BLACKFISH and the SALT SEA

BY L. DE B. HANDLEY

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GETTING HIM INTO THE BOAT

LANDING A BIG ONE

AMONG the gamest of salt water fish and the one that affords great sport to the angler is the blackfish of eastern waters.

There are those who claim that salt water fishing lacks one of the essentials of true sport, there being no casting or other fine rod work to be done. They maintain, and not unjustly, that as much skill is needed to lure some of the fresh water varieties to the bait as to land them after a strike, and that one misses the keen battle of wit against instinct and natural wariness. All of which, while true, does not alter the fact that surroundings play an all-important part in the full enjoyment of a day's outing with rod and reel, a thing even the most enthusiastic angler would soon come to realize were it possible to catch the highly prized varieties from the unpicturesque docks along the water fronts of our cities.

There is inborn within all of us a keen love of the beautiful in nature and in the appeal made to it by the country into which we are taken lies much of the fascination of angling. We are stirred by the swish of the wind through the swaying trees, the murmur of the brook, the silence of the deep pool among the rocks, the placid lake, the fragrance and mystery of the wild woods.

And is not the sea every bit as fascinating? Indeed, once experienced, one never again escapes the subtle spell it weaves about one with its salt-laden breezes, its wonderful skies, the great body of water sparkling in the sunshine, the silvery beaches, rocky ledges and luxuriant green shores.

The blackfish inhabits localities that show the sea at its best and he is so game and crafty a fighter as to leave nothing to wish for on this score. It is not for nothing that he has won for himself the name of "bulldog of the sea." His large, powerful jaw is of iron, and he will dispute every inch of line, resorting to all manner of clever tricks in order to free himself. He is never caught until you have him safely in the boat and the skirmish between you will likely end in his getting away with the best part of your tackle unless your hand is skilled and your attention unwavering.

The blackfish is to be found along the shores of New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Old fishermen claim that his appearance north of Rhode Island is comparatively of recent date. In days gone by, when the Indians roamed the territory at will, he had place among their choicest table delicacies and we are told that the Mohegans, who called him "tautog," held him in high esteem as a spring and fall food.

The name of blackfish, evidently due to the fish's color, is not a particularly fortunate one. Though the black is of a dark gray and mottled, the sides are decidedly lighter and the under part almost white.

The blackfish inhabits the vicinity of rocky ledges, reefs and rough bottoms and shows a decided preference for places where the tide runs swiftly. Here he will lie in ambush behind some sheltering rock and await the passage of shrimp and small crabs carried down by the tide. When he spies his prey he darts out with lightning rapidity, pounces upon it and darts back to cover. This predilection for tidal flues has won him the name of "tide runner" in certain localities. He is also found inside the sandy bays along the southern shore of Long Island and on the ocean banks off Sandy Hook. In fact, the largest specimens are to be caught in these localities, and this, added to a slight but noticeable difference of color, between the rock and the sand catches, has led to the belief that there are two distinct varieties of blackfish, which is not the case. Only one exists.

Wondrous tales are told in the eastern fish market regarding the size of some of the blackfish brought in from the banks and there are those who will swear to having seen 60 pounders weighed. Like the majority of extraordinary fish stories they cannot be credited. No specimen tipping the scale even at 20 pounds is authentically on record, and ten pounders are considered a wonderful rarity. Men who fish constantly claim that the season's average shows a preponderance of two and three pounders, with a few five, six or even seven pounders to boast of. The number to be had depends a good deal on the locality, of course, but a string of 30 to 40 is by no means exceptional in the best waters.

New Yorkers are quite partial to blackfishing and regular excursion boats are frequently run to the banks with large parties on board. They generally return laden with spoils. Launches and sailboats are also used, and along the coast skiffs carry out many fishermen. On Saturdays and Sundays, from April until November there can be seen issuing from every harbor hundreds of little craft bound for the haunts of the blackfish. Here they anchor and remain all day, seldom failing to land a good catch.

