

A FEW FISHING HINTS

By WILLIAM C. HARRIS

THE month of May ushers in the open season for black bass in many of the States; of these, however, there are few lying east of the Alleghanies and north of Maryland. Pennsylvania and New York being the only exceptions, the latter opening on May 29th in Long Island waters only, and the former on May 20th, throughout the State. There is no close season in Massachusetts for black bass, and this fact is a reminder of the low esteem in which this fish is held as a rule in the New England States. In Maine also there is no protecting close season, yet the lowly perch cannot be taken from April 1st to July 1st. In Virginia black bass can be caught up to May 15th, when a close season holds until July 1st. In the State of Washington the same law prevails as in Virginia. A defiance of nature's laws prevails in Delaware, as a rod and line fisherman can take black bass from March 1st to June 1st, a period when they are on their spawning beds, as a rule.

In the North and South Dakotas, the black bass season opens on May 1st; in the District of Columbia, on May 30th; Michigan, May 26th; Wisconsin! May 25th; in California, May 30th, and in Iowa on May 15th. In the Thousand Islands waters of the St. Lawrence River the Canadian Government exact a special license, and require visiting anglers to employ Canadian guides; the license fees for non-residents are five dollars for three months and ten dollars for six months. There is also, a special license—for all non-residents—required for fishing in the Nepigon River and its tributaries, to wit: fifteen dollars for a two-weeks privilege; twenty for three weeks, and twenty-five for four weeks. Non-residents when fishing in other parts of the Canadian Provinces and employing native guides, are not required to take out licenses.

The States that open up their trout fishing on the first of May and not before are: North Dakota, Vermont, Michigan, Wyoming (only in the Big Horn and North Platte rivers and their tributaries; in all other waters of Wyoming the open season commences on June 1st); Quebec and in New Brunswick. In Ontario the season opens on April 20th, and in New Mexico on May 15th. The general open season in the State of Maine for all of the salmon or trout family dates from the time when the ice leaves the waters of the State, which is usually during the latter part of the month of April or the early days of May.

Fly fishing for the Atlantic salmon is permitted from February 1st to August 15th in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Quebec; in Newfoundland from January 15th to September 15th, and in Maine from July 15th to September 15th.

TWO INTERESTING QUERIES

Two interesting queries have reached me: one asking if the bed of hemlock twigs used by campers-out would not cure consumption if laid upon all through the summer season; the other correspondent wants to know if pot fishing is as prevalent now as it was twenty-five years ago. These queries recall an experience of my own on a trout stream, happening more than a quarter of a century ago, which will meet measurably, at least, the wishes of these correspondents:

THE HEMLOCK CURE

During many years my summer vacations were spent along the trout streams of Pennsylvania and Northern New Jersey. I recall the last season, or rather the tail-end of it, when, with a guide, a worthy wood-chopper, I made my headquarters at Bodines, of which Dr. Up De Graff has written a charming book. We tramped within a mile or so of the spring head of Pleasant Stream, which empties into Lycoming Creek near Bodines. Pleasant Stream is now owned by a fishing club and is one of the loveliest of the many mountain waters of Pennsylvania. For at least eight miles the fly-caster, when wading, has a sweep on either side of thirty feet for his cast. From bough-catching he is comparatively free, but not so from back-snubbing, that vile nuisance which destroys more tackle than even bunglers naturally do on their first visit to a trout run. Back-snubbing, as it is called by an old fishing friend of ours, occurs when your point fly catches in the cleft of a rock or a tuft of dense moss on the backward cast and is apt to occur with the best of us when using a short rod and making a long cast.

From the hotel to the upper waters of Pleasant Stream was about seven miles, the last five of which was along the banks of the stream, densely wooded, over a faint trail made by tramping cows and the feet of anglers, through the brush which reached the shoulders as we slowly threaded our way up stream. I had been for a week past afflicted with a severe catarrhal cold, but ventured on the outing in the hope that good physical results, would follow, for when we started from the hotel the air was balmy and the sky unclouded.

When we reached the banks of the stream where the bushy trail commenced, five miles from our proposed camping ground, a heavy rain fell and soaked us thoroughly as we pushed aside the branches of the short underbrush and received the dripping water from its foliage and that downpouring from the clouds. Not even a deserted lumber

hut could be found nor a lean-to of an old fishing camp, and when we sought temporary shelter under a tree the ram fell upon us in little streams as the wind tossed the branches to and fro.

