops in the water. Spins a couple of yards and stops dead. Ker-chug! Pressure is applied, as much as is dared. And it don't move. That precious (and only) Devon escaped the overhanging bough to get foul of a root under water. What can be done? Empty that huge punt (look at it!), go across and disturb the water? Or pull and break, or—as I live, it moved! It moved! and sailed along slowly towards the ice.

Then—it's a pike!! All this passed through my mind, and hard on its heels a saying of "Daddy" Deadman's. "When you hook a big pike it's like hooking a tree." I could have showered down blessings on the old man's head had he been there.

It sailed along towards the ice, and I ventured to hit

her. Then, near the ice, she turned and swam back again, under and past that overhanging willow. Then she seemed to wake up to the fact that in a measure she was held—an awful spell of head-shaking and jiggering took place. She shook the rod-point (I can see it still, for I glanced at it), till I feared something would go. Then came a rush that made the rim of the reel hot under finger-tip. At its end another jigger which pulled the butt of the rod away from one's body. One had visions of hooks losing hold, or hooks breaking (she did smash one—felt it give, and 'twas not pleasant, that jerk) or the rod being unable to stand up to the tussle. She would shake anything out, so one hit the hooks home again, " tapped the hooks into her knapper " â la " Daddy."

So it went on, R. watching in silence, for which I blessed him. Fifteen minutes passed by, and never a sight of her. Never nearer than 30 yards. It was a succession of rushes and shakings and jiggers. Then the reel got her nearer—she came up and up and up, and away again. The rod was putting on pressure again, and she responded—up and up and up again. She was very deep down—we never saw a swirl or a movement for a long time. She was coming up and then, 25 yards out she showed. A long, long back, like a man's thigh, a big dorsal fin, the upper part of the tail. " If you *do* come ashore after all this, you go into a glass case."

Didn't have much time to see her—bang went her tail, as she made for the ice and went under it. A lowered point keeps the line clear of the ice, and slowly round she came. (Our previous best fish was a seven pounder taken on the Thame. He pulled the live-bait

tackle into the middle of a weed bed, while the roach rod was being used.)

She was turned always against her will, and slowly. Round and back and nearer in this time. She's coming in—there, now, she is, and we can see her—a whopper—and may we have the luck to land her! Now for a change of tactics.

Do you recollect the agent said 45 foot of water in depth?

Well, she "sounded"—not a rush under the ice or to the willow—but down and down. The line entered the water about ten yards out, and travelled outwards no further, and the reel sang its song as it yielded. We got her up—and a long way up it seemed. She came into sight again, and we saw her plainly. Across her back a weal as if a stick had struck her. That tree-trunk on the bank suggested trees sunk under water. She may, when she lashed about at the end of her "sounding," have struck one.

Suppose, horror! she got the line round a branch down there. "You shan't go down there again!" But she did, and luckily the line kept free. Again up and in, and she sailed parallel along with the water's edge—AND—then frost seized the chance of a motionless line, and froze the line in the rings—we dare not reel in. "R., come and break the ice in the rings with your fingers." The rod was moved for him to handle. R. was standing behind, upon the bank, and he ran down. Frightened, bang went her tail, and she stripped the ice from the rings—one can hear the breaking of the ice, and see it dropping from the rod!

But the line held, and the reel spoke again. And down she went. Back, and in once more, and again Jack Frost succeeded in locking the line to the rings. R. came quietly this time, the rod was moved, and he broke it successfully. A swirl of mud and she vanished to come back again. In, quite close in, and now while she's not taking line or the reel recovering it, the handles of the reel move to and fro a couple of inches, and the moving line does not freeze.

Out again she goes, not so hard this time, and in again to our right and along to our left, under the rod-point. Soon she'll be ready, and then comes a sight of blood flowing from her gills. She must have been bleeding all this time, one supposes.

Away and in again: under the point of the rod she makes her last bid for freedom. She gathers herself and comes clean out of the water! Down comes the point of the rod, an uncle's advice flashing through my mind, "cut your point to a leaping fish," and over she rolls in the air. We can see the line across her silver belly along the ventral fins. It seemed like a month before the reel moved again. This time she came in head straight to the bank. The rod went to the left hand: R. gave me the gaff—it went in just behind the left pectoral fin, with never even a quiver from the pike. Played right out! She looked like a train coming out of a tunnel as she came out of the water. A pike always looks bigger out than in. And she looked big enough in the water, in all conscience.

Out came the gaff, and in my arms I carried her up

to the top of the bank. And began to unhook the silver Devon.

In those days one carried no gag or pike scissors. We opened her mouth with the hook of the big knife and the gaff. She was hooked far down in the mouth, two hooks on the curve of the gills: another hook, broken. She shut her mouth like a vice, and we could not hold it open. But we observed that we could, when open, have dropped a bird as large as a wild duck easily into it.

So the trace was taken off, and leads off trace, gill-cover lifted up and silver Devon and trace pulled out through the opening. The Devon went into the jaws and came out behind it.

We noticed a beautifully deep red in dorsal, caudal and anal fins. Faithfully reproduced in the mounting. Her ventral fins were curiously shaped with a curve forward in the rays of them. And, too, we noted the end of the gimp hitched back in that curious kind of projection in the upper jaw.

My pal told me months after, "I thought you would bring every ghillie and keeper on the place to see what had happened. You made such a row with your View Hulloos!" That bit remains not a whit in my memories: but no doubt he was right.

Well, we went to some snow-covered objects which resembled a bag and a creel: from the dram flask drank the health of a right gallant fish.

Then we carried her down from the top and laid her near creel and bag, just above the trunk. There she was speedily covered with snow, and her spots and her colours were hidden.

Oh! no—we've not forgotten: her length was 3 feet 8 inches: 44 inches; and her weight 30 lbs.

Now to examine the rod, which was done carefully. It showed signs of the fight. There's a nasty, ugly bend in the middle joint, just above the ferrule. (Later, 4 inches were taken right out by the tackle people.) The butt seemed loose in the handle, and the rings were grooved as they were not before. She had been fighting for nearly half an hour.

Traces, leads, and Devon replaced. Within five yards of where No. 1 was lying another lays hold. Is brought protesting across to us, and R. gaffed a five pounder. After the other fish her struggles seemed very puny. Then after a few more casts straight ahead, a move was made to the left, just a few yards, for there was little space for casting. The Devon was sent out towards the sheet of ice, and once or twice smashed its way through to the water.

A kingfisher flashed through the snow away over the ice, and one never sees that bird now without thinking of this red-letter day. Just one of those trifling happenings that stay in one's memory.

Presently a cast was made into the calm water nearer our bank. Devon spun a few yards: a stop: could be nothing but a fish there. Away goes the pike running hard, and its first jiggers let one know that another sockdologer is fighting at the end of the line.

Much the same tactics as No. 1's were reproduced, save for sounding and leaping. For six or seven minutes again we caught no sight of it. The rushes were perhaps a trifle faster, and certainly the fish turned a little

more readily, but our first glimpse of him showed a fish nearly as long as our whopper, but not having the girth of it.

Rush and jigger, rush and jigger, as before. After a good spell of it in he came, then bang! would go that strong tail and away he fled in a cloud of mud from the shallows. Once—we can see it now—he made so strong an effort that he splashed the water right up—two feet or so.

At last he gave R. a chance with the gaff. And he got him. A very fine fish, perhaps the mate of the big one—3 feet in length and 16 lbs. in weight.

A good long stick gagged his mouth open, and out came the trusty Devon. The fish had got it well down, but no hooks were in the scarlet of his gills.

We laid him beside the other two snow-covered forms —and dug for our luncheon.

After that the tackle was examined again. The whippings on the gimp of the silver Devon and on the trace had to be renewed. We found No. 3 had smashed another hook.

Then the first, the very first, cast after lunch another fish was hooked almost in the exact spot of the thirty pounder.

On any other day this fellow, No. 4, would have received due consideration. But the Devon rod and Devon minnow had already beaten two big ones, and one of them a specimen fish, so after conceding line in one strong rush, he was brought within reach of the gaff, for which he was not really ready.

Something occurred, for R. lifted him out and he

fell back again. (It's not easy to gaff a struggling fish.) But the second stroke secured him safely. Eight pounds, this chap.

Now it was two-thirty p.m. We had begun at mid-day to put up our tackle, and the silver Devon had got four fish weighing 59 lbs. in a few minutes' actual casting.

We were eight or nine miles from home, with push-bicycles. Two big fields away from the agent's house, and some weight of fish to carry.

A man carting dressing in the field behind us suggested the obvious. Yes, he has seen some fish taken out of the Bend. (It is yearly netted for the benefit of the cottagers on the estate.)

He walked his horse towards the water, and with a curious disregard of weather conditions and temperature, gave it as his opinion, "My word! they're some warm 'uns."

So we put them up in the cart and carried our rods. As we turned left into the agent's yard we heard shouts behind us—the snow hid the shouter. It proved to be our host: he weighed our fish, and insisted on our following the fishes' example and feeding too.

It is a lovely house—doors into the Hall big enough to admit our rods carried upright! In the Hall, more fish. A carp of 12 lbs., and four perch weighing over 16 lbs. Toppers.

And the fire, food and drink were excellent.

After this R. went off to the T.O. to wire for his carriage, and I to the shallow end of the Bend to try for another.

The snow was much denser, and made it impossible to keep one's eyes open against the wind, to watch the flight of the Devon. So one cast and waited for the splashing of the falling spinner.

Some weeds were all we took. Then it seemed well to seek for R. Could only see a few yards and stumbled across R. looking for me.

Collected our tackle, put the " treasures " in a lock-up shed and waited for the carriage. It didn't turn up. The bikes were got out, key turned on fishes and tackle, and off we started at four-thirty.

A few hundred yards from the gates R.'s free-wheel refused and went on strike. So we pushed 'em.

Oh! that hill we went down that morning! Inches of powdery snow on a surface hard as ice. Our progress was much like the Irishman's—" Bedad, you step forward two feet and shlip back three."

We passed the medico's house, another friend, and shed our push-bicycles. And later we reached the Rectory where we stopped in the morning.

" What have you done? How many fish did you take? "

" Four. Now guess their total weight."

" Nine pounds."

" Say sixty, and you have it."

That fairly did it. We had to go in, take our coats off and have them dried. We had to recount every incident of this glorious day. Warm, by the fire, wearing dry coats, cheered by his whisky. (Real whisky in 1905!) We did—we hooked and played and landed

them again. And after a pleasant jolly time, started again. This time with walking-sticks lent us.

Oh! that walk! "The way was long, the wind was cold."

And we left the road and went over the fields and made better time and going.

Ah! we would have given something to have lain down in the loo of a hedge before it was finished. We got to R.'s house at length, to find a big house-party half-way through dinner. They couldn't understand what on earth we wanted the carriage for! "For fish?" "Yes! G.'s got a thirty pounder." They understood then.

Change and a piping hot bath was delicious! Then dinner, wine and music. After the ladies had gone, the men drew their chairs round a huge log fire in the hall, and we lived our day over again prompted by numerous questions.

And then to sleep. And I almost believe the best part of it all was waking next morning to the realization of my astounding good fortune. Like a flash came the joy of it—with the thought to fetch fish and tackle.

Later in the day we brought them safely back. The village carpenter, who had done the job on a big estate before, made a big box for the big one and packed her safely for travelling. She went, insured, by rail to the Stores—and was the *biggest* fish they had ever set up.

Now she hangs over the fire in the gun-room, and has been a delight to possess ever since.

Blank days! How many has she sweetened! Come in from one, look at her and say, "We did it one day."

26th December, 1916, to 26th March, 1917

The Earl's keeper—Hector—A turn with the snipe—Chained to a knee-hole desk—Pike Pool—A lovely sight—A snowy day—The elbow turn—The weeds—Bill the signalman.

Another river. Not this time noted for its salmon, but for its trout (and pike).

The Earl's keeper came in to say, "There's a big fish in the meadows. I wish you'd go over and catch him, sir." I wished it too.

Boxing Day came as the first opportunity. So we got together the Grant Vibration 10 feet, 2-piece, and the 3¼ Malloch, and a No. 4 Bar Spoon. Dear old Hector, best of Labradors and most faithful of pals, went too.

"'Scape, 'scape" of near-by rising snipe make one say, "Hector, old man, we've brought the wrong weapon." We have the day before us, and home is very close by. Back we go and get the "Avant Tout" twelve-bore. Gun and retriever get some snipe and a waterhen. The dear old dog works to perfection. Back, and the birds in the larder, pin feathers stored with the others.

The rod and reel are taken again. Operations begin at the bottom of the Earl's water. Casting carefully in shallows and deeps; edges of weed-beds tried—nothing happens.

Then to the tail end of the fork and again a blank. Now to the tail of Pike Pool and for the first time, for

me, a spinner goes in there. The Bar Spoon comes down alongside a bed of weeds, in a nice little run. Shallow over the weed: at my feet a 6 feet deep hole, clear as crystal. A gentle pluck at the spoon and we fancy it must be a two pounder. Fast down the stream comes the fish, the Malloch barely keeping a tether. Then into that pool swims my fish: surely, it must be a twenty pounder. A lovely sight in that water. No sign of the spoon, so one hopes she's well hooked. Away up stream, and we feel more of her weight this time. The river bends there left-handed. Round the corner she swings, the line swinging near to some spire-grass. Tight line and all seems well. We anticipate trouble. Then, for some unknown reason the spoon comes back to me. The horror of that moment! One supposes most fishers have known similar ones.

I must tell someone, so I tell Hector, and he, dog-like, scenting trouble, shows his sympathy in his own way.

Try again and again. Go homewards, trying to realize it.

Upon the Canal bank are three roach fishers. Tell them have lost *a* fish. Have they a bait? "Yes, you can have it." A roach of maybe a pound. 'Twill serve. But it doesn't.

That big fish was a true magnet—when an hour could be spared or stolen the rod was after her.

Twice we saw something of her. Once a huge tail was waved in the air in the middle of a weed-bed, and she was spawning. Another time, apparently, in the corner where we found her, someone dropped a cart-wheel, flat. Just like that.

A day of snow came—26th March, 1917—three months to the day. The knee-hole desk claimed me from nine to one and after. It's two-fifteen p.m., and a meeting at four-thirty two and a half miles away. There's time to try her. That thirty pounder was caught in snow—and to-day? Who may say?

The same rod, reel and spoon, but with a better hook, and the telescopic gaff are collected. And we went across in the snow. Hector out, of course. Pike Pool fished blank.

Below is an elbow turn—a right-angled one. A deep pool with a hollow bank. We make down to it. Hector, ahead, is called to heel and a cast made. The spoon has come half-way across, and the rod is switched over from left to right to bring the spoon right up the slack water. This was hardly done, when—crash! She came partly out of the water! Struck and missed it.

"So here you are, then?" She sent a big wave that went a long way up stream—watched it go. She made my knees tremble and muff my next cast. The line hitched round the reel ring of the Malloch and the spoon fell into the weeds just amid pool near the edge of the slack water. A flick of the Vibration rod put it on the bank. All was set right, and the next cast was a repetition of the first, save that she took savagely. As on 26th December, 1916, she came to me *at once*. Mindful of that, I believe I knelt down in an unconscious endeavour to keep hold of her.

The rod was bent finely. Finding herself held she rushed to and fro across the pool a few times—then down, right on to the shallows. Here she altered her mind and

rushed hard up again and into the weed-bed. Her strength and the power of the rod sent the fine wire through the weeds. Out she came.

Into the slack water, at my feet. Head down stream. Nothing like beaten yet, she lay still. Then I noticed what made her delay. She had some weeds on her head, and they were over her eyes. "Stay there another five seconds, and I'll gaff you." Warily the telescopic was unshipped and pulled out. I gaffed her. Spray and struggle, as you imagine, from an unbeaten fish. Had to hold the gaff firmly. Out she came, and the priest killed her and the balance weighed her. Eighteen and a half pounds.

"Bill" was working in his allotment and saw the gaffing. The baker came from the road and said it was the "biggest fish he had ever seen."

Three more casts and then home. Bill comes across out of the Marsh for a look. "You've got him then. Fourteen—no, seventeen pounds." He's not far out.

Home, and the fun of photographing her. Now she hangs nearby the other Bigger One.

