

# Perils of Winter Fishing on Great Lakes

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**W**HEN winter seals the streams and lakes the follower of old Isaac Walton puts away his tackle and sighs regretfully because his season of sport is over. But for the lake fishermen, who follow angling not as a sport but as a livelihood, the period of bitter labor and hardship sets in when the ice forms thick from shore to shore. People must have their fish in winter as in summer, and so the winter fishermen of Lake Erie, hardy Bedouins of the white desert, face constant suffering and the imminent peril of life and limb to fill their little dog sleds for the market. The lake ports are full of men who lack an ear, a few fingers or a foot. The explanation is simple: "Lost on the ice over night." Sometimes it is a more grisly fate and the victim is not discovered until the ice breaks up in the spring and some floating island touches the shore with its ghastly freight. They must needs be brave men as well as hardy who handle the frozen line on Lake Erie's surface.

It is 5 o'clock of a still January morning. The thermometer marks 7 below zero. Off on the edge of Buffalo a cluster of unpainted frame houses, deep in the drifts piled up by the fierce Lake winds, show signs of life. A door opens in one of them and in the broad swale of lamplight appears a man, followed by two shivering dogs. You might think that the man was a member of one of the lawless organizations that wreak vengeance by night on persons incurring their dislike, for he wears over his face a white mask with holes for the eyes. This is not for concealment, however, but for protection. The sinking dogs have no such protection. They must rely on their own fur and on exercise for their warmth, and of exercise they will presently get plenty. Drawing forward a rough box sled the man twists it around and gives his sharp orders:

"Come, Sharky! Get around, McGovern!" and the dogs, stepping to their places, are quickly harnessed.

Their owner tosses a bundle of fish lines and a pole terminating in a steel blade into the sled-box, places his bait carefully in a corner, starts the dogs until the outfit is



HOMEWARD BOUND—BRINGING IN THE CATCH.

fisherman, unless they are closely watched. Cases have been known where the draught dogs have caught and killed these graceful robbers. A hundred fish in half a day's work is considered good luck, and the man who makes the catch may pack up and go home in high spirits. Then how the plucky dogs speed over the smooth stretches! Unless checked they will take hummocks of ice and snow drifts in their eagerness to get home, and the hard-won load will be scattered for the gulls to pick up.

Not always has the fisherman a load to bring home. Sometimes he may fish all day and take nothing but a wriggling red lizard, edible only for the winged thieves. Or he may have just begun his catch when a blue gray haze appears far away toward the horizon and he must upstake and flee before the blizzard that, at one swoop, may wipe away the trail and leave him lost in the Sahara of snow and ice. If the storm be wind alone, it may be a boon instead of a danger to the outfit, for the shelter cloth is converted into a sail and the sled, now become an iceboat, scuds swiftly along, while the dogs rush, barking

eleven men were similarly caught. A man residing on the shore sighted them and after a number of trips with a boat all were brought safely to land.

At Silver Creek, a village between Buffalo and Dunkirk, thirty fishermen were a mile from shore when they suddenly made the discovery that they were afloat and were being driven out into the lake. They, too, were discovered by persons on shore. A rescuing party was formed, but after thirteen of the men had been safely landed, the boat met an accident in the floating ice. Before the repairs could be made the darkness of a cloudy winter night had settled upon the water. Thirteen more men reached shore in the early evening without aid.

Word was sent in all directions and bonfires were lighted at different points to guide the lost in their efforts to make land. At midnight the remaining four, by jumping from cake to cake, reached the shore, where they fell exhausted. When able to speak, they told a story of suffering seldom equaled. After hours of extreme exertion one became so weak that he lay down and told his companions to leave him to die. They dragged him to his feet and forced him to keep going. Another, in attempting to leap a stretch of open water, fell in, and was pulled out by the others. His clothes soon became so stiff that they cracked and rattled as he walked. A third was wearing felt boots, which became so saturated with water that he was forced to abandon them, and proceeded in his stocking feet. At length all found themselves completely isolated on a piece of ice not more than fifteen feet square. As they watched the widening of the watery barriers around them, hope fled and the men looked into each other's faces as they waited for death. While they waited the wind veered around and set in more toward land, the open space was closed up, and by one last, almost superhuman effort the sick, stiff and shivering group staggered to shore. Two died from the effects of the exposure and suffering.

And what is the compensation for such hardship?

It varies from a few cents to as high as \$6 and even \$7 per day. Or, mayhap, it is nothing but a bad cold and a frozen ear. There are two fish companies in Buffalo which handle the bulk of the catch. Each concern handles about a ton of fish every day. They pay 6 cents per pound and take all that is offered. Some of the men have customers in the city from whom they get the retail rate of 12 and 14 cents, but the time spent in peddling them about offsets the difference in price, so that most of the catch is turned over to the dealers.

These companies also furnish bait, consisting of minnows, at 10 cents per pint. The bait question is sometimes a problem, especially on Sundays and holidays, when over 1,000 men go out. The companies get the minnows in bushel baskets and the source of supply is, as far as possible, kept a secret.

The most important part of the fisherman's outfit is his dog team. Dogs of every size, style and description are used; some are fine fellows and well mated. The great majority, however, are just dogs. There are no adjectives to describe them technically, for the clairvoyant does not live who could trace the pedigree or name the breed. Shaggy, disreputable looking brutes these are. There is little style or attempt at matching of yoke-fellows, either as to size or color. Anything with hair on that can bark and pull is acceptable.

