

A DAY ON THE DELAWARE.

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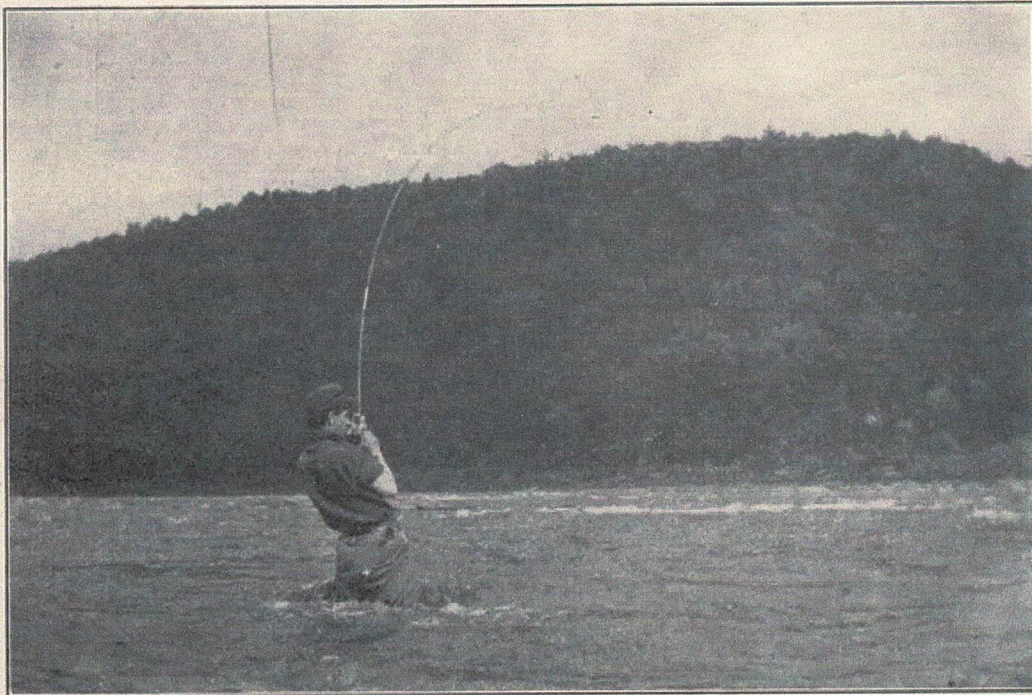
Our summer outing slipped by swiftly, as only such days can, and the last one arrived. As we started out in the early morning the fog was rising from the river, and hung like a great grey curtain along the mountain tops; while here and there, through rifts, the bright sun shone, making the dew sparkle on the leaves. Far up the mountain side could be heard the loud caw of a crow, and the shrill screech of a blue jay. A grey squirrel barked from his safe perch in a tree by the roadside. A ruffed grouse got up from the bushes along the road, and with a great

"I am afraid not, unless I catch him today," I said. "We would have had him if it had not been for your childish and idiotic failure to land the big fellow you hooked the other day."

"I wish you would stop reminding me of that, and give me a chance to forget it," he answered. "I suppose you never make any mistakes."

"But it was so careless," I insisted, "to have a 4 pounder in your hands and then lose him."

"Yes, I know; but let's forget it. I hope you will hook one twice as big and



AMATEUR PHOTO BY R. C. GREY.

AT THE OTHER END A MONSTER.

whirr, disappeared among the trees. The air was keen, with a suspicion of frost in it, and fragrant with pine and hemlock. This was to be our last day. We were going to improve every moment of it, and, perhaps, add more glorious achievements to memory's store, to be lived over many times in the dark, cold days of winter. I looked at Reddy and marvelled at the change a month could bring. He was the color of bronze and the spring of the deer-stalker was in his rapid step.

"Well, Doc, looks as if you were not going to get that big one to mount for our collection," he said.

that he will break your tackle and give me a chance to get a picture of you for future reference," he replied.

At the lower end of the big eddy below Westcolang falls, the Delaware narrows, and there commences a 2 mile stretch of eddies, rifts, falls and pools that would gladden the heart of any angler.

"Now, my boy," I said, "we will toss for choice as to who takes the other side going down."

"I don't know if I would not just as willingly take this side," said Reddy, noting the swift water between him and the other shore.