14th March, 1907

Baits from Leicester—Permission hard to get—A spot in the river—Too hard a strike—Away to the lake—Mad on the feed—Too hard again—The haunt of the wild duck—A dead live-bait—Gold and silver—Will the motor go?—Twenty-one pike.

Come with us to-day, me and the Doctor. We are going to R.H. Lake in his car. We have ordered a

score of baits from Leicester. They arrived at eleven o'clock.

There was a gale of wind, enough to knock some m.p.h. off the speed. We got to the Vicarage and the accumulators gave out. So we pulled her into the Vicarage stable and left her there. The Doctor didn't seem to worry about his accumulators.

Out came the can and off to the water. He had left his rod at the lodge (I couldn't have left 'em unless I was bound to, could you?) and called for it, as was his custom when he had a season's permission. This year he had been over once, and was the only one. Permission was very hard to get.

We tried in a spot in the river at the lower end of the Lake—a favourite spot with the Doctor. Before he had been in a minute he had a run. He struck with vigour—like a horse kicking—and lost his fish and bait. Almost immediately after, I had a run and landed a 1½ pounder. Put him back. Another one of the same size to the Doctor, also put back. And a run to me from a little 'un.

Now we began with twenty baits, and this seemed like wasting them, so we moved to the Lake and began where we should have commenced.

A pause for half an hour and T. had a run and he landed what proved to be one of the best of the day, one of 4½ lbs. Then one, an ounce or two less, to me.

Then they came on the feed, as I have very seldom seen them do. We now suffered some losses; Doctor one, and I two. My two, the Diary says, were played right in and got off.

Every bait killed a fish except those few thrown off in casting.

The Doctor was using a sea rod—and his next fish knew it! My tackle was 8-foot split cane and a 5-inch vulcanite Slater's reel from Newark.

Doctor gets a run and struck him so hard that disaster followed. At the run, he lowered his rod, and then struck like billy-oh! Like a sea angler casting over his head. And ping! went his gimp, coming down with that vile frayed end that gimp has when it is broken. Damage repaired and we kept on catching fish. My score was six.

All the fish in the lake looked like old ones. Their heads were a trifle on the big side, and the lower jaw was very thick and heavy. And, bar the small ones, were a level lot all through.

At this time the Medico moved an adjournment to a pool (for wild duck) on the river. The water was shallow and thick and we did nothing, though we saw a pike strike.

We were left with three live-bait and mine was dead. And I proposed a return to the Lake. Carried. Doctor approved, for almost at once he got another of 4½ lbs.; the nicest fish of the day; and lost another.

I went to the Plane Tree, where we had started, hoping the wind would work my dead bait sufficiently.

The float and pilot drifted down wind, the light pilot, of course, leading. Presently the float stopped and the pilot: and did not rise, the float, so freely. Then drifted again and stopped. Then the float passed the pilot and then began to move against the wind and

slowly went down. A three pounder has caused this curious behaviour. Take 'em all round these fish had taken baits well: not like they will sometimes.

Here we are, barely four p.m., and no live-bait left. Doctor said he'd watch me spin for half an hour. Wouldn't, couldn't hear of this. So lent him my favourite spoon. Before my Coxon's Aerial had replaced the 5-inch Slater he had run a fish and landed a 4½ pounder.

So that looked like business. I had another spoon: a big golden and silver spoon. Used before but never successfully. To-day? It should. And a Caledonian—tried him first, though I did not know his merits as well as I know them now. And put on the big spoon. "They ought to take it," says the Doctor, "there's enough gold up at the Hall." A touch and one followed to within 4 yards of the bank and next time he had it. Four and a half pounds. The first fish on that spoon, which has got me fish since, one or two in one of the most famous of English pike lakes.

Away down the shore of the Lake and three more followed; the last one had pretty near pouched it.

The Doctor said we must knock off and see if the motor would go and the accumulators function. Somehow he had got hold of a fresh one: I didn't see him do it! But he had got it!

We heard the Lake had only been fished once before this season! Off on the way home, getting a sack and cherry brandy at a farm house. Our new accumulator seemed disposed to be troublesome, but we got home safely. Our bag was 21 pike: 10½ brace for five hours'

fishing. Doctor 10 pike, "Silver Devon" 11. My score in the Diary is:— "11 Jack: 1½ lbs., 4¼ lbs., 3 lbs., 4¼ lbs., 4 lbs., 4 lbs., 3 lbs. (live-baiting); 4½ lbs., 1½ lbs., 3 lbs., 4 lbs. (spoon, golden and silver)."

Very few days in the ordinary way bring more than 5½ brace to one's rod.

One of the fish went to a budding taxidermist to be mounted. I was sorry when I saw him in his case. I didn't, couldn't recognize him. He seemed to be in a nightmare: he looked, and, I fancied, must have felt as if he was meant to represent a roach, that is a live-bait!

Not a day of specimen fish, but a good enough day, by a lovely lake.

12th January, 1918

We have fished by river and by lake, now come with Arthur and me, and try a day with canal pike.

The weather fine and cold, with some clouds and a little sunshine—the wind's in the west. "When the wind is in the west then" and so on. Gets light between twelve-thirty and one-thirty. No, I don't remember: but it's put down in the Fishing Diary.

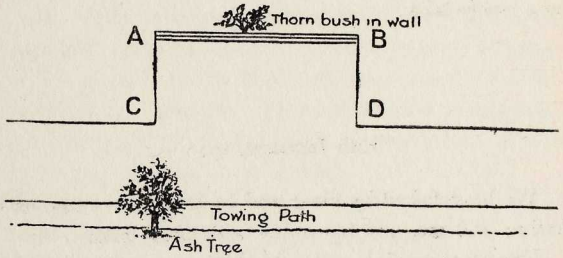
Arthur comes along the towing path—not in his car to-day—bringing fourteen of the best of live-bait in my big can. Vibration rod and 2⅝-inch Malloch reel are ready, with Jardine float, pilot, and single treble

snap. Dear old Hector, best of dogs, is ready too. He has brought me water-hens and a rabbit before to-day. He has his sport and knows enough not to disturb our water. Once, by the way, he hunted a water-hen some way ahead—scenting her in a high bank walking and swimming along the canal edge.

Wondered what effect it would have, so spun along carefully and landed five very good perch.

Come along, we are bound for the Bason. It's a bit of water where there was, years ago, a wharf, and it's more than twice the width of the canal in some places.

It's cold, and in places as we go we find ice on the water. Beyond the Bason "The Short Pound" was frozen over for half its length, we found.



AB is the old wall; CD an imaginary line along and about which you get most runs. And it's a good cast to get there. AD and CB are shallow, about 18 inches to 2 feet, and CD is the end of the shallows.

On reaching the Bason at ten-forty-five we find John D. using his permission for roach fishing.

My rod and tackle are ready, so the Malloch soon sends out a live-bait. Now I had been up here in July and had marked down one, a yard long I made him. Good enough!

Out went the bait. "You don't waste much time," says Arthur, putting up his tackle. Near the east end comes a run—a nice working run. Floats travel along CD and I almost had time to fasten, but not quite. The hook came away, and a nice swirl on the surface showed where the pike kept the bait. And, of course, I thought it was the big one!

A fresh bait and soon came a second run—not so far over—and Arthur gaffed out a chap of 3½ lbs. for me.

Another bait and another run, again "not so far over," and a two pounder was lifted out. And I wondered, "How big was that first chap."

Another bait and another run, and a real good fight, making the small Malloch sing its welcome song. And Arthur gaffed him safely. Seven and a quarter pounds, 27¾ inches long, 5½ inches deep.

Arthur was fishing in the west end and I in the east end. Then came A.'s turn and I went to him with my gaff, but, alas! he came unstuck.

Next one to me—4½ lbs. Arthur is using a Hardy rod and Silex reel. He is busy now, rod bending, reel singing—and I gaff his six pounder. That's better, one feels.

My bait goes out on CD, and a trifle nearer D than before. Jardine float slowly moves and sinks down about a foot—white top clearly visible. A pause and a strike. Hullo! summut weighty. He bends the rod and we don't see him for a while. "Arthur, he's a big 'un."

A. comes along, and old John, too. John has been quietly watching while after the roach. Now he's

bursting with advice. "Gen'lemen, may I venture to suggest—but there, you knows as well as I do." And John dries up.

This fellow makes for deep water and then for the Bridge and comes back again. Then he jiggers and rolls over and over. We get him near the path and—"Gaff him, Arthur, he's hooked in the cheek." And he gaffed him. Twelve pounds, 35½ inches long, 6 inches deep, 9½-inch head.

Had he run instead of jiggered he would have made a better show.

Then Arthur had a run and got a 2½ pounder. Then 'twas mid-day—and lunch and coffee in Thermos, and 'baccy.

Arthur wandered off to the Lock—the wind died down to almost nothing. About one-forty-five a little more ripple and a cast towards the Thorn Bush. A 3½ pounder came out on the tow path.

Hector was busy with rats all day: keeping an eye on his master—bless him—and sharing his lunch.

A. came back and we both had runs, losing some baits. Till we had only four left. Near the east end up near A. then a run came to me, and an attempt to fasten flicked the tackle minus the bait half-way back.

A fresh bait and another run—and a more deliberate fasten on him. A strong fish was fighting—made several rushes, one a good one, cut out some weeds in his travel. He played better than the twelve pounder. This chap made some fine swirls as he rolled about and lashed out. In he came and A. got him. Seven and a quarter pounds, 30½ inches long, 4¾ inches deep.

And now two baits left—both cast off!

This day was our introduction to the value of the Bason. Some 30 pike since, over 5 lbs., have we had there.

My seven fish went into my big salmon bag, and after 2½ miles of carrying, one felt one knew something about them.

My score in the Diary is: 7 pike: 3½ lbs., 2 lbs., 7¼ lbs., 4½ lbs., 12 lbs., 3½ lbs., 7¼ lbs.—40 lbs.

CHAPTER XIV

THE "O" CAST WITH THE MALLOCH REEL

The Scottish Dee—A skilful keeper—On Dartmoor—Necessity is the mother—A handy method—Practically motionless—The fulcrum—Backbone and spring—A la golf stroke—Lock back the drum—Handle down—The wind on slack line.

ONE day I was spinning for salmon on the Scottish Dee, and was trying to fish the A—— C—— Pool from the right-hand bank, going downstream. This pool had on that side a very high bank, with trees growing on the summit. There was a narrow path more or less cut out of the rock about five or six feet above the water, and some long way below the top.

The Nottingham style of reel was in commission at the time, and though line was got off the reel in casting it was not "at an angle of 45 degrees." The bait was falling far too near the fishing path.

It seemed a hopeless position, until the keeper from the Castle came down and fished it. He used a Malloch reel, and fished it well. This seemed to indicate that the Malloch was able to give the others some points—and Mallochs were purchased: 2⅝, 3¼, and 4 inches—and the latter a multiplier.

The bushes and the high rock border or edge simply did not allow of the semi-circular swing advocated for Nottingham reels.

. . . . . .

Now we will move right down south to glorious Devon. We are fishing on Dartmoor; down the East Dart, where you may still use a spinner for salmon (thank goodness!).

Look at this lovely pool. At its head a fringe of mountain ash and withies in a pile of boulders; waterfalls—the sounds of running water, dippers and sandpipers our companions.

There simply must be trout in this pool, maybe a "Zalmon." "'Iss I rakkon, 'zalmon' vur shure us be to Dartymoor."

Well, the golden Devon simply *had* to be got into that pool. See the foaming run widening out into amber-coloured eddies—look behind that boulder. There must be trout there. There were. And the "O" cast came into being.

While salmon and trout fishing were really answerable for the idea, the cast was finally worked out while pike fishing. The cast is worth knowing, and it is very handy. Equally with the other branches, in pike fishing you are apt to meet places where casting necessitates the power of being able to overcome obstructions, sometimes difficult ones.

An "angler" (?) was one day finding many faults with the Malloch, not one of which was founded on common sense. He wound up by saying, "You don't need a reel like that." Then he asked permission to fish

in my Club's waters. On getting it he said his gadget in spinning reels would do anything he wanted.

Being a bit anxious to have the result of a practical trial with this particular reel I recommended one bit of the fishery as holding fish. It does. And it also possesses a narrow bit of towing path which takes a good bit of doing to fish properly. He came back from his day's fishing. "I say, that's an awful bit you recommended me to try. I couldn't manage to fish it at all well." "Nuf sed," I thought.

The "O" cast is called the "O" cast because you get the main part of your impetus by making the bait swing in an "O" shape.

You may have your shoulders touching a wall or a hay-rick which extends beyond the length of your rod, and *then* you can cast your bait well out straight in front of you.

The grip of the rod is as before advised—Right hand controls your reel, handle pointing to the right, and your left hand is in front of your reel.

Figure A shows the start of the cast. Now having got there just swing your bait out Right, in the direction of the arrow. Then you begin swinging across to the Left, and don't pause till your bait is flying to the spot you aim at. Begin and go on, gradually increasing the speed of the bait.

Figure B shows the rod at right angles to your feet, or a line drawn from toe to toe, more or less. You notice the bait flying outwards in direction of arrow.

Figure C shows the course the bait makes in swinging through the "O." When your bait is doing this your

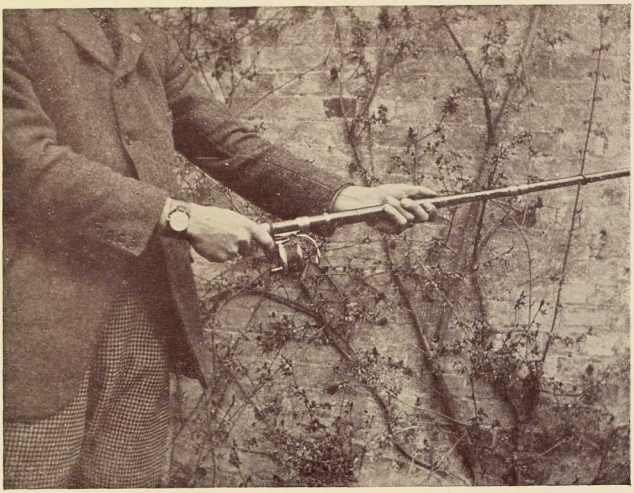


Photo : G.E.A.
Casting with Malloch Reel. Grasp of Rod and Reel.

Photo. G.E.A.
MAKING "O" of O Cast. Notice Rod Point Vibrating.

To Face p. 150.

rod is *practically* motionless (while the bait moves smartly).

When the bait has reached X you use your left hand as a fulcrum of a lever, and tuck the right hand smartly in towards the body. And at the proper moment you release the line from under the first finger of the left hand and the bait flies out, crossing the line of its former swing, and completing the "O."

You will find the cast comparatively easy with the Malloch reel. The point worth noting is that you must have a *sudden* release of the line to do it, and this you can only do well with the Malloch reel. I believe only with the Malloch.

The value of the cast is, as in the case of the Spey Throw with the salmon fly, your line and bait do not come at any time *behind you.*

Points to remember are, smoothness in casting, increasing speed, and *sudden* release. You will be surprised at the speed of the bait in the "O" portion, if you bring it smartly across from the right-hand side.

It is like a good many other things in this world—It's easy to do when you know how; but it's rather difficult to describe.

These diagrams and an account of the cast appeared in the middle pages of the *Fishing Gazette* of 1st January, 1921. And through the kindness of Mr. R. B. Marston, the editor, I am allowed to reproduce them here. In the course of some correspondence with the late Mr. P. D. Malloch, of Perth, the inventor and patentee of the reel, he says, referring to the article mentioned, "I read it twice over. To me it is very clear and

interesting. I have several letters drawing my attention to it."

It was pleasing to have this from Mr. Malloch. And I hope that if ever this book gets into the hands of those who use the Malloch they will try the cast. Am sure they will find it useful.

A rod with backbone and a nice springy action is most pleasant for making the cast with, though it can be done, too, with a stiff rod.

It's like a golf stroke, in that you want your " swing " right smooth, without a jerk, with increasing speed, and " timing " for the release.

Practise the cast : you can learn it in a field or on your lawn. And you will find it will bring you many fish. It's the sort of cast that will make you fish difficult places.

There's many a fish lies in a nasty awkward place; and there are men who pass such places by, just because——

The " O " cast will get you many a pike from a bad place. You get some confidence from the fact that you can spin your bait in any place.

