

## AN ANGLER'S DILEMMA.

BY G. CATHERALL AUDSLEY.



HERE is no more charming spot in the British Isles for a holiday than that part of Wales through which the River Clwyd runs. Harry and I had journeyed down for a few days' trouting and had "pitched our tent" at the best hotel near the Clwyd, residence at which was a passport to the neighboring trout preserves. We had already fished a couple of days with fair success and decided this morning to thrash the stream again. We prepared our flies selecting the Blue Dun, which had proved the most killing the previous day, and set forth. The day was warm but as the weather during the earlier part of the month had been wintry the water was still cold. We found the trout well on the feed, taking advantage of the warmer surface, and in a couple of hours had quite a fair basket though Harry had been rather "unfortunate," as usual, in the amount he caught.

I proposed that we should adjourn for lunch, but Harry said he felt inclined to take a swim first. We were just winding in our lines when Harry exclaimed in an excited tone, "Shiver me timbers if I haven't hooked a young whale!"

I continued winding my line assured that in a few seconds I should either see a clump of weed landed or a fish about five inches long.

"Dick, man! come here quick and bring the net!" cried Harry. He had stumbled over a stone, split his trousers at the knee and one foot was in twelve inches of mud and water. "If you don't look sharp you'll see nothing of me but my hat floating down the stream under that bridge."

I laughed and taking the net went up to him. Sure enough, he had hooked a fish and evidently a good-sized one. It was running out the line rapidly and

there were only a few yards remaining on the reel. If it did not alter its course almost immediately the line was bound to snap off. We were both in a fever of excitement at this critical moment when "Thank goodness!" from Harry assured me that the strain was off and the fish was coming our way. We wound in and after playing it for about half an hour, succeeded in bringing it to the side where my net was ready to convey it to the bank.

"Holy Moses, it's a salmon!" exclaimed Harry, and sure enough it was, though only a young one.

What should we do with it? We were not allowed to take salmon without a special license. "Throw it back," said I with vicarious virtue.

"Look here, Dick, do you think I am a fool?" said Harry. "Do you think that after enduring all this (pointing to his trousers and his feet) I am going to throw back that fish? Not if I know it; it's my first salmon and I'll send it off at once to be stuffed and mounted."

"You'll be found out," said I.

"Oh, I'll manage that; won't it go into the basket?"

"Not unless you cut its tail off."

"Well, I'll have to hide it under some tuft and come again with the necessary materials for packing."

After this decision we laid the fish, which was still flopping, on the bank, and Harry prepared for his cold plunge, while I sat down in the sun to enjoy a pipe.

Harry had not been a minute in the water when I saw a keeper cross the bridge a hundred yards off coming our way.

"Good heavens!" I said, "what in the dickens am I to do with the fish?"

Harry replied by a low whistle.

"What shall I do?" I demanded.

"Throw my jacket over it."

I did so, but a wag of the tail exposed it again to view which sent cold shivers down my back.

The keeper was now just behind a neighboring clump of trees. An idea struck me, and taking the salmon by the

tail I slipped it into one of the legs of Harry's trousers, placing his shirt on top, the better to conceal its struggles, and sat down beside it so that I could hold it down.

"Good morning, gentlemen, any sport to day?" said the keeper.

"Well, fair," said I; "a few trout."

"That's right; your friend seems to be enjoying his dip."

"Yes, he rather fancied one this morning and this seems a very secluded spot and well adapted for it."

"It is, but I wouldn't stay in long, for about this time of day the ladies of the College sometimes take their walk in this direction."

Harry gave a longing glance at his trousers and then began to kick about to keep up a circulation. I burst out laughing.

Harry didn't see the joke, for the water was icy and the keeper showed no signs of going.

"I suppose, gentlemen, you have the necessary permit to angle here?"

"Oh, yes, we are staying at the 'Royal,' here's our ticket."

"That's all right; you see, gentlemen, I have strict orders and have to be careful; not that I suspected you for one moment, gentlemen, but there has been a lot of poaching lately and we are keeping a keen lookout."

I glanced at Harry; he was shivering. Even if it had not been for the water the thought of that salmon would have unnerved him.

"Would you oblige me with a pipe of 'baccy, sir?"

"Certainly, help yourself."

Just as I raised myself to hand him my pouch the fish gave a flop.

"I think I saw a movement under that shirt, sir; is there a frog there?"

"I think you must be mistaken; there is nothing there, I'm sure," and with trepidation I lifted the shirt. Thank goodness all was still and so far we were saved.

"Well I could have sworn I saw it move."

He filled his pipe (I think it must have taken a quarter of an ounce to fill that pipe, these keepers' pipes are generally very accommodating) lit up and sat down, evidently intending to enjoy it in our company.

"Don't you find the water rather cold this morning, sir?" he said, to Harry.

"Well at first it felt a bit fresh, but after a little you get quite warm, you know."

Harry was already turning blue about the gills and was evidently getting tired of splashing about to keep himself warm; but there was nothing to do but sport feebly in the water until that confounded keeper left.

An idea struck me. I whispered to the keeper that Harry was very sensitive and did not like anybody to see him in his present state. I explained that that was why he was staying in the water so long.

"Oh, of course; why didn't I think of it sooner? Well, good morning, gents, I must be off. I hope I'll have the pleasure of seeing you again, I wouldn't stay much longer in the water, sir," (to Harry,) "it may not be good for you at this time of the year."

He was no sooner beyond hearing than Harry leaped out with an imprecation. Sensitive fellow, Harry. If he had been a fireman he couldn't have jumped into his clothes more quickly. In his hurry he forgot the fish for the moment and slipped his leg into his trousers. The fish felt a probe in the ribs and with a bound was through the leg of the trousers and into the folds of the shirt. Then, with another bound, it was down the bank and into the stream, shirt and all, and all that could be seen was a white mass rapidly disappearing from view.

Here was a pretty state of affairs: shirt, collar and cuffs all gone, to say nothing of the studs. I sat down convulsed with laughter, but Harry—well, we had better say little of Harry. He was still staring at the spot where that shirt had disappeared.

Just at this moment, as he was trying to adjust his braces, we became aware of footsteps in the brushwood opposite, and several ladies made their appearance.

"The school," said Harry, making a dash for his waistcoat which he succeeded in slipping into. In his haste he did not notice it was inside out. I shall never forget the expressions on those girls' faces, first surprise, then horror, and then they were overcome by laughter. It was excusable, perhaps, for they had never before seen an angler complete his toilet without shirt or collar, and with waistcoat turned inside out.