Small launches make the best means of conveyance, because they enable one to reach the likeliest ledges (those near shore are pretty well fished out) and because their shallow draft permits of their running safely into the rocky places inhabited by the fish. Sailboats are rather dangerous in this respect and it is no rare occurrence to see one hung up high and dry by the falling tide. Rowboats are very convenient for near-shore fishing, but rather risky. Squalls are likely to come up at any moment and make matters more than interesting for the fishers.

The blackfish is said never to desert his home waters and it is a fact that he never visits the rivers like do the salmon and the sturgeon to lay his spawn. At the advent of the cold weather he becomes torpid and goes into hibernation, not emerging again into life until spring. April makes the return of his appetite and fishermen time the period of his reappearance with the flowering of the dogwood. From then until November he can be caught, though there is a time in mid-summer, during the excessive heat, when he will only be tempted by the daintiest of delicacies. By September he is feeding voraciously again, however, so the slack season only lasts a few weeks.

The bait commonly used for blackfish is the soft-shell clam and the fiddler crab. Knowing anglers swear variously by shrimp, hermit crab, sandworm, hard clam and the tail-end of a chicken lobster as irresistible morsels when the fish are not biting well, but, as a rule, there is no necessity for special bait.

The securing of a soft-shell clam on the hook is a task that requires consummate skill. Wherever lives the blackfish is to be found also in great abundance the small fish called the bergalt or cunner, and the bergalt has a particular fondness for clams and fiendish cleverness in separating them from a hook. While he is about it you feel a few gentle nibbles and then motion ceases. You pay no attention, of course, but after waiting vainly for a bite you decide to inspect the bait and find to your surprise that it is gone. The hook is picked as clean as a whistle. A motionless line, free from nibbles has come to indicate a baitless hook to the seeker of the blackfish.

The most effective way of checking the predatory instinct of the bergalt is to bait with the entire clam, shell and all. This is done by inserting the hook into the protruding neck of the clam, twisting it around until it is firmly imbedded into the hard muscle of the bivalve and then cracking the shell lightly. Prepared this way the clam is easily taken into the big mouth of the blackfish, but presents an armored surface to the begalt which he attempts vainly to break through.

The vast majority of blackfish anglers being fishermen rather than sportsmen, and counting the day's enjoyment only from the standpoint of the catch, scruple not to minimize as much as possible the fish's chances of escape. They use heavy hand lines provided with two or three good hooks, and when a fish strikes it becomes merely a matter of hauling it in, hand over hand.

There are others, though, who have the right sporting blood and believe in equalizing matters so that skill will have to be brought into play. They use light rather than stiff poles, preferably of split bamboo, and bass lines.

The blackfish, being a bottom fish, it is necessary to anchor the line. This is done by securing a small sinker to the end. Above it are spliced two leaders a foot or so apart, each bearing a hook, the size of which depends on the individual's idea of what is proper. These ideas evidently vary greatly, for a wide range is seen. To the writer a 2-0 has seemed to best fill requirements. The double leader has been universally adopted owing to the changeable moods of the blackfish. They will often refuse absolutely to even look at fiddlers and pounce greedily on clams, only to reverse a few hours later. It has therefore been found wisdom to offer them both baits at once.

Landing a blackfish with rod and reel is an interesting and exciting pastime. His dash for the bait is so sudden and his retreat so swift that one is often taken unawares. There are no warning nibbles, no quiet swimming off with the line. It is a case of grab and run for cover. Therefore must one be ever alert and stop him as soon as he bites. Luckily, there is no fear of his spitting out the bait; he seizes boldly and generally hooks himself fast. The danger lies in another direction—in his great strength and wonderful cunning. He has you both ways. If you stop him too suddenly he will throw all his weight on the line and snap it off before you know it; if you try to play him loosely he will dart behind some rock, snarl the line, and it will either snap or saw off when you try to free it. One must know one's business thoroughly to be successful and also be constantly on the qui vive. And even then accidents will occur. The wise fisherman always has extra tackle with him.