And often enough the best fish lie in the worst and most difficult casts. Writing of this reminds me of a scene on a narrow stream thickly wooded, on one of the best trout streams in our land.

This fisherman was very voluble to the keeper as I chanced to come upstream. I knew of a fish in a very difficult cast. You had to get your fly into just one spot for him—to a hair. He lay immediately off the point of an overhanging branch of an ash. And a willow made

the back cast a matter of delicacy. The angler (!) in question was demanding the cutting down of all the trees up this stream. Made one wonder what the fishery would be like, and where the fish would go, up or down its length, if he had his way!

Here's a tip for using the Malloch, for the grasp of the right or reel hand.

You may have noticed, that if your reel has its bolt, which governs the twist, fairly slack and you do nothing to check it, that the "pluck" of the flying line gives your drum a partial turn back towards the "wind in" position?

This was happening to me one day, and for a while, for the life of me, I could not discover the source of the trouble. My casts were being let and hindered, and the casting was not clean and "suent." When I did find out what was the matter I hit upon the remedy.

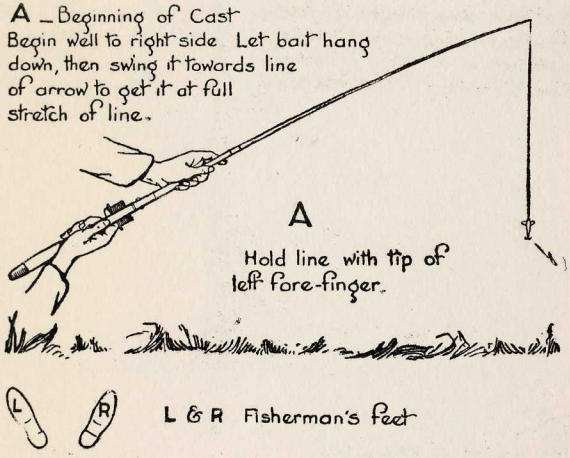
After I had turned the reel for casting, I placed the upper part of the first finger of the right hand against the reel-plate, pressing with the finger-tip. This locked the reel securely and gave a rigid drum to withstand the "pluck" of the line as it left the drum in flying coils.

The trouble ceased like magic, and once more one could enjoy the fun of casting cleanly.

Another dodge with the Malloch is this: when you have reeled up, leave the handle at the lowest point of the plate's circumference. Always. No, sir; this is not a fad. For it ensures the important detail that after gripping line with left forefinger and turning drum, you have as short a bit of line 'twixt drum and forefinger as you can have. Now this is important. And when

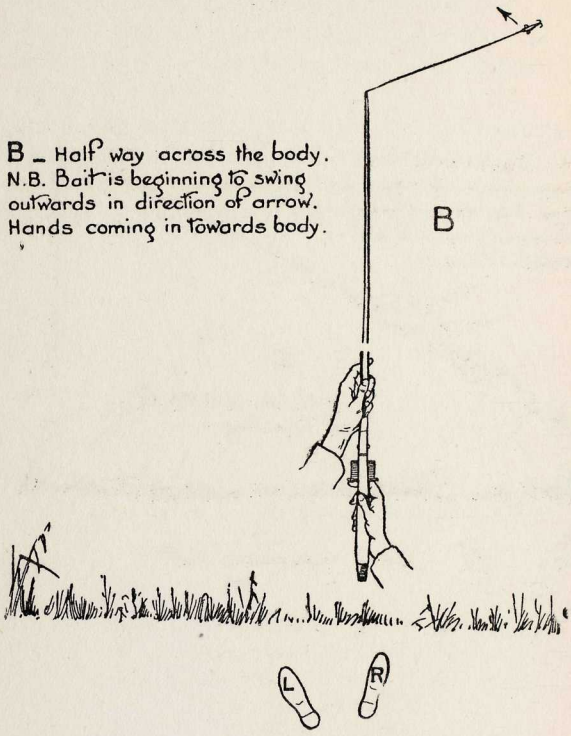
there's a wind blowing you have very little line for wind pressure to deal with. If you have an extra inch or two of slack line in a wind, the wind will get a hold of it and, pulling a few more inches off your turned drum will probably baffle you when you cast, and you'll find a tangle. And likely enough you find it a little difficult to diagnose the trouble.

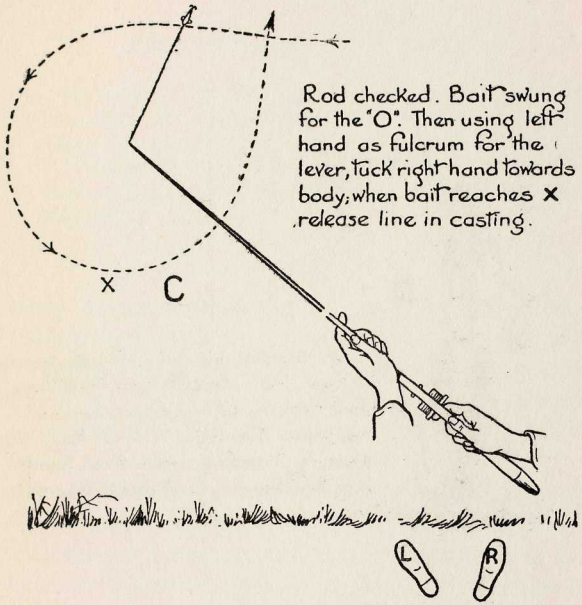
Little tips and dodges make such a heap of difference in using master spinning reels. The Malloch is an admirable servant, but if you neglect little points of detail you may easily find it your master.



L & R Fisherman's feet

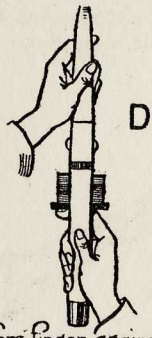
B – Half way across the body.
N.B. Bait is beginning to swing outwards in direction of arrow.
Hands coming in towards body.





Rod checked. Bait swung for the "O". Then using left hand as fulcrum for the lever, tuck right hand towards body; when bait reaches X release line in casting.

As the bait flies out for the spot aimed at, rod follows and points towards it. Rod and line being held in straight line.



D – Right hand grip of rod – ready to cast – with Malloch reel. Fore-finger tip of right hand is pressed against reel plate. This locks it firmly back & prevents it getting askew from flying line. Left hand in front Holds line with fore-finger against rod until released

CHAPTER XV

ODDMENTS IN THE WAY O' TACKLE

Bags big enough—The Tay Bag—Care in selection—Sailcloth bags—Dee fish carriers—Improved Dart pattern—Spinner boxes—Mementoes—Gaff and net sling—Rod rest—A tea-cup—Shooting stick—Arm your spinning lead on the trace—Spools—Bait carriers—Umbrella rings—Rod rings—Ferrules—A rod to lend.

Bags

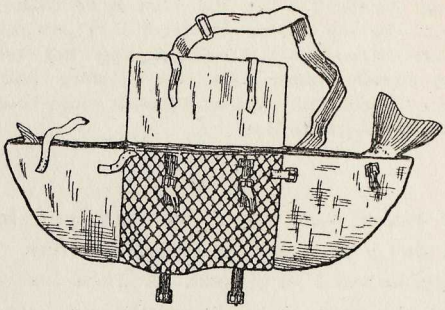
MANY fishers carry bags, and their gear in them, which ain't o' much account for real hard use. A pike bag gets an awful lot of wear. A friend has just been staying with me for a good turn at the pike. He brought a new bag with him, which gave out in the first few days.

You are some day going to ask your bag to carry several heavy pike, and, maybe, your real big 'un.

When you get him you'll be anxious to get him to the stuffer in as good condition as possible. You won't want to put him on a carrier, or double him up in a small bag. Therefore we come to the first requisite in a bag: big enough for your needs. One which will hold half a dozen nice fish. One with expanding gussets which can be opened to admit your twenty pounder and keep him more or less flat.

Then you want room for your tackle, and there's a good deal of it. And lunch wants stowing away. You

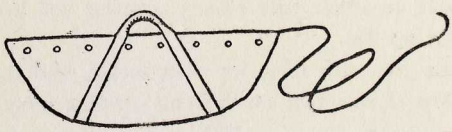
won't beat a " Tay Bag "—it carries a lot of fish and big ones. Get the largest size. Moreover, this bag has a fish bag, or pocket with expanding gussets—and a large pocket for gear and lunch, and a net in front for your Thermos flask and mackintosh cape or coat.



The TAY BAG in use. Note short straps to keep gussets in place when folded in. See the net is roomy, and good pocket between it and fish partition. A *wide* webbing strip is a good thing to carry on shoulders.

When you are purchasing see that the shoulder band is strongly and firmly stitched to a leather patch. Some day you'll cross a fence or ditch with a heavy load, and your bag's stitching will be severely tested; and if the job is not well done it won't hold up.

This is the best shoulder bag there is, this " Tay Bag."

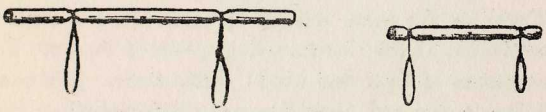


There is also a most useful article made of sail-cloth. You can buy them brown or grey. It's a large bag, and will hold your tackle and your fish. But it's a bag for hand carrying.

There is a line fastened on to it to lace up your bag by means of the brass eyelet holes. It is not waterproof. But it gets stiff in rain and keeps out a lot of water. You need, however, one hand free to carry it. Before the war they were five shillings.

Fish Carriers

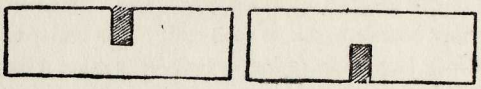
The tip for these came from salmon fishing on the Dee. Cut a stout bit of stick—hazel or alder or any will do, 5 inches long. Cut nicks at each end. Tie two pieces of leather boot-lace, one at each end. It is better to make one a long loop 10 to 12 inches long—the other a loop 9 to 10 inches long. Then the bigger loop is threaded through his mouth and the stick slipped through and the slip loop formed and then the second loop is slipped over the wrist of the tail. I have one of this pattern and another 4 inches longer—9 in all. The loops are 5 inches apart allowing 2 inches of hazel to project at each end. These long ends allow of hanging your pike up in the crutch of a tree, so keeping him off the mud, leaves, etc.



Spinner Boxes

There are many and fascinating boxes of such a kind displayed in the various catalogues which come into one's hands. Partitions, trays, clip lids to partition : all kinds of very pleasing boxes. But they cost money. There's one that always causes me profound pondering. It is a beautifully fitted box for carrying bodies of Devon minnows. But where on earth do you carry those grisly trebles? In your pocket? or loose in the bag?

Personally we would rather have a box for the tackles and carry the bodies loose. And you need a few tackles—dozens, by the look of that box! For you may lose some Devons.



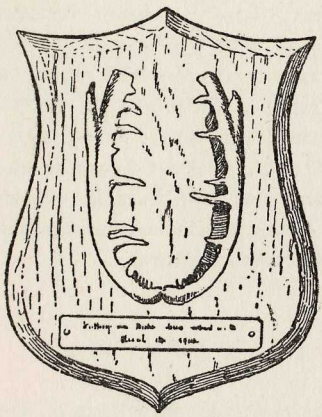
I was fishing once on a reservoir where the spinning minnow is allowed when I met a pal who was working round in the opposite direction, and as the American said, " he wasn't the maddest man I ever saw, but he was the maddest *looking*." He had lost ten minnows at two shillings a time!

But you can have some very useful minnow carriers made at home. Use your ¼ lb. and ½ lb. baccy tins. These for the cases, and cut up cigar boxes to form the partitions. Look, here's a Log Cabin ¼ lb. tin. Four partitions of cigar box wood : easily made. Just now it holds 12 gold and silver Devons, a blue and silver and a small salmon spoon. All the Devon tackles are in one partition.

A larger box will make six or eight partitions. But for your reservoir at home you need something bigger. I got one at the Army and Navy Stores, opening out into three trays with partition lids, some years ago for fifteen shillings. Of course it is more to-day, but it's very useful. And holds a goodly number and variety of baits.

Mementoes

You sometimes get a fish which you would for size or some incident connected with his capture like to send to



MEMENTO.

the stuffer's. But, maybe, finance or " summut is agin " it. You have a choice. One is an outline of him on paper. And the best paper you may buy of the grocer. A halfpenny (or penny perhaps, now) sheet of brown paper. It is stiff and gives the shape well. Lay poor

old John's body on it—run your pencil round him, after spreading out his tail, anal and dorsal fins—the natural substance on the fins will adhere to the paper just enough to keep them in place. Having drawn, now cut out the shape. Place this on an oak or mahogany board, sufficiently long and deep, and you have the foundation for a pipe, tool, or gadget rack.

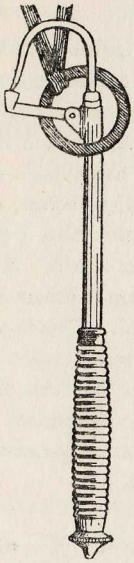
Look here—pipe-rack, twelve pounder in Canal, for 8 pipes—tool-rack for 8 tools, 13½ pounder in Canal; two more pipe-racks each for 12 pipes, 12 lbs. 8 ozs. and 12 lbs. 10 ozs. in the D.

Or you may have no desire for these. Here's another. Cut off your pike's head and boil it slowly; when it will easily come apart take out the lower jaw. It has a gristle hinge at the point: be careful not to break this. Now open the jaw to the fitting angle. Let it dry for a couple of days. Cut out an oak or other shield and mount the lower jaw on this shield, attaching with fine wire. Two drawing pins will fasten the label with particulars underneath the trophy.

Gaff and Net Sling

One of the most necessary parts of one's gear, and if we like we can spend a guinea or two upon it. But you need not. Get a plated harness-ring at your saddler's —1¾ inches inside measurement. I got a very stout fellow for ninepence. And get a good sound strap from him, too. This size will carry your telescopic gaff, the cross-bar for the point-protector hangs well in the ring.

And if your landing-net has, as it should have, a knuckle-joint, then this will hang in it, too.



HARNESS RING AND STRAP CARRIER FOR TELESCOPIC GAFF.

GAFF AND SLING.

Live-baiter's Rod Rest

This has been mentioned before. It is made of two short lengths of zinc tubing, 5 inches for the upper piece to hold the butt of the rod, and 4 or 5 inches for the down tube. The two short tubes are soldered together so that they make an obtuse and an acute angle. Not forming two right angles. It is hardly of any use giving an actual

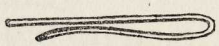
measurement in inches for the size because the top tube must fit your rod butt sufficiently nearly *and loosely*. Your rod must have the button unscrewed, or removed if it is a fixture.

You may line the inside with leather. Cut a length as wide as the inside measurement of the tube, leaving an inch or so over at each end. Now place round inside tube. Snick the extending inch lengths in four places, fold over back on to the outside of the tube and whip down with waxed cord, or better, stout saddler's-thread.

Fit the rest or crutch to a 4 feet or 4 feet 6 inches broom handle or other shaft. A Boy Scout's pole is stouter and thicker than a broom handle. Also it has a slightly swelled top end. This is useful because it allows shaping a flat-sided and broader blade to stick in the ground. Shape it flat and this flattening will prevent the wind blowing your rod round.

A screw bolt and butterfly-nut to attach metal to wood makes a good job of it.

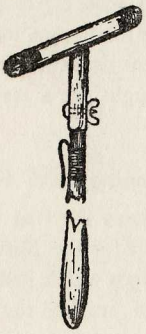
Remember to have it not as this tends to raise your point and prevent a run by the fish pulling your rod out of the rest if you are not "standing by" when the run comes to you.

You may also whip on a  trouser clip just below the metal head. This will prove of use when changing ground. You may clip it to the ring or strap of your bag, or into the pocket edge. Leaves your hands free for bait can and rod.

It's a gadget that you will appreciate in muddy

places, and banks with obstacles. It keeps your tackle and rod clean, and saves a vast deal of stooping in a day's live-baiting.

When you get a run, push your rod straight forward 6 inches, and you are ready for John to do his worst.



Crutch, or Zinc Head, leather lined inside, showing outside whippings.

Butterfly Nut and Bolt.

Trouser Clip and whipping.

Spear-bladed point of shaft.

