

ANGLING

By WILLIAM C. HARRIS

FLY-CASTING TOURNAMENTS.

THE cast with a fly-rod of one hundred and forty feet by Mr. H. C. Golcher, at a tournament held by the San Francisco Fly-Casting Club, on October 11th, naturally suggests a consideration of the value of casting tournaments as mediums of instruction to the young angler. Certainly no contestant at these meetings in the distance class fails to show bad form from an angling standpoint. The acrobatic throwing of the body forward and backward, and the muscular phrensy of the arm in the forward cast, are not only distressing to look upon, but disastrous to the advancement of the tyro in a knowledge of the art of fly-casting.

The flies are not cast or thrown, but are "shot" out, as if from a catapult. The contestant uses a rod of much "yielding resistance," backbone and spring, re-enforced by brawn and muscle, and overruns his reel, coiling at his feet twenty-five or more feet of line, somewhat in the style of the English Nottingham method.

In the preliminary casts a maximum of about seventy-five feet is reached, an average distance at which the line can be lifted, and the feathers thrown with the back cast free in the air. As the casting continues greater distances are gradually made, the length of each cast being increased by the looped line passing upward and outward through the guides on the rod. Then, presto! The contestant draws his muscles almost into knots, extends his right arm to the utmost reach, throws his body convulsively, as it were, into an undulating arch as he lifts the seventy-five or, perhaps, eighty feet of heavy line from the water in the backward cast; then, bracing muscle and sinew, he makes a powerful forward cast, which, with the weight of the heavy line in the air, impels the reserve at his feet upward and outward, and the line shoots out one hundred to one hundred and forty feet, as the case may be.

It is to be hoped that the anglers of the country will discard such contests from the tournaments and confine themselves to casts which approach, in a measure, actual stream fishing.

Better still, the angling clubs of the country should inaugurate contests on streams which in many instances are adjacent to their club houses. Let us take one as a specimen water

and dwell upon the methods of fishing it at the suggested club tournament.

It is a beautiful stretch of water, about one-fourth of a mile long, with overhanging banks and rifts and rocks, with pools and eddies and clustering foliage and sheltered root holes, all of which constitute the physical conditions for the display, not of the muscular output of the angler, but of his best skill acquired from experience, and refined to a nicety through his love of angling.

From the banks, here and there, many hundreds of expectant and knowledge seeking tyros can overlook the tournament. What these methods are can be told briefly: A contestant steps up to the judges and announces that he is ready. He is required to put the joints of his rod together and to adjust his reel, run the line through the guides, attach the leader to it, and, finally, to select his cast of flies and place them on the leader. His manner of doing these things is duly noted and graded by each judge. The stream is before him—a rapid, with a large rock to the right, below which the waters subside in a long, deep pool. A note is made by the judges of the contestant's methods of approaching the stream, of his style of casting, mode of fishing the rapid; the variation in his manner of fishing the rapid, and the quiet pool; what use, if any, he makes of a passing cloud shadow, also of eddies, whether formed by rocks or pebbles; if he estimates the effect of the glare of the sun, and how he reduces its influence to a minimum. All these and other mannerisms of the contestant are noted by the judges, as they all pass down stream.

A short distance below there is a reach of water two hundred yards long, on one side of which is a heavy growth of alders, and on the other a number of large trees, their foliage extending nearly across the stream. Here the contestant is watched closely. He must fish it without instructions from friend or judge, and woe betide his score if he fails to realize the danger to his back cast, and the delicate work before him along the edges of the water.

He works down about thirty yards, and the conditions are reversed. The alders and the large trees have changed sides on the stream, and the methods of the contestant must change with them. Previously it was casting to the left; now it is casting to the right—underhand oblique, horizontal, overhead, or with the spey

or roll cast—and so on indefinitely, as the various phases of the stream unfold to the delight of the experienced angler and the confusion of the tyro.

Again, the method of bait casting at tournaments has entirely changed. The original oblique cast with the full sweep of the arm, in use on western waters by expert anglers, has been discarded, and the contestants at tournaments invariably use the overhead cast, which is admitted by an authority on this subject to be "in actual fishing often awkward and unnecessary." The line used in bait contests is braided so fine as to be entirely unfit for actual fishing, and so we find that tournament methods have set aside one of the most valuable educational factors of club meetings.

I have been expecting for years, with a cheerful greeting well in hand, that some of our local clubs, particularly the South Side Club, of Long Island, would take the lead in getting up a stream tournament as suggested above. The South Side folks have a stream close to the club house, where these contests could be held under natural conditions. The anglers of Passaic, Paterson, Plainfield, or Bound Brook, in New Jersey, can find, close by, waters adapted for this purpose. In fact, all through the Middle and Far West, streams abound, suitable in every respect for these contests.

COMMON SENSE IN ANGLING.

AN ANGLER who has read the short paragraph in the November issue of *OUTING*, wherein it was stated that Seth Greene once declared that common sense was a greater factor in successful fishing than luck, wants the subject treated more fully. Space demands that he must be content with a few illustrative incidents. One of them was as follows:

An old and experienced angler was in the habit of visiting several times each week of the fishing season the Great Kills on Raritan Bay, for the purpose of catching the weakfish which were numerous in that water. He had noted that the tide was very gentle on the fishing grounds; hence, he used a ten-ounce black bass fly-rod, a light line, a nine-foot single net leader, a single hook, and no sinker. Upon the hook he placed a medium sized bait of shedder crab, and paid out on the tideway fifty or more feet of line. The weight of the line caused it to sink to about midwater, where, under the action of the slow-moving tide, the bait swayed to and fro, as if alive. His outings were invariably fruitful ones. One day he was

bantered by the keeper of the fishing hostelry at the Great Kills who was a wool-dyed, non-progressive believer in the old-fashioned weakfish tackle, which might be described within limits as a bean pole, a clothes line, a gang of detached hooks and a lager beer keg float.

The banter was taken, and they soon reached the fishing grounds, where the weakfish were rampant. Both soon had their lines out, and host missed hooking about three fish out of five that took the bait. Our fly-rod fisher hooked and boated every fish that plucked the crab lure. Fitzgerald was astonished, and wanted to know why such a thing could be, for he was considered the best weakfish catcher in those parts. The reply was a common sense clincher, and covered the field exhaustively.

"Don't you see, old man, that your method of fishing is full of lost motions. First your sense of sight is brought into action as you watch your float; when that bobs, indicating a bite, your will acts and then your muscles go to work to take in the slack line before you can strike the hook into the fish. Three lost motions. Now, my line is always taut, and its tension on the tip of the springy rod, as sensitive as a pulse, indicates the slightest pluck of the fish, and instantaneously hooks it.

"There are no motions lost in my method. I am not compelled to use my eyes, my will, nor my muscles until after the fish is hooked. My rod does all this. See!"

This same fly-rod fisherman went to the Great Kills, Staten Island, one day, and found the usual fishing grounds dotted with boats, whose occupants with one accord exclaimed, "No luck!" He anchored and fished for ten minutes without a bite, and then told his boatman to row slowly along the inner edge of the channel and over the flats, about a mile from the shore. After trolling straight away for about fifteen minutes he caught a fine weakfish. He told his boatman to make a wide circuit over the same ground, and upon reaching it he boated another fish, which was even a finer specimen. The same tactics were employed for a third time, with the same result. The anchor was quietly lowered and a large score made of unusually fine fish—tide runners, with the golden yellow fins, in number equalling the combined catches of the thirteen boats which were found on the usual fishing grounds.

My correspondent will, doubtless, catch on to the moral of these two incidents.