It is generally conceded that blackfish bite best on the rising tide and one cannot deny that exceptions prove the rule, but in more than one instance the writer has hauled in good strings on the ebb tide, and the largest catch he ever witnessed—in number, not in size—was made during the first three hours of a falling tide.

Weather conditions are said to influence the biting of blackfish. A well-known writer on game fish gives it as his opinion that ideal conditions are clouded skies and sufficient breeze to just ruffle the water without stirring it. The writer's experience and that of several of his angler friends has been that weather makes very little difference.

A common belief, in no way substantiated, is that blackfish have a keen sense of hearing. Novices are always cautioned to make as little noise as possible. It is also said that thunder so frightens the blackfish that they will cease from biting at the first peal; and to this is added the legend that after sharp crashes of lightning a number are to be found floating around on the surface dying or dead.

Not the least good point of the blackfish is his toothsomeness. Fresh caught and cooked on the embers, he offers a morsel fit for the gods. The flesh is firm, savory and possessed of a delicious flavor. But, to the writer, the greatest charm in blackfishing lies in the beautiful nooks and enchanting little islands about his haunts where one can go ashore either for a few hours or, if the spirit moves, for several days of camping.

Nothing is more delightful than to idle away the time in such pleasant surroundings, fishing, bathing and boating. And the catch will not be wasted, for the blackfish is strong and hardy and will suffer no ill effects from being confined alive to a tank or small pool for a few days.

A Telephone Bluff.

At 101st street and Broadway a man was talking into a telephone, says the New York Times. Presently he was heard to say:

"All right, I'll come. I am now at 23rd street and Broadway. I'll be up in about half an hour."

"That chap seems to have lost his bearings," said a man who had overheard the error in locality.

"He knows where he is, all right," said a drug clerk. "He's just putting up a bluff. It is quite a common bluff. Men who have a mighty regard for truth at all other times do not hesitate to tell a whopper over the telephone. I have heard persons swear over the wire that they were telephoning from points all the way from Hoboken to Amityville. They were not seasoned liars, either; just wanted a few minutes' grace, apparently, and thought the easiest way to get it was to make out they were a mile or two further away than they really were."

A NEW FACTOR IN FARMING

Use of Power Has Multiplied Man's Capacity a Hundredfold—Comparison of Power Furnished by Tractor With That Furnished by the Horse.

By H. H. MUSSELMAN, Instructor in Farm Engineering, Michigan Agricultural College

The history of agricultural machinery has been one of extremely rapid development within comparatively recent years. The trend of development has been toward the application of power to hand processes. The history of manufacturing shows the same course. We are told that the extended use of power has made the work of the world less arduous and shortened the hours of labor. Man's progress depends largely upon his capacity to do work, which is the result of the expenditure of energy. The use of power has multiplied his capacity a hundredfold. The man with the hoe, dull and uncomprehending, is passing, and in his stead we find the man with wits keen to direct and hands skilled to control the energy which doubles his own a score, whether it be the four-horse team, the steam engine, or the gasoline tractor. Through the agency of well adapted agricultural machines he has been able to direct this energy into useful work, the effectiveness and nicety of which the unaided hand of man could never equal.

This year at Winnipeg, Canada, was held a competition of motor tractors, steam, gasoline and kerosene. Here were met thirty-one outfits from half as many companies. For three weeks these machines were subjected to the severest tests on the brake and in the field under actual working conditions. Virgin prairie sod, the toughest task the plowman has ever encountered, was severed and upturned with a rapidity and ease amazing to the layman. What was the purpose of it all? Primarily to determine the adaptibility of the various types of machines to the work for which they are intended, but in a larger sense to develop and perfect a machine which means the making of the northwest.