Cup

One piece of commissariat tackle which one hesitates to mention, is, however, so useful that perhaps it may go in. Every fisherman knows the valuable usefulness of the Thermos, and no one better than the autumn and winter angler for pike. The one part of the flask the writer dislikes is the metal cup head. It's a difficult thing to keep spotlessly clean because of the screw; it's too small for a good drink, and having no handle, burns one's fingers. You cannot get a good long drink, and it's often mighty hot—so you put it down and over it goes. So carry an enamelled cup with a handle. One of my friends has one which just fits over the top of the closed

Thermos, cork and cap and all. It's practically no more to carry, and is most useful.

Shooting Stick

One of the telescopic kind is the best. Closed up it's not much longer than a good big bag is wide, and if you are going to try a very likely spot for a spotted good 'un —well, there! you can sit over him. Messrs. Hardy Brothers have just brought out a very good one standing securely on three legs.

The Spinning Lead Armed

You remember perhaps the lead for the Malloch reel is the Archer lead: and for the Nottingham pattern reel the lead of various shapes which hang below the line.

Here's a method of arming the Archer lead which will do for either. Of course, in the case of "below the line" leads, you need not twist the wire round the lead.

Arm your lead, and you are, so to say, "fishing with two flies instead of one," giving your bag a double chance as the "wet" fly-fisher would say.

When I am making up a trace which I know will have to be weighted I often select a neat plated swivel as it may form a sort of "head" to the lead.

Now fasten your swivels in the ordinary way. Pass your wire through, leaving 1½ inches over, whip round five or six times, and cut off close. Now attach the lead (Archer), to the other end of the swivel. Pass wire through oval ring of swivel, leaving 5 or 6 inches of an end. Whip five or six times. Now place lead on main wire of trace. Wind end round lead, and bring out

through corkscrew wire point. Slip end through eye of treble and round both wires whip five or six times. Cut end off close.

Now cut from spool 1½ inches or 2-inch piece of wire and bend once round shaft of treble. Twist up tight and cut off ends. This will make your treble lie snug to trace.

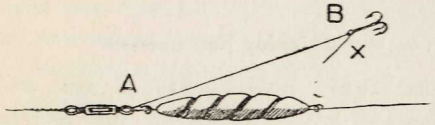


FIGURE I.

Attach Archer lead to trace, leaving a long end, X. Pass X through A, leaving long end, and fasten at A. Pass X through B and fasten, leaving short end. Twist AB round lead, bringing B to C. Twist X round and cut off.

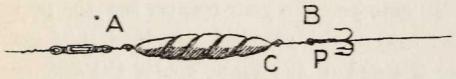


FIGURE II.

When treble lies along trace, secure shank of treble at point P with one loop, and twist to trace. Tighten up with pliers and cut off ends. This will make your treble lie close and snug to your trace.

Spools for Traces

A very convenient and useful gadget for the spinner's purposes is the wooden spool for carrying traces. They are round and flat boards in which there is a hole bored in the groove in the rim for inserting the swivel. Slip it in and wind your trace round the board: the swivel cannot slip. When you come to the end swivel you use a wire pin with flat ring head. Place the point through

the swivel oval ring and drive it into the wood. This holds your trace safe and secure.

You may need five or six traces, and you may use these spools for them. You may get them from Horwood, of Killin, for a trifle apiece. One of Alfred Dunhill's quarter-pound baccy tins will hold half a dozen. The tins might be made for them.

Spinning Bait Carriers

Messrs. Hardy Brothers make a most convenient little pocket of leather for holding your spinning bait, or for that matter, live-bait tackle too.

When you want to move, on foot or by boat, to a fresh spot your tackle has a most inconvenient habit of getting its hooks into anything from your stockings to trees. With this gear you slip your spinner into the pocket, and with the long thong attached you bind it to your rod, slipping the end of the thong under the last couple of twists, and pull fairly taut. Then you may shift your ground without the necessity of unhooking from unwanted objects.

Umbrella Rings

What on earth? Put one or two on the butt of your rod, and you will find a ring most useful. For two reasons or purposes. First, it will prevent the rain-water running down the rod on to your hand and up your sleeve. I remember once walking a good spell on Dartmoor for trout fishing, in a very thick fog. My Father complained of his hand getting very wet from the

water running on to his hand. Had not noticed it myself, and remembered my ring was in its place.

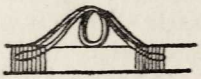
A second purpose is to slip a hook of a treble under the ring, and it secures your bait and holds it firmly.

Rod Rings

There are various patterns of these. Perhaps they should have been dealt with in the chapter on the Rod. They are, however, so various in design and pattern that they may be placed in a separate section.

The best and most costly are agate rings. These are fitted throughout to rods of highest excellence only. They are liable to chip and crack, and may cost anything from 2s. 6d. to 11s. or 12s. each. Now this is a very serious consideration when it comes to spares for replacements.

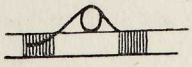
Next in cost, but equal in efficiency, come porcelain rings. They are by comparison cheap, costing not shillings but more like pennies apiece. You may buy them with the ring of porcelain in a ring of white metal, or protected by one or two ribs in front and back. Or there are the dreadnought or buttress patterns. Get your rings with wires back and front. Perhaps these are the best and most practical pattern. Then of metal rings there are



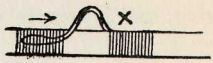
GUARDED RING. 8

HARDY'S BRIDGE RING.

the well-known bridge rings of Messrs. Hardy, Bell's Life, and Snake.



BELL'S LIFE.



SNAKE.

The first two are both very good patterns. In particular Messrs. Hardy's rings are cut out of the solid, and are very strong. The Bell's Life pattern are very good in use. But we fancy that the useful snake pattern sometimes cause a jam just where the ring comes close to the rod at X.

For your rings choose larger sizes rather than smaller. It is a good plan to have a uniform size throughout. In the event of a tangle occurring—and they will occur sometimes—while casting and while playing a big fish—if you have good big rings your tangle will pass through without jamming. This is *most* important.

If I had my choice and " my ship had come home " I would have all agate on all my spinning and live-baiting rods. The ship has not done so, and so one has porcelain on most. The porcelain rings make a curious little whispering rattle—for they should be loose in the metal rings, and so able to turn in the casting. Then there is no risk of their wearing in one place. They do not wear as a rule, and they seem to put a polish on the line. They seem to be almost frictionless. The difference between porcelain and all metal rings must be tested to be realized.

If £ s. d. necessitates metal rings, then have your top ring and butt ring of porcelain, and keep some spares. The important rings are the butt and top rings from the point of friction. The advantage of having porcelain rings here is enormous.

You should take some care with your top ring. There are three very good patterns—Hardy Brothers' " Tulip " top ring, the " porcelain loop " of the A. & N. Stores, and the special top ring supplied by G. Bustin, of Oxford. All these have stays or ribs to prevent the line getting a hitch just immediately below the end ring, and are efficient for their purpose.

A " Description " of Spinning by a Roach Fisher

Perhaps this is worth repeating.

Was coming home along the towing path and found a roach fisher at his sport.

" Had any sport lately, sir? "

" Yes, I got six pike the other day, best one just over 9 lbs."

" Live-bait or spinner, sir? "

" Spinner."

" Ah! I don't like spinning: you see, sir, you no sooner hook than you have to land."

" Do you? " I thought to myself!

Ferrules

These are of simply vital importance, and need great care in selection. Roughly you may put them in three classes: ferrules with hitchers to fasten them; suction; lock-fast jointed ferrules. These last are splint ended.

Now personally if I were asked to classify them good, better, best, I should put them in this order: suction; with loop hitchers; lock-fast.

We will take them in that order. Suction joints are considered by many anglers to be the last word in ferrules, and I beg to disagree. For this reason: that in addition to the ferrule, inner and outer, you have no additional gadget for keeping them in place. You rely on the inner and outer portion alone to form "suction." Now to me this is entirely a misnomer. I would prefer "compression." "My dear man," you say, "see how they fit." Quite. But you can pull them apart, or twist them, can't you? Now put them together a few hundred times and disjoint. Worn at all? Of necessity they are. Now do you say they fit? Well, put your rod up. Now you have a cushion of compressed air *under* the inner ferrule, and the closer the fit the greater the compression. Well, I had suction joints put on a short single-hand split bamboo and I had them taken off several years ago and bayonet lock-fast put on—and they are there yet. So much for suction joints.

Now the hitcher ferrules. They need tying with thread or silk. But they keep them tight. And again a "but." But your casting line hitches in them and causes trouble. So we look to Messrs. Hardy Brothers, as so often, and find the remedy. I think, that with one exception to be mentioned later, they are the best. Yes, you may be sure they are the best.

They do hold and keep the joints home. I have one of Hardy's rods now in its eighteenth season, and they are still good. When they are fitted to the rod always

see that the bayonet comes down the ferrule on the same side of the rod as the line through the rings. Then the wind or the shake of the rod won't be able to hitch your line alongside the bayonet. Messrs. Hardy's rods always have the bayonet so placed in relation to the line that no fouling can occur.

A word of advice. When putting up and taking down your rods with these joints, never by any chance let your fingers touch any part save the metal. I knew a fine angler once who couldn't imagine what had happened to his split bamboo—all the joints were faulty near the ferrules. Another angler saw him putting up his rod—and the trouble was explained. His hands were six inches from the metal.

And again, don't let your ghillie put your rod up. He may be, most likely is, a good one, but he will not be as careful of your rod as you will. And never lend your best rods. Better, as many anglers do, keep rods for lending. "Oh! yes! you can use No. 1 visitor's rod."

I mentioned one style of joint even better still. Well, I have seen them. You cannot make the ferrules turn or pull out. They are perfect, and belong to a world's champion caster, and incidentally a manufacturer with a great name. The inner ferrule has a ball-ended bolt forced up by a spring. It fits a circular hole in the outer ferrule. It is nice to see how it slips into its place when the hole comes into the right position. It then projects just far enough for the thumb-nail to push it back and allow the end of the hole to ride over the ball end when you wish to disjoint. Topping. They made me break the Tenth Commandment on the spot. "Why

on earth," I said, " don't you put them on the market? " " Well, you know, most men are so careless. They let their ghillies put up their rods. And we should have the works full of repairs and the office full of complaints." So I suppose he was right, but it seemed an awful pity.

Remember your ferrules want a little lubricant. Especially if you are going to keep your rod up for a week or two, or more. In such a case it is a sound policy to take your rod down now and again just to make sure that you can pack it in the rod box when you must.

Of course, the ferrules wear. Look at the wear of putting up and taking down and casting. There was a correspondence discussion in the invaluable *Fishing Gazette* some time ago on the subject of ferrules. I read it with interest, and remember one man complained about them because, as far as I could see, they were not everlasting! His arguments seemed quite unfair and unreasonable. These ferrules will last for years. Mine have. But they will wear, and will turn an eighth or a quarter. Well, you may stop even that.

I was fishing on the West Dart and had the pleasure of meeting an angler who knew the lovely river like a book. He knew the lie of the fish as only the man who has spent over thirty seasons on the river can. I remember one day coming across him, carrying not a rod, but a thumb-stick. " Look there, behind that boulder with the moss, there's a salmon there." Away he went across to the boulder, using his feet and stick most skilfully. It was very bad going. It was a wee pot-hole, but it held salmon. Well, this angler used a 14-footer greenheart with lock-fast joints. One had a

narrow white bandage. When I knew him well enough I asked him what it was. "Oh! that's a bit of bass. It stops the ferrule twisting. It's a very old rod, and we are some way from the tackle shops up here." So I looked; very neat, firm, ends cut close.

No, on the whole, the best, the very best we can get are the lock-fast jointed splint-ended ferrules invented by Messrs. Hardy Brothers.

Gag and Disgorger

These are two invaluable bits of tackle. Your gag, of course, holds pike's mouth open when you are getting out the hooks. *Don't* use a spring pattern, but get those shaped like a pair of scissors. They have a bar to lock them open, and are most efficient. A disgorger you will need to push the hooks out with. You may want, too, a knife with a good long blade. A big pike has a huge mouth armed with a multitude of teeth, and it's something of a job to get your hooks out without a gag and disgorger.

Note on Ferrules

I mentioned above a ferrule with "ball-ended bolt" which one could not purchase. But I am glad to say that now this is not so. The ferrule appears in Hardy's 1923 catalogue as the "Stud-Lock" Joint, 1923 Model. The fact that Mr. J. J. Hardy has them on his favourite trout rod speaks for itself.

CHAPTER XVI

SALMON FISHING: WITH FLY AND SPINNING BAITS

In the beginning—Perch and worm—A boy's big trout—The fisherman's goal—The rod: greenheart and bamboo—A ghillie's opinion—The danger of a sunk line and a broken rod—" They won't stand us chaps "—A useful tip for a sinking line—Hung up behind—Reels should be big enough—Care of your reels—Upper Gannets—A broken spring—Lines—Casts—A twenty-two-and-a-half pounder on trout rod—Spinners—The willow hoop.

THERE seems to be a pretty strong impression among certain authors on angling that the majority of fishermen commence their angling careers with the game and bold-biting perch. Very likely they are near the mark. For perch are an encouraging quarry for young hopefuls. Anyhow, we have to make a start somewhere; and I fancy the bait is pretty nearly always our humble friend the garden worm.

As we say, we have to begin—either with a worm or a natural fly off a bridge. My small son started with a worm and a pound and a half trout: he was about 5¼. He was the happy possessor of a rod given by his paternal grandfather. And he hooked this fish in a narrow stream at the foot of a big elm tree. He kept his point up and that big fish away from the elm roots and brambles without any advice. There must be something in heredity!

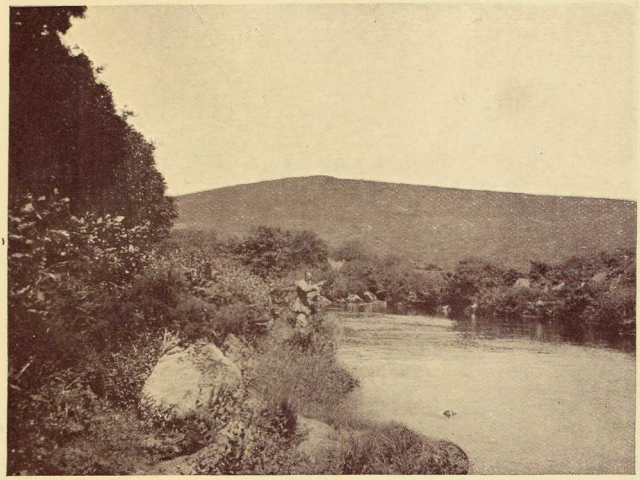


Photo: T.S.G.

TROUT FISHING: QUEENIE POOL.

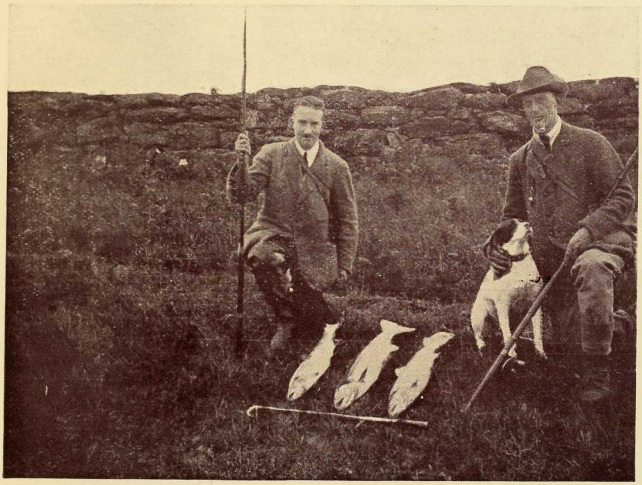


Photo: E.M.G.

Three of Us and three of Them at Wydemeet.

To Face p. 178.

Well, we make a beginning with some fish, but I fancy we all look ahead to the day when we may stand on the banks of a salmon river and hook and land our first salmon.

For that is the ultimate goal of our highest angling hopes. We feel that then we should have matriculated as anglers, if not graduated: taken our degree, in fact.

One feels, I think, a little sorry for the lad whose first fish is a salmon. He has arrived too soon. Far, really far happier he who has worked his way by roach and perch, tench trout and pike up to the glorious strength and vigour of His Majesty the Salmon. His knowledge both of fish and tackle has improved with his tackle, and he can, by comparison, better appreciate what good fortune he has reached.