"No," I answered, "that would not be fair. You know I am acquainted with the river, and the other side is the best, so here goes for the toss."

I won the toss and chose the near side, with a cheerful consciousness of my generosity which was not in the least affected by Reddy's suspicious glances. He was game, however, and waded into the swift water without another word; and he got safely across a deep place that had baffled me many a time. I stepped into the water, which was clear and beautiful, and as cold as ice. In a little eddy below me I saw the swirl of one of those vultures of the Delaware, a black bass, as he leaped for his prey, and sent a shower of little shiners out of the water, looking like bright glints of silver as they jumped frantically for dear life. It was a grand day for fishing, and the bass seized hungrily at any kind of bait I offered. They were all small, however, and, as I was after big game, I returned them safe to the water.

Occasionally I looked over to see what Reddy was doing. Usually he was up to his neck in the water and half the time his rod was bent double. I also noticed something that worried me considerably. It was a long, black object, and it floated from a string tied to Reddy's belt.

About noon we both made for the big stone near the middle of the river, where we rested and had our lunch. My fears were realized. That long black object was a 3-pounder, a beautiful specimen of the red-eyed bronze-back of the Delaware.

"Have you been fishing, or did you come along just for company?" asked Reddy, cheerfully. I made some remark about the luck of certain people.

Reddy was satisfied to stop then; in fact, he loafed the rest of the day; but I am a hard loser and I hated to quit. Five o'clock found us at the foot of the rifts with only one more hole to fish. It was the Beer Mug, a hole so deep that it looks black, and always covered with great patches of foam. It was a likely place for a big fellow, but I had never caught one there. Now I have memories of that hole which will never be effaced.

Reddy hooked and landed a big eel, which wound the 6-foot leader entirely around its slippery body. This made Reddy so tired that he said things which can not be repeated here, and quit for the day.

I caught 2 small bass and a sunfish. Then I tried a helgramite for a change. I fished the hole every way, but without success. I was reluctantly winding in my line, of which I had more than 100 feet out, when I felt a little bite and hooked what I knew at once to be a chub. I continued to reel in my line in disgust, when suddenly it became fast on something. It

felt like a water-soaked log. I pulled and pulled, but could not get the line off. I did not wish to lose 50 feet or more of good line, so I waded out and down the side of the pool to a point opposite where I thought I was fast. Imagine my surprise when I got there to find my line going slowly and steadily up stream, through water that was quite swift. I could not believe my eyes, and was paralyzed for the moment. That chub was 6 inches long, probably, but he could never have moved the line in that manner. Reddy dropped his things and became interested in a moment, with his characteristic remark that "something must be doing."

Then I struck hard, for I knew I had hooked a heavy and powerful fish.

At the first rush he took 20 yards of line and pulled my tip under water. The reel went around so fast it burned my thumb. With one yell I settled down to business. I knew my tackle and that if the fish could be kept in that pool he was mine. He made for the head of the pool and then he went from side to side in short, furious dashes. My brother was yelling to me like a lunatic, and was running around snapping pictures of me with his camera. I controlled the fish perfectly for the first few moments of that struggle, and then, with what seemed to me a settled purpose, he started down stream for shoal water. Below were swift and dangerous rifts for wading and I knew if he got in them I should lose him. Twice I tried to stop him, but each time I saw the wet line stretch with the heavy strain on it as he tugged doggedly; and fearing it would snap, I had to follow him. I waded down stream as fast as possible and as I climbed over a big stone in my way I saw the fish distinctly in the shallow water below me. It was a pike, fully a yard long, and as his great yellow body flashed in the water, his head pointed toward the bottom and tail up, I groaned in spirit. He was not even tired, and there I was, in a dangerous place to wade, a 5-ounce rod in my hands, and at the other end of a silken thread a monster.

Wading over a bad place I lost my balance and my thumb slipped off the reel. At that critical moment the pike made his fiercest, maddest rush. It was all over in less than a second. My reel, being a 4-multiplier, overran, the wet line tangled and became fast, there was a snap, and I was looking miserably at a limp line that floated on the swift water in front of me. That was an unhappy moment.

As we walked down the winding mountain road Reddy generously forgot his wish and tried to cheer me, but without avail. I could hardly see the beauty of the setting sun, going down behind the mountains in a red blaze of glory.