We are accustomed to the use of power on the farm in Michigan. The principal sources are the windmill, the gasoline engine, the steam engine, and the horse. The field has been divided and to the lighter duties have been assigned the windmill and the gasoline engine. The steam engine handles the heavier duties to which it is adapted, but to man's most faithful friend, the horse, falls the greater share. The steam engine has never been seriously considered as a field machine in Michigan on account of its weight and unwieldiness on the comparatively small fields and farms. There is being brought forth today, however, the light internal combustion tractor intended for general purpose work upon the farm. It has not as yet proven its worth, but many are looking forward to its advent with the keenest interest. Can such a machine find a field of usefulness, and if so what would be the basis of its adoption?

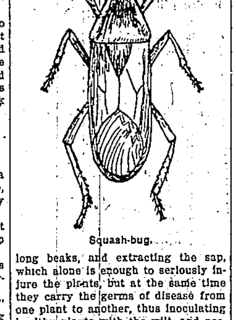
Suppose we give the matter of the amount of power furnished some consideration and in so doing leave out all other factors. We will compare roughly the power furnished by the tractor with that furnished by the horse. At present the unit of power is the horse. This unit may be combined into the two, three and even the four-horse team. The latter is about the limit of power that one man can handle advantageously. The average horse is able to develop nearly a unit horsepower when used continuously. One horsepower here is intended to mean the unit used in measuring work. A man then driving a four-horse team would be able to control the energy equal to four-horsepower. If he were using a twenty horsepower tractor which should develop, roughly speaking, about fifty per cent. of the total horsepower at the draw bar, he should then have from 6-10 horsepower available for effective work with the engine working at somewhere near its full load. All other things being equal, the balance would be in favor of the tractor since it would enable one man to control a greater amount of power. Aside from the question of power furnished there is a question of adaptability which the manufacturer is assiduously working out. An example of what we mean by adaptibility may be shown by the following: A four-horse team may be divided and each horse or unit used complete in itself, this adapting it to smaller yet important details of work. In the tractor this would manifestly be impossible, but on the other hand the tractor through its construction and efficiency would be found especially valuable for belt work where horses can be used to very little advantage. There are many questions of design such as types of engines, gears, clutches, height, height and width of drivers, kind of lugs for effective traction, weight, etc., which time and experience together must determine. If, however, we can add to the size and adaptability of the now commonly understood and used gasoline or kerosene engine, obtain fuel at a reasonable cost, and shift a proportionately larger share of the work upon this unfeeling machine, then it will surely find favor. Old Dobbin will not be supplanted, but relieved of his heaviest burdens as he has relieved man of his.

CONTROL OF SQUASH BUGS

By R. H. PETTIT, Entomologist, Michigan Agricultural College

Everyone knows the large black stink-bug or squash-bug of the garden and field. All of us have tried to kill it by sprays, dust baths and what not, but still the stink-bug flourishes. There seems to be no wash or powder that will kill the bug without at the same time killing the plants.

The eggs of these marauders are red in color, and quite large; they are laid in patches on the leaves, for the most part, on the under side. The young bugs that come from these eggs resemble the adults very much except in their proportions and in size, although of course they lack the wings. Not only do the bugs attack the vines, piercing them with their long beaks, and extracting the sap, which alone is enough to seriously injure the plants, but at the same time they carry the germs of disease from one plant to another, thus inoculating healthy plants with the wilt, and possibly with other diseases.



Squash-bug.

Remedial.

Plants grown under mosquito-netting of course escape the bugs, but such a measure is very expensive except in unusual cases.

Clean Culture.—In the autumn after the crop is secured, the bugs continue to feed on the old vines for some time before the vines dry up and die. The writer has collected large numbers in such situations. Young bugs, old bugs, and bugs half grown. It is these young and vigorous bugs that hibernate and start new generations in the spring. The remedy is obvious—destroy all old vines, squash, pumpkin, cucumber and all vines of that family, just as soon as they have served their purpose, either plow or burn, and do it then.

On cool nights the bugs love to hide under shelters. Old shingles, placed on the ground near the vines, harbor dozens of the adults over night. The lesson is obvious—put out pieces of board and shingles and destroy the bugs early in the morning before they get to the vines. Jar the bugs off into pails of water having a little kerosene floating on it.