One thing is certain in either kind, fly or spinner, of salmon tackle. You must have the best. We said of the pike rod that perhaps the easiest work it has to do is to play your fish. And consider, piscator, how many pike do you get under 5 lbs. and how many over? If the smaller ones are the "Ayes," then the "Ayes" have it.

But again, piscator, how many salmon will you land under 5 lbs. and how many over? You won't have many under 5 lbs., and may have none under 10 lbs. And every one of them is going to test the worth of your rod. So in salmon fishing there's one rule. Get the very best—the very best you can find—not afford, but find.

Generally speaking salmon rod materials fall into two kinds of materials: greenheart and split bamboo. There are also whole cane and greenheart composite rods,

blue mahoe, washaba, and some others. But if you watch you'll see that split bamboo and greenheart are the two most popular sorts.

Bamboo are the lighter and greenheart the heavier. And there are points in favour of each. Greenheart has a life and vigour all its own, but—and it's a big one—it splits, while your split bamboo with its subtle steel centre, which please I prefer, is practically unbreakable by fair use.

I was much amused one day on the Scottish Dee. It was blazing hot: midday in May. I was resting on the top of a famous and enormous bridge watching several salmon in the pool below. The village constable and I were having a yarn—he's a keen and, I believe, a skilful salmon fisher—when a ghillie came to us from the other side. With some pride I showed him my new, double-built, steel-centred, 16-foot split bamboo made by the best firm. "Aweel, them rods is richt eneugh for you gentlemen that come up here. But they won't stand us chaps! Look at my one, two pounds I paid for him in a pop-shop. A bonnie rod. Ay! Greenheart." He threw a lovely line, and I picked up a good tip while watching him. It may be new to you, gentle reader, so I will tell it.

It happened that I got my "Special" because I had broken the top of an 18-foot split bamboo (not steel centre) in the Willow Bed some way up above the Bridge. It was a rod my father had bought cheap, and "it might do." So he gave me my "Special," to my great delight, to replace it. In the Willow Bed there's a heavy stream running through it, and then in a bay in rocks, there is

deep water and a current running back towards you. Now your line sinks very deep, and it's very hard to lift. Hence my broken top.

Well, the pool below the Bridge has a narrow throat, and the stream comes down very heavily and then eddies back towards the rods on either side. We were lunching there one day when this same ghillie came down to fish the pool from the other side; when his fly, beautifully thrown, had worked round, the line sank. So he made a modified Spey cast straight down parallel to the bank and lifted all his line to the top of the water. Then away and up behind him went his fly, and over again to our side. I tried it, and Willow Bed had no terrors, or the Bridge Pool. No more broken rods or flies with the hooks smashed on the rocks behind. Now you try it.

Of course my ghillie should have told me how to avoid the danger of smashing with a sunk line, but unhappily he was one of the uncommunicative kind.

Another salmon fisher said, " Oh ! he is always either grumbling or boasting." Luckily there are very few like him. I had one perfectly charming ghillie on the Dee : one morning after we had had a good yarn about the things he and I both love, he gave me the eggs of a curlew and capercailzie. Treasured, both of them.

" They won't stand us chaps "—no split bamboo rod will stand mishandling. Always mind your ferrules in putting up and taking down. And do it yourself. I don't care who your ghillie is. But be sure of one thing —there's nothing to beat those split bamboo rods.

I am the happy possessor of another fine rod, greenheart this time : 17 foot, 4-piece—a Grant Vibration.

Mine was made by Grant himself. Messrs. Playfair, of Union Bridge, Aberdeen, make these rods exactly to Grant's gauges and measurements—Playfairs alone.

The rod came into use especially for tackling one famous pool, Greenbanks. You need a very long line to reach the lie of the fish—shallows our side and " they " are over under the rocks on the other.

Well, I had got hung up behind when using my split bamboo, and without any qualms—I did not fear breaking my rod. You may know a whinbush on the high bank behind. It appeals to your sense of the beautiful, but when it holds your fly there's a difference! So I feared what would happen to my greenheart when I got hung up. Of course, I said to myself, the top will go.

I began at the Middle Gannets, and at first all was well. Have you ever noticed how easy it is to be " well up behind " as you begin to fish a pool, and how much harder it is when you are lower down, your fly coming to the best part, and you are trying to reach that particular spot? It was like that when—kerchug! whinbush! and the rod was O.K.! Well, I never worried after that. And have had some fine sport with that rod.

That rod, a 3-inch or 4-inch iron, and a strong spring fish make a lovely trio! And I have had some.

Salmon fly rods must be the best and of varying sizes—16 or 17 feet, and a 14 will carry you through most conditions of water. Big rods for big water and big flies. Small rod for small water and small flies. I remember once, I used that big 17 footer with a 1-inch or ¾-inch fly and the rod, and a very strong fish rushing for a dangerous place between them pulled the loop out

of the whipping on the fly! Of course, I was too hard, although I could not very well help having to try to stop him, but it shows what a big rod can do. If you like a split bamboo, go to Messrs. Hardy Brothers of Alnwick. If you don't know exactly what you want tell them where you propose to fish, and whether or no you can use a big rod, and you may safely leave the rest to them. If you want a greenheart, try a Grant Vibration by Messrs. Playfair of Aberdeen.

Personally, the writer likes a longer rather than a shorter rod for fly fishing for salmon. It always seems as though you have more control over your fish, especially when it comes to boulders and big bushes or small trees on the bank. Mind, you have to negotiate them sometimes.

The Grant Vibration is a spliced rod, and in those splices is found some of the merit of the rod. The point has a knob at the end, and the splices together make a slight bulge—like a cigar—and are bigger than the line of the taper of the rod. You bind your splice with a porpoise hide thong, and owing to the shape, the harder you try to pull them apart the more tightly does the thong hold. This is something of what the action of casting does. Moreover, you never get a stuck ferrule with these rods! You may buy your greenheart rod of a good many firms. But I know I have two treasures—my 16-foot Special, and my 17-foot Vibration.

Reels. These again are of the greatest importance. For fly fishing have them large in the drum rather than small. The *adjustable* check on your reel is of very great importance. Suit your check, strong or mild, to

your casts stout or fine. And when your salmon takes your fly raise your point and strike directly from the reel, and if your check is right you should hook him well.

Remember that check: too strong seeks loss from broken tackle. I remember on the Dee watching a man "in a fish" and he had to pull line off his reel to ease his fish. Too strong a check. And a feeble check is maddening. You pull line off your reel, and you stop pulling but your reel runs on. It overruns and simply asks for a smash from this cause. You can get adjustable checks made on more than one system. A reel which carries a revolving back plate (i.e., opposite to the handle) is a fine reel to fish with. For you can put your finger-tips on that plate and so get power to stop a wild and rushing fish.

And care for your reels. I like one you can readily dismount to dry and oil again—it adds so much to the life of your reel.

Talking of them reminds me of an incident on the Dee. I was fishing the Upper Gannets and had come to the last cast of the day. Suddenly my reel went on strike, or rather, the wind-in movement would not strike—there was no click of the ratchet. Hurried back to the house, meaning to telephone to Aberdeen for a new winch. "Shop just closed, sir." Well, there was to-morrow and the day after! Something had to be done. Reel dismounted and part of a broken spring found. My Perfect reel had the lower half of the V-shaped spring straight, and but a third was left. If one could slip a piece across from the screw to under that bar it might do. I got a baccy tin from the village

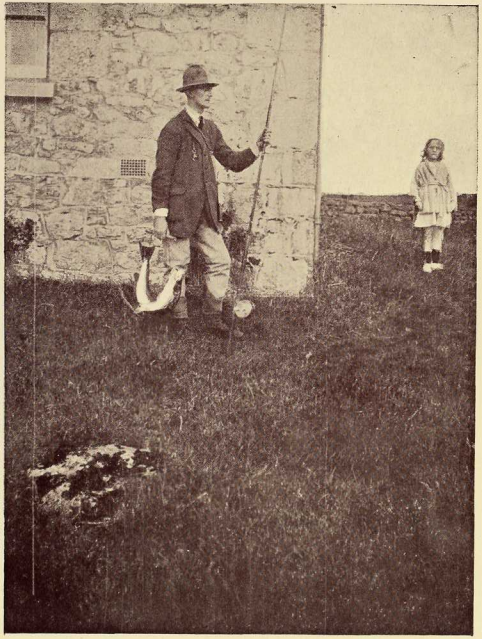


Photo : E.M.G.
WEE JEAN AND 12½ POUNDER.

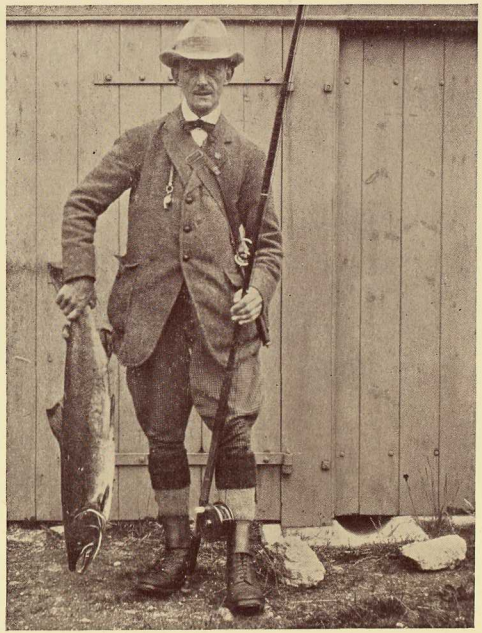


Photo : E.M,G.
A NINETEEN POUNDER.

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shop, and with my wire trace cutters got out a thin strip, and it held and functioned. Anyway, I got a well mended kelt of 14 lbs. with it after a fine fight. But my heart was in my boots. And another well mended kelt of 19 lbs. the day after. Messrs. Hardy Brothers now make spare springs which you may slip in with your fingers—a very great convenience.

Just before I got this nineteen pounder we had, the two ghillies and I, a discussion as to when you should pull in your line which you are going to "shoot" at the end of your cast. Before you move down, or while you are moving down, or after. The general opinion was in favour of "before you move down." Within a few minutes I had fished out a cast, and before moving pulled in the first bit of line, and bang!—the hook went into his mouth. And I made my way ashore.

Another thing. Your casts. They should be the best. You have the best rod and the best reel and the best line, so that it is miserably false economy to begrudge the few extra shillings for good sound casts. Some men use gut substitute. It is vastly cheaper than gut. But from what I have seen of it, it don't cast so nicely into the wind as gut, and it is more visible to your fish. Also, the knots need great care in making. Get a 3-foot twisted or plaited gut collar, a 3-yard gut cast, and cut it in half, using a half at a time on your collar.

Choose your line most carefully. The same line may do for your 16-footer and 17; but you want something lighter by a good deal for your 14-footer. Get a good maker's line and get it balanced to your rod. Your rod, reel, and line should all work in harmony. Lines may

be parallel or double tapered. If you want length use a level line. That tip was given me by the champion fly-caster. If you wish for delicacy in the delivery of your fly use a taper.

Lines are usually made in 40-yard lengths—have them married or spliced to 60 or 80 yards of backing. These of course are fly lines. And watch that splicing.

Always dry your line at the end of the day; and a line drier made for the job is best. Though you may leave coils on the floor or hanging from your reel handles or a hook on the rod rests.

Spinning rods. If I were confined to one and only one I would use always my steel-centred split bamboo. The Murdoch, 11 feet 6 inches, by Hardy Brothers. The epidemic of the desire for light rods has attacked, as well as the trout fly rods, the salmon fisher's spinner, too. Really I am inclined to think it is a mistake. For it seems reasonable that you can kill a big fish more speedily with the heavier rod. And it always seems to me that the fun of a fight is not only its length, but its vigour and " go."

And think, too, of the time you save and the more chances you have with the strong rod. If—well, I remember reading in the *Field* some years ago that an angler had killed a 22½ lb. (I think it was a ½ lb.) salmon on the Taw on a trout rod. Great sport, truly. It must have been, but it took him 3½ hours to land his fish. Well, we wouldn't dream of salmon fishing in ordinary with a trout rod. No! That fisherman might have had more than one salmon tail in his bag in 3½ hours. And again, you may be going on a longish

journey far from tackle shops. And you need a serviceable and lasting weapon. Your light little roddie may stand up to a bit of rough wear, but a big rod is more useful. If you don't like bamboo you may have a Vibration, 10 or 11 feet—and they are bonnie rods. Porcelain rings throughout.

Rings are also important. You really must have porcelain or agate for butt and top ring. And I know a useful tip for some porcelain rings. It is well to have the porcelain loose in the metal holder. The porcelain can revolve and lessen the chance, of which I think there's but little chance, of wearing into grooves. With the ordinary unguarded ring, before you bind it on, whip with two or three turns of thread the two angle bends, the elbows, as close as you can. Then bind on to your rod and when bound cut the thread, and you will find your ring will rattle when you shake it. It is loose. Of course, agate protected rings throughout are best of all rings.

Spinning reels for pike will do for salmon. They get hard wear, and you may take a toss on the boulders or shingle, so avoid wooden or vulcanite reels. They cannot stand what metal will.

Spinning baits for salmon are very like those for pike. But they are generally smaller.

There is one important salmon bait you don't use for pike—the prawn. There are patterns of tackles for them in varying forms, upon which much cunning has been expended. And they say a salmon will nip a piece out of a prawn between the hooks unscathed. You must bind your tackle on with fine copper wire and fish him

just clear of the rocks. Eel tails, preserved and mounted on a tackle with a corkscrew, are deadly baits, and you may get them from the makers. Gudgeon, dace, and sprats are also used for salmon spinning.

Among artificials you will find much the same spinners as are used for pike. But of a smaller size for salmon. There are many and various kinds of spoons, and they are useful fish getters.

Devons and phantoms are most useful, too. If you have been using a Devon, and it has kinked your line, then a spoon is useful to fish with while you are trying to get rid of that kink, for the same spoon will spin both right and left-handed, and this depends on which way it starts.

Traces may be of gut or wire, and we prefer those of wire on the score of utility and cheapness. But wire has this against it, that if you get a turn-over kink it will snap. Gut has not this objection.

A useful tip—when you get hung up in rocks or oddments in the bed of a stream, you may sometimes free your minnow by easing your point when the hook releases its hold and the current carries your bait down and clear. Failing this get well below and pull. And then if this fails, go up again. And lay down your rod and cut a 4 or 5-foot willow or whin stick—willow is best—and strip off twigs and twist end round and make a hoop. Pass your butt and rod through the ring and heave it out as far as may be, down your line. Now let the stream carry it well below your bait, then give a stiff and sharp jerk with your line, and nearly always it will pull free. I remember once on the West Dart my father got hung

up in Corner Pool. The withy hoop failed to free his Devon. So as a last resort I held the line taut down to the minnow, standing well above it, and the river carried that hoop nearly down to the minnow. The hoop was above the Devon, and very soon lifted it clear. Of course, your bait may be jammed between two boulders or fast in a sunken tree. You won't always retrieve it.

Rod protection. Always carry your rods in a box made for the purpose. Train and carriage or car give you no qualms as to the safety of your rod. If one rod only is in use, you may have a stout tube hollowed from a big bamboo, or a white pine wooden protector. Deep grooves are cut into it for the various joints and depressions to let in the rings—a fine gadget.

In the case of your box, have one made to take your longest rod, and then allow room for gaff and line winder (if collapsible), wading staff, net and handle, stick, etc. If you have any room over your socks add to the safety of your treasures and pack into a rod box well.

When you buy your reel always see that it holds your line with some room to spare—the line won't so easily jam in it when it is filling up while playing a fish.

CHAPTER XVII

SALMON FISHING DAYS

February

Wintry conditions on Scottish Dee—Cutting ice off the pools—Dreary waiting—Gannets and Greenbanks—Roe-deer and golden eagle—Awkward wading—Steer for the hut—Glen Tana fly—" A taste o' your rod "—A trout on the ice—" I saw him "—A spring fish.

COME with us to Bonnie Scotland for a try for a salmon on the royal Dee. It is February now and we hear wintry conditions rage in Scotland.

