

the new grass to come forward; in other cases prospectors set it on fire in order to be able to search for the reef, while in some cases it is set on fire for mischief. In any case the blaze is a very pretty sight, and can be seen a long way off; but if not carefully guarded is sometimes apt to do more damage than good, on which account efforts are being made to put a stop to the practice, unless in cases where there is a sufficient reason for its being resorted to.

Passing through the Matoppo Hills, the great stronghold of the Matabeles, which is at many points impregnable,

and crossing the Lomeni River drift, where the scenery proved exceptionally pretty, we were once more re-entering Bulawnyo, well satisfied with our trip and able to look back with pleasure upon many little incidents attending it, and also feeling as we found ourselves once more in touch with the partially forgotten outside world, that there are few better ways of enjoying life than by spending part of it away from the artificialities of ordinary civilization and among the many interesting animals, birds, insects and the native life with which Matabeleland abounds.

ROD FISHING FOR THE LEAPING TUNA.

BY S. J. MATHES.



THE leaping tuna is the tiger-fish of the Pacific Coast, the king of the mackerel family, the largest and most active of its kind, attaining a weight of several hundred pounds. It is a veritable demon in point of ferocity and a most accomplished athlete and acrobat. The tuna usually takes its prey on the bound, as does the tiger, and the tuna fisher must have his nerve with him

when the great fish comes leaping after his bait, or else his first impulse will be to drop the rod and leap overboard for safety. The tuna is only caught in trolling, and a steam launch is generally used to tow the small boat from which the anglers fish.

It is a great sight to see a school of these big fish feeding. They leap out of the water ten or a dozen feet and descend on the hapless flying-fish, which is their approved diet, with a velocity which defies the lightning's flash for swiftness. Perchance the flying-fish, to escape his pursuer, has taken wing and is speeding through the air, as he vainly imagines, to safety. The tuna darts through the water with equal swiftness, and when the flying-fish drops again

into his native element, there he finds his relentless enemy waiting to give him a warm reception and take him in out of the wet.

The tuna has been known to leap over a boat, to tow a boat twenty to thirty miles, to fight the angler more than fourteen hours, and, after exhausting several men, at last, with frenzied energy, to break away and gain its freedom. The tuna seldom surrenders; it fights until its last gasp, and is frequently brought to gaff, after several hours of fierce fighting, stone dead, having fought with indomitable pluck until the last spark of life had departed. Tarpon fishers declare that a tuna has all the "steam" and vigor of three tarpons with all the tarpon's tricks and many of its own. To tell of some of the experiences of the sportsmen now on the island necessarily lays one open to the suspicion of telling "fish stories" of the rawest sort, even exceeding those of the Munchausen variety.

Up to four years ago it was deemed impossible to take tuna with rod and reel, and it was seldom they were taken even with a heavy hand-line, which was then the only means in use. One day, however, an angler, while fishing for yellowtail with a rod and light line, hooked a tuna, and after a struggle lasting several hours, in which his boat was towed a number of miles, he succeeded in bringing it to gaff; and then dawned a new era in fishing. The remarkable feat was heralded far and wide among

sportsmen, and others successfully emulated the example, until rod and reel fishing for tuna became the fad, and soon resulted in the formation of an organization at Santa Catalina called the Tuna Club.

In this club only those are eligible to membership who have brought to gaff, on rod and reel, entirely unaided, a tuna, weighing 100 pounds or over. The rules of the club also specify that no line larger than a 24-thread Cuttyhunk is permissible. But few of the members avail themselves of the limit, however, and the line most frequently used is 18 or 21-thread, as length of line sometimes counts for more than strength in checking the grand rushes of this fish. The reels in use will hold 900 feet of 18 or 21-thread, and but about 600 feet of 24-thread; and this fact, with professional pride in using the slightest possible tackle, brings the smaller line in favor with the Tuna Club members. The largest line admissible is not larger than the ordinary wrapping twine used for tying up packages in your grocery store, and with this mere thread fish weighing more than 300 pounds have been taken here. To be exact, the largest fish was a black sea bass which was caught July 22, 1899, by T. S. Manning, of Sierra Madre, Cal., weighing 330 pounds. The line used was 21-thread. The record tuna of 1898 weighed 183 pounds, but that record was broken July 3d, of last year, by Col. C. P. Morehouse, of Pasadena, Cal., who landed a tuna weighing 251 pounds, which is the world's record for tuna with rod and reel.

