



ONE DAY AWAY FROM THE WEARY GRIND

Big Lake, Mo., August 23.—After a lover of the rod and reel has spent an entire summer in wondering whether he will get a chance among the moss and the lily pads, it comes mighty good to get away for even one day. And when to the one day off one can make it a day back in the scenes of his early youth, among the friends of his earlier days, a lot of the disappointment over a two weeks' vacation is wiped out.

Big Lake is not a fashionable resort. There is no orchestra at the hotel, a dress suit would be a curiosity, and "dressing for dinner" simply means jumping out of the boat, pulling off your rubber boots, donning your shoes, washing your hands and face and taking a dab at your hair with the brush and comb. Wearing a coat at the table depends altogether on the state of the weather. It was hot here today.

The average angler who writes and tells of his fishing trip loves to talk about "my guide." Nothing doing in the guide lie down here.

"Well, where's a good place, John?" is the question the angler asks.

"O, just row down the lake and drop over close to some of the brush if you want to fish for croppie," answers mine host.

"Any bass?"
"Yes, if you want to cast for 'em over there in the lily pads."

That is the extent of the guide business at this rural resort. And you do your own rowing, accumulating blisters and an appetite that are really marvelous. That's half the fun of fishing, anyhow, for a man of sedentary habits who often wonders if he is going to fall a victim to dyspepsia, and whose manual labor is confined to hammering the keys of a typewriter or grinding away with the stub of a lead pencil.

Big Lake is not so awfully big, measured by the standard of Mill Lac, Minnetonka, Lake of the Woods and Devils Lake. But it is a very sizeable lake as lakes go in this central western section, being about four miles long and between a quarter and a half mile wide. Formerly the Missouri river ran where the lake now is, but some thirty years ago that erratic stream wandered a few miles westward and cut a new channel, leaving the old bed dry. Gradually it filled up with water that seeped through the soil from the river, and today it is a lake of beautifully clear and cool water. Twenty-five years ago the writer fished in Big Lake, and caught fish galore. And scarcely a year passed in all that quarter of a century that he has not "wet a line" in its water.

O, but it's good to get away from the grind, even for one day, and float upon the bosom of a clear lake, watching alternately the cork and the fleecy clouds drifting across the sky, and breathing deep of the air that is untainted by the smell of coal smoke; listening to the boom of the frogs, the singing of the birds and waiting for the bites that send a thrill through the blood of the inveterate fisherman.

All the way down on the train the expectant angler thought of the copious draughts of fresh country

buttermilk he would have when he reached Iden's place. After a walk of two miles down a country lane, and reaching the farm house hotel on the lake shore about two hours after the usual supper time, the angler's first words were:

"Churn today?"
"Did you churn today, ma?" shouted Iden.

"Yes; why?" came the reply from the sitting room.

"Will's here and wants some buttermilk."

Then Mrs. Iden came to the door with a sad look upon her face and said:

"I wish you had told us you were coming. We threw all the buttermilk to the pigs."

Whereupon the expectant angler walked out into the night and held communion with the stars.

Let silence like a pall drop over the unspeakable scene.

Ever hear the story of the man noted for his profanity? He was hauling a load of apples to town, and when half way up a steep hill the endgate of his wagon came out. Neighbors who saw the accident flocked to hear what he would say. Gazing ruefully at the scattered apples the man remarked in a choked voice:

"Friends I have no language equal to the occasion."

The best we could do was to envy the happy lot of John Iden's pigs.

To bed at 9 o'clock, tired and happy. No noisy motor car rushing by the house with clang of gong and whirl of motor. No noisy whistle from the railroad yards. No night hawk's wagon, steel tired, rumbling over the streets. Nothing but the chirp of crickets, the croaking of the frogs and the occasional hoot of an owl in the near-by woods. What wonder, then, that the tired worker who yearned for the sleep that refused to come when at home, dropped off to slumber like a tired child, and felt when John hammered on the door at 5 o'clock next morning that something was wrong with the clock.

But within fifteen minutes after the call the expectant angler was in his boat and rowing down to the brush piles and the lily pads.

"Breakfast'll be ready at 7:30," cried John.

"All right, but don't wait."

It was nearly 8 o'clock when the angler beached his boat in front of the farm house hotel. A hasty wash and then breakfast. Now, for a man whose usual breakfast is a piece of dry toast and a cup of coffee, or a couple of pancakes with coffee, what do you think of a breakfast of fried fish, crisp bacon, three eggs "sunny side up," thick slabs of bread generously covered with fresh country butter, two cups of coffee and a couple of wheat cakes floated in real maple syrup?

Filled with all these good things, and likewise a fear of results, the angler hiked again to the boat and was once more off for the brush piles and lily pads. Back to dinner at 1, then off again to new fishing grounds with an afternoon under the clear sky, with the cool breezes wandering by and the fish biting most satisfactorily.

O, it was great fun. The cobwebs disappeared from the brain, the

lungs filled up with fresh air, the blood went pounding through the veins with renewed vigor, and every care was forgotten in the tense excitement of the glorious sport and surroundings.

Back to the farm house hotel in the twilight, and a hearty supper of bass not more than an hour out of the water, a long pull at the favorite pipe on the big front porch that looks out over the lake, and then to bed to drop off to sleep before the head had fairly made a dent in the pillow.

What if one did have to chase back to the daily grind on the early morning train? The memory of the one day would cheer many days of ceaseless work and worry. The chat with the old friends of days long gone, the companionship for a few hours of the "kid" brother who has girls of his own who are budding into womanhood, the renewed acquaintance with old scenes—it was worth double the cost, aye many, many times the cost.

"Right over there by that bunch of lily pads I got a five pound bass last week," cried Jim Bunker, who was rowing by.

So over you go, drop anchor and begin casting at the lily pads. Nothing doing. You move over a few rods and cast again. Nothing doing. Again—

There!

Who can describe the fierce strike of the black bass? Who can describe the sensation that thrills the fisherman when he hears the reel sing and sees the steel rod in his hand bend and sway as the gamey old bass tries every trick known to the finny tribe to outwit the mere man at the other end of the rod? The angler comes up standing, thumb on the reel, and eye on the line to see that old Mr. Bass does not get into the pads and foul the line beyond all hope of recovery. Splash! There, he broke water, his gleaming sides quivering with rage as he strikes to shake the hook from his mouth. Down to the bottom he goes and it takes a quick turn and a wide sweep of the rod to keep the line from fouling under the boat. There he goes, and the reel fairly hums. Now he rests, and slowly you toll him along with the reel, careful to keep the line taut but ready to let it go the minute he starts to pull away. Back and forth, in and out, up and down—so the contest goes on until at last Mr. Bass comes slowly to the side of the boat. Then you shift the rod to the other hand, stoop and reach for the landing net and—swish, away he goes again and the contest is on once more. But finally you get the net under him and a moment later he is flopping in the bottom of the boat.

Four pounds if an ounce:
"Told you you'd get 'em over there," grinned Jim when you landed at the house in the evening.

Yes, the one catch was worth the trip. But beside that one you caught some others, not so large but still capable of putting up a good fight. And croppie and pike and an occasional channel cat—and oodles of "shiners" that are absolutely worthless, even as fertilizer.

Only one day, but it was a day that shook off a dozen of the accumulated years, and sent the angler back to work feeling fit and fine. A man simply can not afford to not lay off for at least a day now and then, and spend it in the woods or on the water far from the madding crowd.

So here's to the one day off, and may the time soon come when every toiler will be able to take at least the one day without knowing that the loss of the one day's wage means privation for months.

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