We reached the camping ground just after the storm had passed, an hour or so before sundown, and the guide deftly, and in half an hour, built a rough lean-to with a thatched roof of boughs and leaves and a great camp fire at which we dried our clothes and also a big stock of hemlock branches, the twigs of which, when dried, were to furnish our bedding for the night. By this time I was in a bad way; nasal passages nearly closed, head almost bursting with pain, legs and every joint stiff and sore, and worse than all with a dreadful presage of the night's suffering. A pannikin of strong tea was drank, a soda cracker eaten and I stretched what seemed to be a confused jumble of disjointed limbs, upon the hemlock bed. I tossed from side to side for a full half hour, scarcely able to breathe, with a creel for a pillow, until exhaustion from my long tramp came bringing blessed oblivion with it, and the last thing I remembered was that in my restlessness my head left the creel pillow and my face, particularly the nose, became buried in the elastic twigs of the hemlock bed.

My sleep was deep, yet dreamless, and I awoke at the first glimmer of light to see the guide with a coffee pot in one hand and a loaf of bread in the other going toward the camp fire, which he had kept blazing and roaring (so he said) all through the night. He bailed me with:

"How is your cold?"

Singular as it may seem I had not given in that early morning a thought to my affliction of a week past and its severity the night before, for my head was as "clear as a bell," my limbs free from soreness and all my faculties centered on the pleasure of fishing the beautiful and fruitful trout water that made music for attuned ears twenty rods away. The balsam of the hemlock twigs in which my catarrh-affected head and nose had been buried all night, had done the deed, and since that hour I have been as firm a believer that all the drugs that can be compounded from the pharmacopoeia would not be equal as curatives to a trout outing and a hemlock couch. In fact, I am as great a fanatic on this subject as an old angling friend of mine, who insists that wading a trout brook without waterproofs will cure chronic rheumatism.

OLD-TIME POT FISHING

Now, this outing had another feature about it that meets somewhat the query of my second correspondent. It has haunted my memory and burdened my conscience in a vicarious sort of way for many years. At that time, long ago, there were, if I

recollect right, no restrictions in the size of trout caught, and open and close seasons were merely paper laws.

After rods were jointed, casts made up, creels adjusted, and belts tightened we started for the stream. The guide said as we reached it:

"I want fish and plenty of them, and to make sure of it, I'm going up to the head of the brook and fish down. You can fish leisurely down from here and I'll catch you about nooning-time."

So up he went and down I trudged, knee-deep, vigorously casting right and left for at least four miles, basketing about a dozen fish, ranging from six to eight inches. It was a bad day and tiresome work. About 1 P.M. the lusty woodchopper hailed me from above and soon came up to where I was sitting on the grass, stretching my water-soaked limbs. I noted the pleased expression on his face, and prepared to look upon several giant trout and plenty of presentable ones. I hailed him with:

"What luck?"

"Glorious," came the reply, regurgitating itself around among the mammoth bell-toned boulders that were strewed around us. He reached me and, lifting the creel from his shoulders, cried out until the sympathetic rocks commenced to resound again.

"Isn't it a grand catch?" and spread them before me with the addenda, "there are more trout in that basket than any one man has caught this season in one day."

They were there sure, but such trout. "Fingerlings" was a complimentary misnomer for nine-tenths of them, one hundred and twenty in number. None were more than five inches long and some actually graded down to two. "Little bits of things," hardly out of their swaddling clothes, and in one or two instances I imagined I could see traces of the umbilical sack still upon them. How they ever got their mouth open wide enough to take even the infant hook the woodchopper used, was a mystery then and is now to me. Packed solid by jostling in a medium creel the whole one hundred and twenty hardly tilled one-third of it. It was a clear case of infanticide, and I felt then and there, that the vile murderer should be hung up on the nearest tree. But as I glanced at his big brawny body, I postponed our "vigilance committee" until I could catch another and a little fellow at the like trick.

I made no comment upon his catch; only muttered that "I was pretty well used up and would stop fishing," and at once plunged into the woods, making for the nearest cow-path that led to Bodines and the hotel. Upon our arrival there and when my companion, in his pride of capture, boastingly exhibited his score, no comment was made by the bystanders as to the size of the trout, but hearty congratulations were offered as to the number of them. So much for pot-fishing nearly forty years ago.