WEED CONTROL IN AUTUMN

By R. S. SHAW

Seedings of clover and grass seed mixtures for hay and pasturage are quite universally made along with winter wheat, rye, barley or oats. While these crops are growing the weeds are kept in subjection, but after harvest their competition in growth with the clover and timothy begins promptly and vigorously. The number and varieties of weeds will depend somewhat on the locality and care exercised in operating the farm. Canada thistles, ragweed, pigweed, foxtail, etc., are among the commonest kinds found. It is not uncommon for ragweed and foxtail to overtop the new seeding and mature their seeds perfectly. Most of these weeds can be prevented from seeding by clipping, with the cutter bar of the mower tilted up so as not to injure the new clover seeding. If the growth is heavy it may be permitted to cure and then raked up and stored for winter forage for sheep, otherwise destroyed. This work can usually be done during August or September at times when farm work is not pressing. Of the weeds which seed in this way at this time, the ragweed is probably most persistent and pernicious. The practice just advocated is pursued on the Michigan Agricultural College farm in case the seedings are not pastured by sheep. A constant warfare has to be waged against weeds owing to their introduction in the purchase of hay, straw and grain for feeding, all the manure being returned to the farm.

Many promising colts are ruined by being forced on long drives with their dams. This is not only a cruel practice, but a senseless one.

GREW STEADILY WORSE.

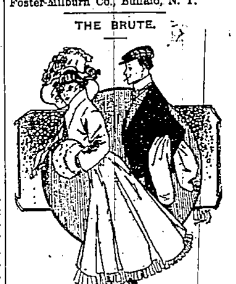
Chicago Woman Experiences Terrible Suffering from Kidney Trouble.

Mrs. Emma Kunze, 1649 N. Halsted St., Chicago, Ill., says: "A crick took me in my back and the pain was so terrible I could not straighten. I was confined to bed and could not turn without assistance. I grew enough better to sit up but began to suffer from rheumatic pains, so bad I often cried out. Kidneys were in dreadful condition and secretions suppressed. Finally I began using Doan's Kidney Pills and was cured. My health is now fine and my kidneys act perfectly."

"When Your Back is Lame, Remember the Name—DOAN'S."

For sale by druggists and general storekeepers everywhere. Price 50c. Foster-Milburn Co., Buffalo, N. Y.

THE BRUTE.



Wife—John, I listened to you for half an hour last night, while you were talking in your sleep.

John—Thanks, dear, for your self-restraint.

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The Recoil.

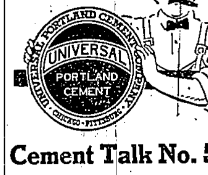
Tobacconist—You learned long ago how to pack a barrel of apples, didn't you, Uncle John?

Horticulturist—Sure thing, Billy; same as you packed that box of cigars I bought of you the other day—all the nice ones in the top row.

Whoever complains of not having found a true friend accuses himself.—Sintenis.

Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup for Children teething, softens the gums, reduces inflammation, allays pain, cures wind colic. 25c a bottle.

He who knows most grieves for wasted time.—Dante.



Cement Talk No. 5

The term *"barrels"* is usually used in speaking of quantities of *cement*. However, *cement* is seldom actually packed in barrels. A barrel is the unit of measure and simply means four sacks, each sack weighing 95 lbs. *Universal Portland Cement* is packed in paper or cloth sacks; in most cases cloth sacks are used. *Universal* is of the best quality of *Portland Cement* possible to manufacture. Forty million sacks are made and consumed yearly in this country. The railroads use hundreds of thousands of barrels. It is used by the biggest architects and contractors in the cities and the government uses it extensively in all departments. If you have any *concrete* work to do, ask your dealer for *Universal*. It is the best for *concrete* work of any kind.

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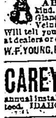

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CAREY ACT land and water rights. Open to entry on Big Wood River Project in Southern Idaho. $50.50 an acre in 12 annual installments. Ample water supply guaranteed. IDAHO IRRIGATION CO., Richfield, Idaho.

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