We find the report we had heard in our own land a true one. Ice, six inches thick, on the edges of the pools, and grue every day, coming down thick till eleven or midday.

Grue is new to us. So we ask for a definition. " Aweel, sor, it's ice which has formed round the stones in the stickles during the nicht. The sun lifts it in the forenoon, and it comes down thick. Ye maun wait till it's awa' before ye can fish."

Our first task on our first morning is to cut away the ice. Stout 6 or 7-foot fir poles broke a goodish bit off. But we have to get an axe to cut the thicker ice. You see the ice edge is just where we want to wade. We get out slabs as big as a room floor, and push them out to be

Photo: T.S.G.

SMASHING ICE: GREENBANKS.

Photo :T.S.G.

FLOATING IT DOWN: GREENBANKS.

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carried away downstream. And we clear a big portion of the Pools. Greenbanks is where we begin. Some of the other pools were not so bad. We have to make all safe and secure, so that we can step off ice edge to river bed.

And so we fish for a week, waiting each day for the grue to go away—a dreary job sometimes. And we land two kelts: 6 lbs., 15½ lbs. No springer fresh run comes to grace our bags.

It is winter: hard frost at night. At times a cloudless sky and sunshine.

On our way up north we stopped at Aberdeen and visited Playfair's. My father buys a 16-foot Vibration. On the long shop counter, on a rest, is another. Seventeen foot and a four-piece. I wish—and the wish has been fulfilled. She's mine. Partly a gift and partly a purchase. The first time out she gets a kelt of 6 lbs.

So the days pass. In the morning on Tuesday. Hullo! it's raining! What of to-day? The ghillie on the beat above opines "It's the worrst day we've had." One of our ghillies says, "She's a little coloured, but the burn is no up yet." So we start: two rods and two ghillies.

Father and his ghillie stop at the Gannets. She is up a few inches, and has some colour. Wylie and I go down to the Greenbanks. Wylie had been head keeper on a fine estate. He is full of yarns and anecdotes and facts. One day, he told me "I was awa' oot on the muir wi' my glass. I was watching a roe deer stag and two hinds. I lay and watched them through the glass. Presently a golden eagle circled over the deer and

'stooped' twice. I saw the stag detach himself from the hinds. The bird stooped again and the stag stood up and struck at the eagle. I could hear the blows on the strong quills from where I lay."

Tales of a pie-bald grouse killed by a stone. A kestrel that took turkey poults. Caper and curlew. He is a charming companion, attentive and interested all the while, watching the work of the fly and spotting showing salmon.

So we leave them at the Gannets and carry on half a mile down to Greenbanks. Here's where the lupins bloom and abound in the summer. There we saw our first capercailzie. What a pace he went! "Quack, quack!" Up get two mallards. "Bonnie birds," from us both. "See, Wylie, in that alder; there's where we found the tree wasps' nest."

Now we reach Greenbanks. Good! No rod on the other side. Bag left in hut and up to begin. Greenbanks is an awkward pool. A shallow above it—a real long stickle. The current enters the pool on each side, leaving a comparative shallow in the fork of the Y.

You get well up—cross the left hand arm of the Y (looking towards the sea)—and get to the shallow. You now send your fly across the other arm. Got badly hung up in the fir tree, jammed, sunk, in some boulders the other forenoon. You must be careful. The might of the river pushes you down; pebbles are very round and roll under your feet. My father was pushed into deep water and under in this place, but by the mercy of God and his own efforts saved his precious life.

Now come on down and as you see the water deepen

in front of you turn half left and wade towards the hut; you shall then presently find the pressure on your back grow lighter.

Well, here we are—and at the seventh cast this morning comes a pull—no words can describe the thrill of this moment. Always fresh and pregnant with great happenings. The big Glen Tana has found him, and he's responded. He shows at once, and we like the colour of him. And after some play he's brought to the shore and Wylie tails him. And now we fear he's too bright, and anyway he's lean. So he goes on the balance: 7½ lbs.

Back in the water, and after some nursing he sails strongly away. We wish him the luck to get back to the sea, but we fear a scar he carries near his tail.

Now in again; missing the awkward wading at the top. The 17-footer still sends out the Glen Tana and "mid-hole," lower down there comes a check. Firm as rock for a moment. Out into the heavy current sails the fish. A heavier one than the last. A glance at Wylie's face finds him beaming. He says, "I can grip him better with my mitten." "Don't use that, you want to wear it. Use your handkerchief and dry it on the stones."

This fellow is pulling hard. He keeps well down. In towards us, and then out into heavy water. And so it goes on in the way salmon have, bless them!

His third visit to our shallow is the last, and he swims right up to the ghillie. Tailed! And on the balance: 12½ lbs. He's very well mended. Wylie has a strong liking for him and wants me to keep him. But

nice as he may be, he's no juist richt. So we nurse him till he recovers an even keel, and he goes off happily.

"Well, Wylie, we've had a bit of fun, anyway." "Ay, and it's gi'en ye a taste o' your rod. It's a gran' rod; and it will be a pleasure to ye as long as ye hae it."

The fly runs through the tail of the pool. Gang canny hereaboots. Mind those big boulders and the deep water channelled out beside and behind them. Very treacherous places always are these when you are wading.

The others come down from Gannets where nothing has been given them.

And so to lunch in the hut. My father fishes the pool now, and I walk down the edge of the ice. A curious thing happens. The water surges up through holes in the ice, and in one place carries a wee brownie up too. He's kicking on the ice. See how red is his adipose fin. In again, little chap. A glance behind shows Dad well down the head of the pool; and rain begins again.

I have come down to see if that diseased salmon which Wylie found is still here. There he is, poor beast.

Downstream comes a whistle. Father is standing by the hut. "Come on, Tom, and try your Gardener down the Greenbanks." The big rod is ready, and down we go. Past the first black stone, getting near the boulders where is good holding water.

Just below where the fly fell comes up a big dark head and shoulders. "There's a fish risen there." "I saw him."

And the next cast by good fortune went out quite straight into the wind, and the fly fished a foot or two and then came a rattling pull, and the reel screamed, and the Gardener had him. He pulled like steam, and went slowly upstream: something like the big kelt only rather more so. He went up and up; meanwhile I got to the shallows. He still went on up, and the curve on the big rod spoke of the pressure.

Then, three times he comes fairly close in to go out again. Then right bang across and up. Now he shows some way above the spot where the line entered the water. "Oh!" says the ghillie, "he's got a belly on the line: get above him." So up. He shows again, and at last the line is up to him. I noticed gladly that my father's ghillie had gone to the hut to fetch his gaff.

Then the fish came in and we saw a gleam of bronze. The ghillie opened his telescopic gaff—a promising sign. He showed again and again—and there on the bank was my father with a gaff—Wylie with a gaff and the ghillie with a gaff! Poor salmon!

The salmon comes right in on the shallows among big boulders. He looks very fine lashing and jiggering, but my heart is in my mouth all the time.

The ghillie scrambles out on the boulders and stretches out his arm, but he does not gaff. In again, and we have him. Fish and gaff and all are slung on to the stones and the gaff handle is used as a priest and a game fish dies. Fifteen and a half pounds.

Well, there he is, and we have done what we came north to do. A bar of silver—a picture lying on the shingle. "I'll carry him to the hut."

My father now goes down hot foot to the Brig, where are the Pot and the Pool below the Brig.

The ghillie advises the Pool, and whilst this is being fished the valet on the other side goes to the Pot and takes a big fish on an eel tail! If only—but the shallows are on the other side, there.

A Gardener, Olga and Brown Wing Ackroyd are sent through Greenbanks with no further response. Father and the other come up to report the fish from the Pool, and so home.

And that ghillie on the other side had followed him down the Pool below the Brig and hooked a fish, but soon lost him.

My salmon clips the sling of the bag to my shoulder, as we tramp home to tea and a fire. The fish is soon packed in a basket and on his way south.

And now come tea, slippers, and the comfort of the fireside. The water was plaguy cold to-day, and we rejoice in the comfort of indoors.

Lines and flies need drying: line driers and blotting-paper reels need attention and oil. And the Fishing Diary has to be written up. And so in comfort we do these things—not among the least enjoyable on a fishing holiday. So to dinner—tobacco—and bed.

One incident perhaps worthy of a line occurred this evening. Wylie was new to the benefits of a Thermos flask—so on our arrival at the house I went to the village "Whiteleys" and got him one.

"Ye are verra kind, and I shall go home as pleased as yersel', sir."

Next morning, however, he appeared without it.

"Where's the Thermos?" "Aweel, sor, I have had no luck with it at all." "Not broken," for he's a very careful man. "Ah! no sor! But when the guid wife saw it she said, 'It will make a grand ornament for our sideboard,' and it's there now."

Father heard my laugh and inquired. Across to the shop again. "Now, Wylie," he said, "you tell your wife this is for you to use." Next day he brought it. He had most cleverly contrived a cover out of an old stocking leg.

And the delight on his face when his boiling hot cocoa burnt his fingers was well worth the price of that second flask.

Wylie helping himself to my baccy pouch says, "I shall remind you of a man where I lived. He was poor and always short of terbaccer. He was aye asking for 'juist as muckle as'll hoist the logie.' The logie, sor, is the little bit that's left at the bottom of the bowl."

May

Leaves and flowers—Oyster catchers—Potarch and thereabouts —A yarn on the brig—The tyranny of dinner—O' a nicht— A salmon lost—The thud of a big one.

Let us go again to the Aberdeenshire Dee under very different conditions. In May. How the name of the month conjures up the sights and sounds of the riverside in that charming time. Many flowers in bloom, with showing signs of many more to follow. And the birds—sandpipers and the whistle of the oyster-catchers—their

costume a mixture of grave and gay. " Luck, luck, good luck," they seem to call to us.

We watch them on the strands of shingle, busy and beauteous birds. And many smaller birds.

There's a water ousel—the dipper in Devon—a nest there in Middle Gannets.

And the trees in bloom and leaf in the valley—larch and beech, and alder and birch. Have you noticed, gentle reader, the wondrous sheen on ground beneath the beech trees, cast by the sun through fresh opening leaves? It's just wondrous.

Over night I had been invited to go down to the march and fish the lower pools. So after brekker out came the cycle to look at the gauge on Potarch Brig. It showed 2 feet 1 inch. And the pool was full of fish. So all seemed well. On getting home a 'phone message was waiting—" Meet me at Middle Gannets at five p.m. please "—from my hostess.

So my wife, with sketching gear, and I walked down to Potarch. It was already piping hot with a cloudless sky, which became overcast as the day wore on.

Now to begin. A logie in " the Pot," " Pool below the Brig," and " Upper Floating Bank." Nothing. So down to " Inch-bare." A pool I saw for the first time. Using my own ideas, as was to be expected I begin too low down. " Higher up, sor," shouted a ghillie on the other side, " and fish down to the red rock."

I saw two fish show, far over towards the far distant bank. But nothing moved to my fly, as far as I know. So up to lunch with my wife at the hut, hidden by sheltering trees with a view of the river.

I never can resist a bridge over a river—even the motor-cycle has to stop for a peep into the pool below.

On the bridge are the ghillie who said a split bamboo rod " won't stand us chaps " and the village policeman.

Fish are spotted and watched; flies talked over. He has a match-box with half a dozen—small ones. I have my box, which holds 80—flies of ½-inch to 4-inch irons. " What on airth——" he began when I pointed out that I liked to have my flies with me.

My father has a somewhat similar one. A ghillie looking at it said, " Mon, I am juist wishing that you had lost it and I'd found it." Mine looked this, but didn't say it.

He passed and gave his opinion—and approval.

" Now look here, sor, you put on that 3-inch Gordon at quarter to nine to-night and that big White Wing at a quarter past, and I'll eat ma boots if ye don't hae a fush." Astonished I looked at the bobby. Confirmed it did he. " Ay, sor, this man has a fush 'most every nicht." To the bobby: " Will you come with me? " " I will, sor, with pleasure." Carried.

Well, you see, I had gone home each night at six-thirty. Dinner with a capital D is a fine thing; but it's an awful spoil-sport.

And I had gone home in time for dinner. However, this is my last day, for we journey south the next. So perhaps an exception might be made.

Anyway, we go home: letters and tea had to be attended to. And at five p.m. I meet my hostess at Middle Gannets. She fished down first, and I followed with Jenny and Silver Blue. While fishing we heard the

splash of some small fish and the thud, deep and sounding, of a big one in the pool.

I am kindly given permission to fish after dinner, and the constable is approved as my ghillie. I tell the regular ghillie. "Ye micht take a fush, but I don't think ye will." Cheery fellow! Then the car comes at six-thirty. Ghillie stows rods, etc., and when he's about to go home, shouts down to me, "Put on a big Thunder and Lightning." That's better: Much! "And then try a big Gordon." That's a good Dee fly, too.

So home to dinner. Eight-fifteen finds me on my way to the Gannets and Robert talking to a group of men. He tips me a wink as I pass.

The ghillie knows, so I put on a 2-inch Thunder and Lightning. "Hullo! you, Robert." There's a rock in the pool—a sure hold. And in the gathering gloom the fly stops! Up goes the point—have I fouled the rock? No! it's him! This time it is the 16-foot special—a gift from my father to replace the 18 footer. "Ay, a bonnie rod! Ye're no the same man fishing." Welcome commendation.

And now the special bends to the rush of the salmon—I had almost written my salmon, but that he never was. "It's a gran' licht for a Thunder. If ye had had that rod when ye first came ye'd a had more fush."

I hardly listen for the fush is verra busy. Up and down and across the pool he tears, and then down, and I have to follow. Fast through swift water, and then in, and on his side, and I fancy we have him. But no—he gets his head round and away he goes into the heavy water. Into the stickle, jiggering hard, rolling about, in

towards us a bit, and then up flies the top! And he's gone.

"Never mind, sor, we'll put on a big Gordon and get another. But what a pity. I thought we had him. I was to gaff him next time."

I find the point of the Thunder's bent outwards. Feel in my pocket—no box—"they're in the bag on the brae." "They're not here; I'll awa' hame while you fish the Lower."

He was off, and I fish on. After all we heard several fish, and the thud of a big one.

He was soon back: house a mile and a quarter away. "Man, you are never back? How did you manage?" "Ran there, and just rode your bicycle." "But it has no lamp!" "Aweel, I am the only bobby in this village!" Good fellow.

On goes a big Gordon for the Middle Gannets. Now, what with our high bank, tree-crowned, and the wood opposite, the pool looks pitchy black with the white line of broken water beyond it.

Again the fly should be near that holding place—when it again stops—I feel him go down as he took. He rests, and gives two vigorous tugs. A blur of white appears in the blackness, and "thoomp" comes the sound of it—another blur and thud! Now he runs about a bit, and then makes the reel scream—the Perfect reel—as he crosses to the heavy water. Here he stays, my Diary says, for ten minutes. I can see the bend of the rod against the evening sky. And apparently he's trying to rub the hook out on a rock. "He's lying still and sulking." "Never mind, sor, hould on tae him." At

last he moves, very slowly over towards us. Then he begins furiously shaking his head. "Careful, sir, and we'll kill him in this pool." He moves about, running a bit at times, making the reel scream. Those awful jiggerings are most mysterious in the dark water.

He came in close once, deep down, arching the rod furiously, so I eased him. "Can you see him?" "I cannot, sor." He came in several times—three or four, the constable stooping down to get a glimpse of him. Presently, "I see him. He's a big fush. Bring him in, sor, that's right—now move along the bank." By the curve of the rod I can see he is close in, and I "lead" him up, along the path. A forgotten and big boulder is here—and, tripping, I go back on my back, on to my shoulders, feet up in the air. "In heaven's name what are ye at, sor?" "Just for the moment I'm on my back." "Well, don't do it again, sor."

The big rod steadied me—on my feet once more and all's well. Backwards, more carefully now—the Blue Ghillie creeping, creeping, crouching. Suddenly out goes his arm, over the water. "Bring him in, sor." A heave, a smother of foam and a splashing—a gleaming bar of silver!

Robert has him on the path between his knees, and hits him three times with his truncheon before you can say "knife." By gum, I think, if you're as handy on a man's head as you are on that fish's, I have no desire to scrap with you.