To encourage rod-fishing, and to discourage as much as possible the use, of the murderous hand-line, the Tuna Club arranged a fishing tournament for the summer, opening May 1st and continuing until August 15th. Handsome prizes were offered for the largest fish of the many kinds taken in these waters, and the result has been a lively competition, bringing together at Avalon a congregation of sportsmen hailing from every part of the country. The greatest competition was at the beginning of the season, over taking the first tuna, for which event two prizes were offered, one to the angler and one to his boatman, though the prizes were scarcely considered as a factor, the honor of having take a the first tuna in the tour-

nament being the distinction sought. Flying-fish, without which bait it were useless to attempt tuna-fishing, were scarce and hard to get, five dollars having been offered by an enthusiastic sportsman for a single specimen. The tuna season usually begins about the first of May, and they continue to bite well into August. Last season, however, the opening was somewhat delayed, and it was not until May 26th that the first one was hooked. At last, after some weeks of patient effort, the ball was opened. Prof. C. F. Holder, President of the club, who held the record for the largest tuna of 1898, C. H. Townsend, of Philadelphia, with Jim Gardner, of Avalon, as boatman, were the fortunate men. They were in tow of the launch *Minnebaba*, Captain Louie, skipper, and Mrs. Gardner and J. C. Bassett, were spectators. Mr. Townsend had the first strike, but lost his fish. Prof. Holder's bait was soon pounced upon by a ravenous tuna, and the fight was on.

The big fish started off on a rush, and the click of the reel soon became a perfect scream as he made the discovery that there was a string tied to that innocent-appearing flying-fish which he had so hastily stowed away under his vest. Quicker than it takes to tell it 500 feet of line was run out. Here a temporary check was given to the rush, and then it was give and take. The Professor would gain a few turns of his reel, and then zip! zip zi-i-i-p! it would go till another hundred feet was lost. Turning his fish, the Professor would gain some of his lost line, but the gamy creature made the fight fast and furious, darting hither and thither, now at the surface and a moment later sounding the depths five or six hundred feet below, never for an instant relaxing the vigor of its efforts to escape, and towing the boat at almost the speed of a good oarsman. For more than three hours the battle was waged, the Professor keeping the line taut to the limit of its tension, never allowing the fish a foot of slack, as that would have been fatal and the little thread would have been snapped in a twinkling.

Then skill began to tell. The rushes became a little less vehement, and the reel showed that gains were being made. Finally the fish was brought to view. Still fighting, it made a rush alongside

the boat, and then came its Waterloo. In an instant the alert boatman with a dexterous sweep of his long-handled gaff had him impaled and was dragging him into the boat. Then it was the fish's turn, and he wreaked a sweet revenge upon the three men in the boat. Just as they were setting up a cheer at having captured the first tuna, prizes and all, their cheers were suddenly drowned in a gurgle.

With a mighty bound the fish leaped into the air, and, alighting on the edge of the boat, upset the craft, dumping the occupants into the sea more than a mile from shore and in water a hundred fathoms deep.

Jim retained his hold of the gaff, and being an expert swimmer struggled to the surface with his fish and gained a hold on the overturned boat, as also did the others. Then the boat sank under their combined weight, and they were obliged to swim for the launch, which was fifty yards away. The Professor struck out, followed by Jim, who still clung to his fish with the tenacity of grim death to a deceased Senegambian.

It was a question whether Jim was towing the fish or the fish was towing Jim. Part of the time Jim was on top and part of the time the fish had him down with McGinty. It was a tug-of-war with realistic features seldom witnessed. Three times had Jim been dragged down out of sight, and Mrs. Gardner, who was an enforced witness of the whole scene, was frenzied. Her agonized cries, as the fish pulled her husband down, were heart-rending, she entreating him to let go the fish; but as Jim came up near the launch she grasped a rope and threw it to him with the energy of desperation. After the fish

was hauled aboard the launch, Jim was pulled in. Not a word was spoken until Jim, after getting his breath, looked up at the Professor and coolly remarked: "I saved your fish all right!"

Townsend, in the meantime, was resting easily upon the bottom of the up-turned boat, and it then transpired that he was unable to swim, and the call had been a particularly close one for him; while the Professor was handicapped by a heavy corduroy fishing suit, which he declares weighed not less than a ton in the water.

When an account of stock was taken it was found that three valuable rods and reels, including the Professor's, with various other fishing paraphernalia, were missing. A line was noticed leading, from where Jim sat, out into the water, which, on being drawn in, nearly a thousand feet of it, brought up the Professor's rod and reel. In some mysterious way the hook during Jim's swim had been transferred from the mouth of the fish to the seat of Jim's trousers!

The tuna which wrought all this ruction was not a large one, weighing less than 140 pounds. That it was not dead when Jim took his swim with it was fully demonstrated by the fact that, after it was gotten into the launch, it drove everybody out of the cockpit by its floundering. There are heroes in every walk of life, but the annals of fishing will scarcely show a more courageous act in devotion to duty than that of Jim Gardner swimming with a live fish well nigh his equal in weight.

The fish was properly mounted, and now ornaments the office of Hotel Metropole, the island's big hotel, the headquarters of the Tuna Club on Santa Catalina Island.