Out with the fly and on the balance—electric torch bought this evening—17 lbs. A good fish for the Dee in May. A bonnie sicht. My wife arrives just as we

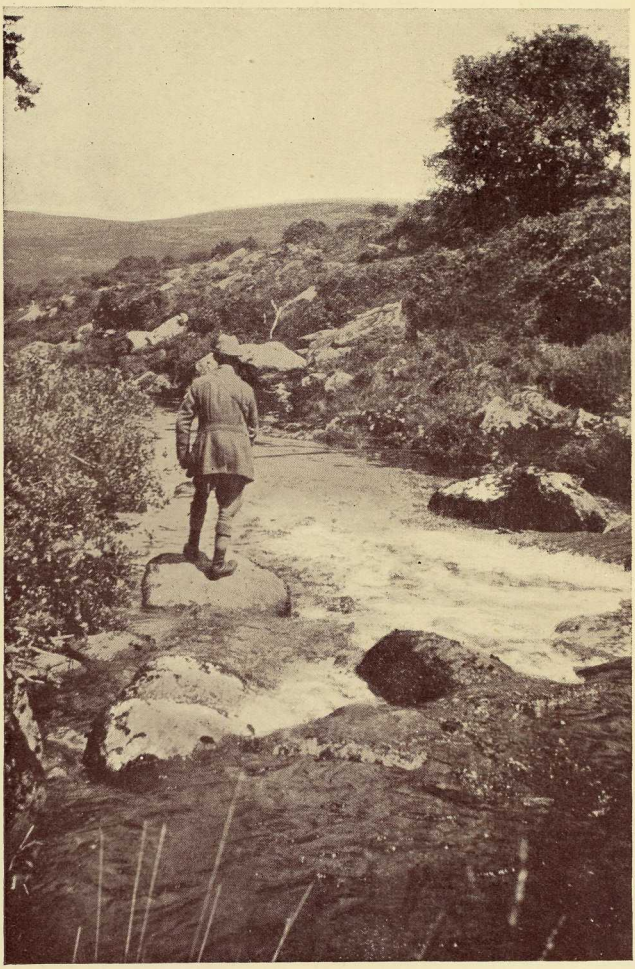

Photo : E.M.G.

SALMON FISHING : Throat of Queenie Pool.

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toast him from the dram flask—she's pleased, and so are we!

Another try in Middle and Lower Gannets—fruitlessly this time, and so home to rest.

The big fish accompanied us on our long journey south next day. His model adorns my gun-room.

July on Dartmoor

A fine spate—A heron fishing—Devonshire cream—A basket of Moor trout—"A man and a boy to work it"—Furzey Brake—A slice of good fortune—Home with the news—One behind him.

SUMMER ON DARTMOOR.

I love the silence of thy tors,
The purple splendour of thy breast,
The flowers that gem the mossy shores
Of rivers with their foaming crest.

I love the music of thy streams,
The plaintive song the curlew makes.
They weave themselves into my dreams,
And peace returns when Dartmoor wakes!

AUGUSTA J. GODDEN.

A far cry now, to the southward—700 miles away. Let us go and fish in the West Dart among the heather and gorse, the bracken and grey boulders of Devon.

We got down to Totnes to find the Dart thundering over the weir, a big, dirty, porter-coloured flood, and the river showed more than bank full as we went up to Buckfastleigh. Luck, by Jove! it was luck to find the Double Dart like this.

As you may imagine, it was not long after we got settled down more or less, less perhaps, before we were on the river. There we met D——. Perhaps the most skilful fisherman on the Moor. Certainly the one with most local knowledge of pools and catches.

And, piscator, always bear in mind that local knowledge is of the utmost importance in salmon fishing. Get your information locally, from men who know the river. Now D—— is a great sportsman, and seemed to take pleasure in letting us know where to find fish. "See that boulder—in the pot-hole—there's a tunnel there—he'll run up it," and so on. Any amount of information he gave us. Well, we met him and his verdict was, "No fish will run in this flood—it's too beastly dirty." It certainly was dirty, and we did not get a pull. A couple of days passed, and there came another flood. All night long the rain continued after rain all day. Hurrah! We lay in bed and revelled in the sound of it.

As we got up in the morning we saw the Swincombe rising! And she's overflowing her banks. A heron—"hern" in Devon—comes down to fish. No need to tell *him* where the trout will be. Look at him, wading in the water on the grass where the trout are. Watch him behind a boulder—he's got one! Robber! However, we can't begrudge him his sport.

Now—well, probably at this height Dart will be too big. So the little trout rod, 2⅝-inch Malloch and 1¼-inch gold Devon are carried down to the bridge—a pull at once. That's enough; the trout are feeding, and so back to the cottage for brekker. Brekker is soon

disposed of, with Devonshire cream. And after fitting up the ladies and bairns with worm tackle, out goes the spinning gear again. And the trout are feeding. And the bigger ones. And the Malloch gets some and loses some. Seven fish between Sherburton Bridge and the Meet up to 10½ ozs. Some trout give savage tugs and are gone. Fancy these fish take the bait short, or across head and shoulders. Up to Gobbet Plain, and get three more. An excellent basket, and our breakfast is provided for to-morrow.

So back for lunch, and after down to Swincombe again, and what a change! The rain has grown less and ceased, and this is a fly and no spinner's water. So the Dart should fish.

Back home, and the 17-footer and 5-inch reel come along. Down Swincombe, across the clam up to Timber Pool, and again across a clam (wooden foot bridge). Timber Pool, Iron Pool, and Swincombe Meet Pool all fish blank. So down to Furzey Brake. Moss, my lovely pointer, is ranging. There's D—— casting in the big Pool. Moss points far out, so I go down to her and move the rabbit. Moss don't break her point, you see.

Back to the fisherman's path. Hullo! D——'s not casting—bent rod and jerkings. He's in one. He is! Slowly down to him, and we watch the tussle. An old cast and fly, but they hold and he gaffs him: on my balance 12 lbs.

I show him the rod: "I say, Gray, it takes a man and a boy to work it! But it's a grand rod."

"Now you come and fish the Tail." "No, it's your water." "Come on, I have got two fish; if you see a fish

show here you'll get him. See that big boulder just covered? When that's covered they are running in. And that's where they lie."

Now for the fly. I have six, 1½-inch to 2-inch, a Christmas gift from a skilful angler. Silver Wilkinson it shall be.

Out she goes, 17-footer sending out a long line. Fishing out a cast steer rod over a sallow bush—a stop—hung up in that boulder—get into position when the "boulder" moved! I have hooked my first Dart salmon on fly.

Away upstream into the Pool. He ran far across, and the Pool is very wide: he rolled and splashed and jiggered, and made one tremendous leap—somersaulted in the air! Buried the line and fought hard.

At the tail of Furzey Brake there's an island. Five mortal times he tried to get down on the other side of that island and the rod stopped him. D——, delighted at my good fortune, came down to me, gave me information about hidden boulders, bushes, and bugbears. In salmon comes.

Then after tales of lost fish in the sallow bushes, my salmon—I can call him mine—ran right under a thorn, well in the swollen river, at my feet. We both thought he was fast. But he wasn't, for he next ran under a sallow! Then he showed up. Nose right into the bank, belly gleaming silver upward—and D—— gaffed him! A handshake of gratitude and "tight lines" from the dram flask. Twelve and a half pounds. Good enough, gentle reader.

I think I was never quite so anxious over any fish as

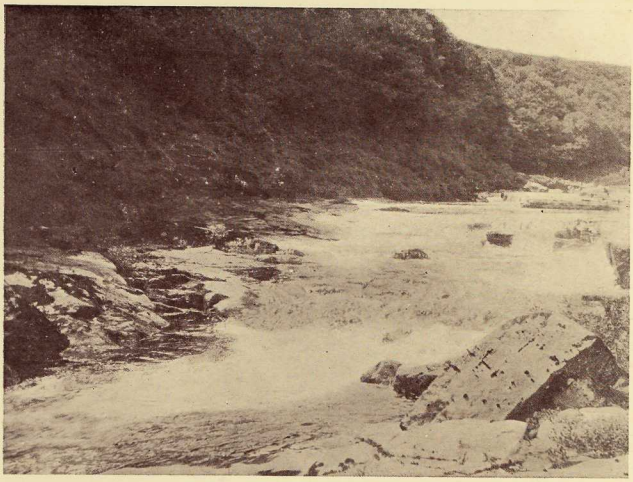

Photo: T.S.G.

THE BROAD STONES: DOUBLE DART.

Photo: T.S.G.

FURZEY BRAKE: WEST DART.

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this one. Every Dartymoor angler can sympathise with one over one's first salmon on the fly on the Moor.

D——, like a good sportsman, asked me to go on. But the good news must be taken home to the cottage, and Tommy Fox must give up trout fishing and try for a salmon.

So the fish goes on the hazel carrier, and Moss and I put off homewards. Across the plain, where I found white cross-leaf heather on my way down, to the clam and the cottage. Much rejoicing and a photo.

"What have you come home for?" "To tell you: you will get rod and tackle ready and your wife will go for your salmon licence."

Passing along the Swincombe Tommie says, "Look at that lovely trout water—I rather grudge the money for that licence." This is awful! Across the clams—Timber Pool. "You fish the throat, Tom, and I'll fish the tail."

I had hardly begun when Tommie, at his third cast, let out a yell! I heard the hiss of his line! And his fish shot into the air quite near me. Had shot the bridge, ran up, and leapt!

Safely down again, past razor-edged boulders! Down, hard as he can go—straight for the far passage round the island. He did his best to get behind that small island—if he had, he'd have gained his freedom. He comes right to the surface—we see every bit of him—slow, slow goes his tail. A glance at Tommie's anxious face makes me long for my camera. Anyway the spasm past, and he's safer in deeper water.

Presently we pick a spot. The fish comes in,

telescopic gaff ready, his belly hits the edge of the boulder, he rolls over and plunges, rests, and the gaff gets him. We look up, and there's Jory the bailiff watching. Balance—12¾ lbs. Licences are all in order, and permission for the pointer to be with us.

And so to Furzey Brake. Tommie and salmon, bailiff and two interested farmers. Here are two local rods at work, so we fish the stickle above.

Then Tommie went to Mid Furzey Brake, and I was invited to follow down behind the angler at the throat. In the throat of the pool there's a tell-tale boulder. When that's covered you may look for a pull. 'Tis covered now, and the 17-footer sends the fly further out than the 14-footer before it. Our ladies appear on the other bank.

We move down, and the fly, a Dusty Miller (one of the Christmas six), just gets to the tell-tale when a lusty pull, raised point drives home the hook, and a yell at once from the other bank.

Hard down the heavy water he goes. My neighbour reels up and Tommie comes up. Both exhort me to get below him—I know, on paper, I ought—but below means sallow bushes, of which I have already had enough to-day. The big rod can hold him, however, so I stay where I am. Down and up again and again he goes. How many times I don't know. Jiggers, rollings, and rushes he gives me. But here the bank is free, only heather and bracken. We choose a place and get him near it. "Use your butt," but I prefer to give him his time. In he comes, and the telescopic again has him: 9½ lbs. My neighbour says, "It's like catching trout."

Not in my experience! Anyway, for the first time in my life I have killed two salmon in one day, and that on Dartmoor.

On to the carrier goes the fish.

That's a bonnie spot by that boulder—a day or two later I had a terrific tug at that spot, and after over twenty minutes of the very best, some way below Tommie gaffed a nineteen pounder—best fish on the West Dart of the year up to then. A funny thing happened that day. I cut out the fly with my big knife and unbeknownst it fell off my belt. It lay out for eighteen days: we made several close searches in vain. Then George Coaker, "to" Spaders was fishing. His fly caught in a blackthorn. He went to free it: there just under his fly was my knife! Thank you, George Coaker. He's a skilful fisher is George.

Tommie goes to mid-pool and his rod. My neighbour goes to a pool lower down. I begin at the top of the throat.

Shortly after, a sea-gull yell from the other bank makes me look for Tommie's rod. It is bent over! And No. 4 is fighting his last fight.

Mid-pool is the scene of the struggle. Rushes and jiggers and runs—salmon tactics all over. Tommie is hard on his fish, and speedily has him conquered. We choose a nice clear space, and in he comes for my gaff to deal with him. The balance makes him 7¾ lbs. You can imagine our rejoicing. Four fish in one day!

We try a little while longer and then pack up. A farmer picks up Tommie's salmon, and we make for the clam and the path "up over."

We get safely home. "I'll be down along to-morrow evening. I doan't remember vour zalmon ever going to Wydemeet in one day."

So to dinner, tackle, diaries, and beds in hopes for to-morrow.

CHAPTER XVIII

SALMON SPINNING REELS : PROS AND CONS

The Silex reels and the Malloch spinning reel.

THESE two classes of reels are the two best. And I propose to consider them carefully.

The Silex reels are Messrs. Hardy's, and to my way of thinking the Eureka, the new reel brought out in 4-inch size in 1923, is the best of the bunch.

We have the Silex, Silex No. 2, which the makers claim has superseded the original Silex, and the Eureka.

Let us look at them in that order.

The original Silex has an optional check, worked by a knob in the circumference of the inner (opposite handles) plate. It has also an adjustable brake, worked by a screw which may be turned by a coin or the fingers. You can screw the shoe brake, which works on a hub, right off, thus making a free reel on the Nottingham principle.

Or, having mounted your tackle and held your rod nearly upright, you can so adjust your brake that the bait will pull the drum round fairly fast or slowly.

When it just pulls the drum round, you use a further attachment. A lever can be lifted with the finger-tip, which removes the brake, and released, allows the brake to function again. Thus you cast without touching the

line—finger at the lever and " ready," swing, raise lever, and when bait hits water release lever. An automatic brake.

Personally I use my Silex with brake screwed right off. But when wintry conditions numb the fingers I adjust the brake to stop over-runs which may come from the mentioned numbness. Of course, in this method one needs more force in the cast or one loses length.

The Pros for this reel are: good possibilities in length of casting, the free reel, and also the adjustable brake.

The Cons are: as in the case of all Nottingham reels you must have room for side swing or sufficient swing to get your bait out.

In actual practice if one wants to get out at an angle of 45 degrees one needs plenty of room.

With this reel you have to slip in the optional check.

The Silex No. 2 differs a good deal from the former one. For in this you have one lever working both semi-optional check and brake. In the case of this reel your brake is off unless you put it on, and your check is on unless you take it off. As we said before, the lever does five things—removes check, gives free reel, applies increasing brake, stops reel, and puts check in gear. You may at will alter degree of braking force. Here, again, on the Pro side we have these lever points of advantage, and the possibility of making long casts. On the Con side we have this: when casting across a really strong wind, as I did on Tweed, the force of the wind on the bellying line may be so great that the lever, no matter how tightly pressed towards the butt, has not sufficient power to stop

the drum. I fancy a stronger spring might do so. Then you need some portion of a finger to come to the rescue.

Next we come to the new Eureka. This is, roughly, made in two parts out of the solid. Line-guard and back and the drum.

One of its great features is that the outer (or handles) plate has an overlapping rim coming well over the line-guard, and handles set well in. This gives ample surface for the forefinger tip to engage with to apply the brake, and gives great confidence in casting. There's plenty of room. Then inside lies a four-sided square nut. This is worked by a key from the inner plate, and gives free reel, and light, medium, and heavy brakes. You may regulate the brakes as you wish for your bait, and of course go from free to heavy, say, when you have on a powerful fish. And every salmon is that.

This, in my opinion, is the best reel made on the centre-pin principle. And its centre-pin works in an agate bearing. It is a lovely reel, and may be registered A1. It is 4 inches, and holds 120 yards of stout spinning line, leaving plenty of room for line in case it piles up. This may happen when you are playing a strong and lively fish. Your salmon may keep you so busy that you do not, or forget to, wind line on evenly. If line piles up at one side or the other, and your reel is a small one—well, you may lose your fish easily.

Yes, perhaps all things considered, this is the pick of the three.

With all these centre-pin reels you need a lead. This is not so important in salmon spinning as in pike spinning. For in the case of pike he sees the lead first

and the bait second. Hence pike are caught on the lead if it's armed with a treble.

But in salmon spinning the bait comes over him first and then the lead. Mind, do not have your lead too close to your spinning bait. If you do the salmon may see both " to once " as we say in Devon. Two feet is quite close enough: three or four feet is better. And incidentally, there's another point against the short rod. No, you may be sure that the longer rod has many fishing points in its favour, save, maybe, when in a boat.

If you don't use a lead on your trace you are bound, yes, absolutely bound, to have kinks put in your line.

There is a method of using these reels, in particular the Silex No. 2, which is this: fix the reel to the butt handles to the left, under the rod. This brings lever end to the front. Now turn your reel uppermost. You can control the lever with your finger, or as well, use your finger on the " gapped " portion of the line-guard.

Personally I do not like this method.

Of course, while you are playing a fish the line is pressing against the timber of the rod, on the curve. It's a grand method of cutting the many short whippings. Though, of course, the rod friction acts as a brake.

To go back to spinning leads again. In salmon fishing with gudgeon, sprat, eel-tail, and prawn, you certainly *want* them to get down to your fish. Spoons, phantoms, and aluminium Devons *may* need them, too.

However, it is not every pool or run that needs a lead. Your Devon, for example, may be heavy enough of itself. If you use a spinning bait without a lead then you must have a bait with the opposite spin to take out the kinks.

Right hand first, and then a left hand spin. And you may be sure of one thing: you will find it difficult to get them. Why, for the life of me, I cannot think. It is an odd fact that most makers make their baits to spin all the same way.

You can, however, get baits with reversible fins. At any rate you must have something to deal with kinks.

Now the Malloch with reversible drum, and optional check.

With it I am inclined to fancy that in fishing out a pool you get a very uniform length as a rule. For example: your cast may need to be 35 or 40 yards, down a half mile of water. Well, you get your length quickly. You have to overcome a certain amount of ring friction, which is soon estimated. Of course, if there's a breeze you have to overcome the effect of that, too. In centre-pins, on the other hand, you have ring friction and drum control, and you will find your length rather more erratic. Naturally in some pools you may need a different length every two or three casts. "Now, I must get behind that boulder." "Mustn't get hung up in that one," and so on.

Every cast you make with the Malloch puts kinks into your line; but you may reverse the drum and get rid of them. And, as we saw at the beginning of the book, different baits have different effects in kinking. But not to repeat too much, with this reel you need not worry about kinks. They will arrive and you can deal with them while you are still casting.

You need not have a lead—this is of greater importance for pike than salmon. And, by the way, the

advantage of no lead is very noticeable in trout spinning. For on Dartmoor—but that's another matter.

If you must, as you will surely have to, take care in your choice of leads. It must be an Archer with spiral groove and corkscrew ends. I have tried a Simplex and it made the kink question very bad. It prevented, through its under-the-line weight, the due dispersal of kinks.

But to my mind the Malloch is most useful in difficulties. Anywhere where you can find foothold and have a bit of open in front of you, thence you may cast with the Malloch. A path on the steep, deep, precipitous cliff of a pool is no hindrance to this reel. You can get that spinner well out at the angle of 45 degrees, and fish your water. Flick goes the point of the rod—you need not swing—and away goes your bait to the spot aimed at and cast for. Or if the bushes, etc., hinder your flicking out the bait then call in the " O " cast, and using that, fish it out.

That's my point for the Malloch. You can fish where others cannot.

The usual sizes are 2⅝-inch, 3¼-inch, and 4-inch. And for a 100 yards of fine line then the best is the 2⅝-inch; for a stouter line the 3¼-inch will do. I have all three sizes, and I like the 2⅝-inch best, and have killed my salmon with it.

These are some of the Pros—now for the Cons.

I fancy you cannot cast so far with the Malloch as the Silex or Eureka, and that is an important point. And it certainly does kink the line.

On windy days you may find trouble—in particular a

wind blowing from your left, gets hold of a few inches of line and blows them round the ring. Remember the advice on this point given earlier.

There's a deal of ring friction, and fine lines wear more rapidly than is the case with centre-pins. And the constant turn and re-turn makes for wear at the union and bolt-head.

You have to push home the locking-bolt unless you use the umbrella ring. A spring, oilable, ought to be, and I feel sure could be, fitted.

Think of any beat or river you know, and there's pretty sure to be one or more pools where this reel would score.

Look at Ardoe Castle Pool—that narrow bit of a path midway down the cliff, and many others where natural obstacles can be successfully overcome.

There's one very strong point in favour of the reel. *It's a very easy one for the beginner to cast with.* Reel up, turn drum, reach out behind with a swing down and up as you would lob a cricket ball. You have made a cast. Now turn your drum, reel up, and so on.

When your salmon takes a spinning bait you strike him. Don't wait for him to do it. There was a good fish in Ireland—alas! Remember you have several hooks in your bait. Your quarry is very strong, and he may be holding tight. So don't forget to hit him. "Tap the 'ooks into 'is knapper."

Salmon sometimes take very vigorously. A small one nearly pulled the rod out of my hands, on West Dart. Some gently. Anyway, as soon as you know and feel "he's there," hit him, and stick it into him.

The " Compleat salmon spinner " is well advised to carry his Malloch in his bag, with the Silex or Eureka on his rod. To change reels means a few minutes trouble—which may mean the best fish of the day, or the only one. A sweeter triumph if he comes from an awkward place.

POSTSCRIPT

THE LATEST SILEX REEL

ONE of the charms of angling is that one has in this sport never finished learning. In fact anglers are like the Athenians of St. Paul's time: they spend a deal of time telling or hearing some new thing. And this peculiarity applies to other folks as well! Well, to get back to angling.

This fact of piscatorial education was again recently brought home to me.

I have been up in Glen Orchy in Argyllshire with Mr. J. J. Hardy and his party: invited up was I for salmon fishing.

Surely the scenery of this Glen is bad to beat. Below us was the giant Ben Cruachan with his seven peaks; topmost 3,689 feet above the sea. Away up the Glen, always watching in fine weather was Ben Douran. A glorious week there was mine. At times our big neighbours hid their heads in the clouds: but we had two perfect days: for scenery and fishing.

Our fishing headquarters was the hut at the falls of Orchy. Here, on the lower slopes of Catinhis, were daily scores of deer, stags and hinds: watching the salmon fishers below them.

Cotton-grass and bog-myrtle were our friends by

the river-side, and a purple gem, unknown to us, but apparently of the orchid tribe.

A lovely river, holding big fish, and a fine river to fish. And the falls with their narrow gorge below! Water-worn rocks: hollows: basins—from one, three hefty fish—but that's not for telling now.

We fished with fly, first and of choice, then prawn and "summat else."

Mr. Hardy was, I found, as so often, testing something new. The Silex reel.

Well, with Silex, Silex No. 2, Silex Major and Silex Minor, I fancied the testing and trying of this reel was completed. But I was in error.

J. J. H. had the Corbett rod in two varying actions and his last word in Silex reels.

A word as to the rod. He said, "I want to get them established. This morning I have a new one from the works—rather more limber." Two piece: stud lock joints. I saw these 10 foot rods handling heavy salmon in heavy water. And well they did it.

The reel in use was 3½ inches diameter of drum and 1 inch in width. The lever for the thumb was wider across the ivory thumb piece than in any of the Silex reels I had seen before. The drum struck me as being wider than in my 3¾-inch No. 2 Silex. But it was 1 inch in width and held 110 yards of fine dressed line.

All this may be of the usual pattern, but the thing that struck me at once was the line guard. Half of it, opposite the reel plate, had been cut away, or "gapped" as Hardy Bros. term it. This gapping was done just beyond the line guard cross-bars, so that it makes a very

firm job. The part of the drum rim thus exposed makes a capital surface upon which to apply the fingers in order to brake the strong rushes of a salmon. Mr. Hardy gave me an actual and practical demonstration of this with a very lively fish.

In addition to the bars of the line guard which are cut out of the solid, a roller bar is also fitted to facilitate the due winding and control of the line. This is an important addition of great use.

Now for the cast. Mr. Hardy fishes with rings and reel " up," above the rod. Reel handles turned to the right, for the right hand to wind in fish or cast.

In casting *both* hands are below the reel. This shows that the cork grip is large enough for real use and comfort. Both hands below reel: left hand on button. Right hand controlling reel, with the thumb. Half circle swing with Mr. J. J. Hardy's " cut " in it.

Now this position of the hands permits of a free and uninterrupted action of the rod right down to the reel. And I believe this to be an advantage: for the rod, unchecked by a hand above the reel, has full scope for its full play. Away flies the lightly leaded (or heavily according to the water) prawn, to the spot aimed at. The left hand holds rod under the reel and the fingers control the line as it comes home, placing it evenly on the drum. This careful winding in ensures a successful cast next time, and should invariably be done. The position of the hands is important too, and clearly is a comfortable and manageable one.

One very good point about this position is this. There is no inclination to stoop when winding in. Some

anglers seem to think they must stoop or cannot help doing so. They always complain of pain in their backs, if they do so.

Now this reel allows of an erect carriage when thus used : and for men of middle age or more, this becomes a great advantage. For one thing, you have probably noticed, most salmon fishers are of middle age or beyond. They have had time to learn and appreciate the best of all sports.

It must be clearly understood that in this new reel, the thumb lever is below the drum and is in place for the right thumb, hand below the reel.

Mr. Hardy was very pleased with his discovery. It is no less than a discovery.

I have known him some while now, and he has always been busy with his tackle, testing and improving : and we reap the benefit of his care and experience.

He said to me : " For years I have been working on the Silex reel. Always trying to improve it. And now, with this one, I am satisfied." I envied him as I heard him speak. Surely a case of " something attempted, something done." The Silex speaks for itself. A man might well have been satisfied with the original : but there have followed the No. 2, Major and Minor. And now this one.

I tried the rod and reel and was astounded at the ease of control and the distance the rod and reel between them put the prawn and small leads. " You can put it where you like." And away it went, beyond the broad stream in " Oak Hole."

That Corbett rod and new 3½-inch reel made a

combination that a delicate man might fish with all day: and enjoy every moment of his casting with such a perfect outfit.

That 10-foot rod stood up to the plunges of mighty salmon in an extraordinary way. Quite up to its work.

One thing is certain: spinners for salmon should try this new reel with its accurate casting powers and drum control and where necessary salmon control. One could not wish for or, I am convinced, find anything in the world superior to this, or indeed so good.

No, that lesson he gave me and the trial of the gear will be a lasting memory—a memory of a perfect salmon river in superb country, a perfect fishing outfit and of a great sportsman and skilful angler. That reel is the last word, the result of years of thought and tests and trials. I urged Mr. Hardy to give it a special name, but this he did not seem disposed to do.

He said, truly, that this was after all a Silex reel, and all the Silex reels are very good. "No, I don't think I shall give it a special name."

This new pattern will be made in the following sizes: 3 inches, 3¼ inches, 3½ inches, 3¾ inches. The size which Mr. Hardy prefers is 3½ inches, width of drum 1 inch, line capacity 110 yards of fine line: it will cast 4 drams over 30 yards! I feel proud to have been able to write of this new reel, as well as have a lesson in casting from the inventor. For this addition to my book is the first mention of this new pattern to appear in print. So that my book may perchance, at any rate, have one merit. That it is "up to date."

I can confidently recommend anglers who fish for

salmon and pike to try this reel and buy and use it. You will find it bring you pleasure from clean casting and playing and landing fish.

. . . . . .

So, to an end must come my writing of salmon and pike—and it shall end with a wish. One often heard and redolent of the freemasonry of our charming and engrossing sport. To all anglers, wherever they may cast their lures, for the king of fishes or his humbler subjects, to all good fishers, brothers of the rod, and reel, and line, " Tight Lines."

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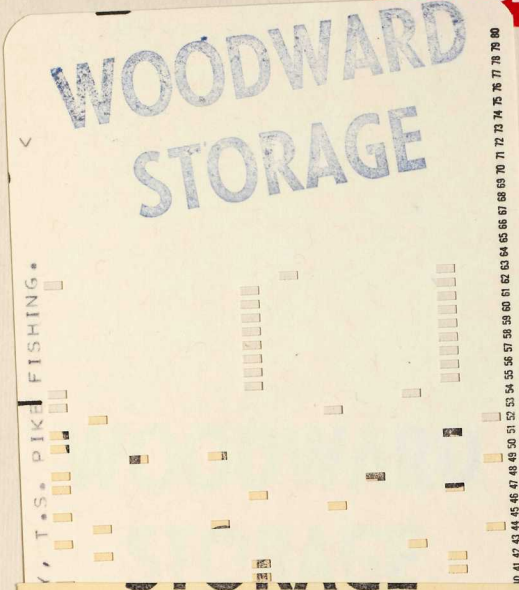
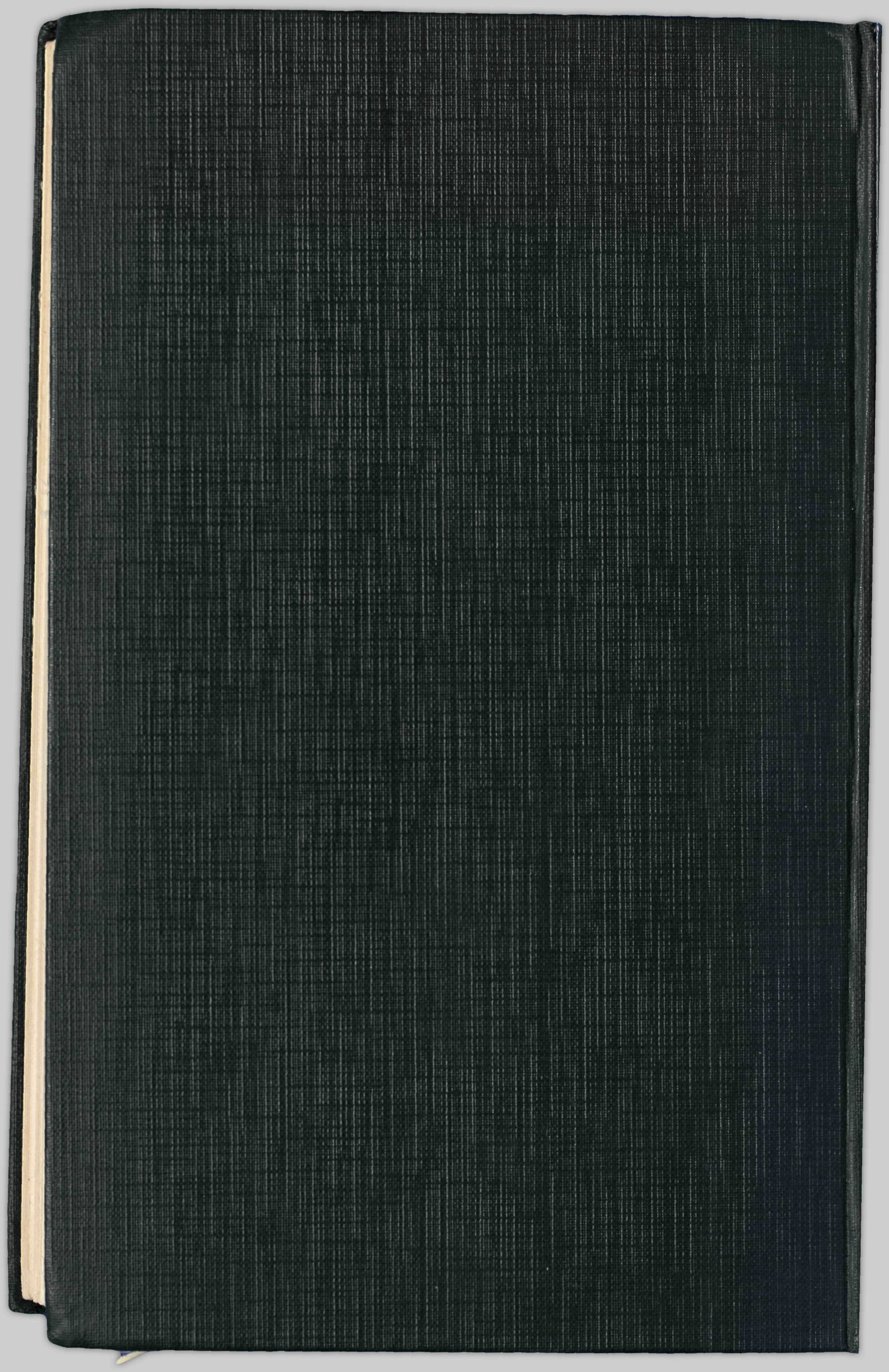
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