As the mercury falls the dog market rises and in February shows a strong, bullish tendency. A dog sale is a remarkable sight. The merchants are sharp fellows and clever jokesters and their remarks regarding the pulling qualities and sprinting propensities of some hulking, homely brute of uncertain extraction and ownership, which they are trying to sell to the fishermen, would make a horse trader feel like a kindergartner.

BISSELL BRICE.

## The Incurables

Chicago Tribune: "What ward is this?" asked one of the visitors as they looked through the cross-barred doors at a number of wild-eyed, ill-groomed men who were quarreling among themselves.

"This," replied the keeper, "is the place where we confine those men who thought they had a message for mankind and

such things do not happen," said Wadsworth, gravely.

"Hub!" retorted Sherman. "I'll tell it, anyway. The farmer went to the office of the insurance company and demanded his money."

"Nothing doing," said the manager. "The fire was caused by friction, and friction doesn't go."

"Friction?" expostulated the farmer, "no such thing!"

"Oh yes," and the manager smiled grimly. "It was the friction caused by rubbing a \$3,000 policy against a \$2,000 barn."

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started a paper in order to deliver it. They are our most hopeless cases." With a pitying sigh the visitors passed on.

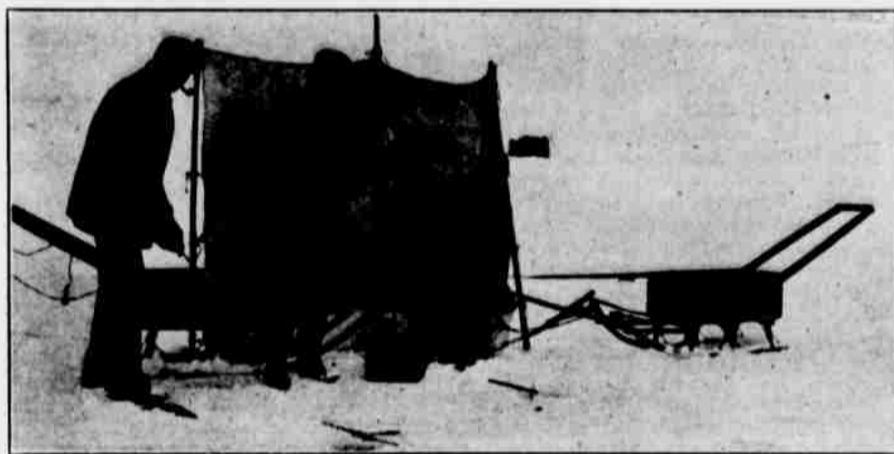
## Friction Caused the Fire

New York World: "I hope there will be no friction," said Representative Wadsworth to Representative Sherman the other day.

"Friction?" said Sherman. "Did you ever hear of the farmer up in the Mohawk valley whose barn burned down and who could not collect from the insurance company?" "I come from the Genesee valley, where

## "Outing" Art Calendar 1902.

**W**E offer this week the second in our series of beautiful art calendars for 1902. The first, our "Century Girl", may still be had, the second is now ready for distribution. For want of a better name we have decided to call this one "Outing," because that title seems most appropriate to the dainty and artistic drawings. Each plate is from a water color painting by Miss Maude Stamm, and all the delicate shades and artistic atmosphere of the originals have been faithfully reproduced. There is no advertising upon these calendars, nothing more nor less than shown in the illustration herewith except the colors, which are of course impossible of reproduction in a half-tone. We have secured a large number of these calendars, but the demand is steadily increasing and it will be well to send in your orders as early as possible. They will make very attractive and inexpensive gifts and are most appropriate at this season of the year. You cannot secure such calendars at the art stores for several times the price at which these are offered.



WATCHING THE LINES—TIP-UPS IN THE FOREGROUND.

going fairly; then, with a "Hi-yah!" to speed them on, jumps into the box and sets his face toward the blood-chilling blackness of the lake. After him come other dog teams, some striding out over the ice, others racing side by side, while the encouraging whoops of their drivers answer each other across the spaces of the night. By the time the sun rises one could see, if he could take in the whole breadth and length of the icefield, a squadron of from 500 to 1,000 of these outfits. He would also see many men patiently trudging on foot, but these are mere "pot-luckers," who content themselves with the fishing three or four miles from land. Your true fisherman considers ten miles a moderate journey and sometimes makes a round trip to thirty.

If he has had good luck at the spot where he last fished he returns there. First he puts up a square of sailcloth which he has brought along, fastening it to two poles set in the ice. This is his camp. In the lee of it the dogs crouch, nestling close together. Their work is over for the time; the man's has just begun. With his steel-clad pole he chops a row of holes in the ice and lets a line attached to the end of one of two crossed sticks down through each hole. This device is known as a "tip-up," the term appropriately describing its action when a fish is caught. The inducement to the fish is a minnow—frozen perhaps—but food is scarce in winter and there is considerable competition among the pike at breakfast time. Before he gets the third line down the first stick waggles and then stands upright.

"Tip, yip, yap!" bark the dogs, that being their way of announcing, "You've got a fish." They are interested because an occasional bit falls to their lot.

Removing a squirming fish from an ice-encrusted hook when the fingers are so numb that they couldn't pick up a twenty-dollar gold piece, is no pleasant sport, but it must be accomplished. Hardly is this one flopping in the box sled when another tip-up performs after its kind. If the angler has had the luck to strike a school of fish, he will be kept warm—all but his hands—hustling from one line to another. The gulls will give him some occupation, also. Emboldened by hunger, they swoop down upon the little encampment and snatch fish almost from the hand of the

with the joy of freedom, beside it.

Blizzards are the terror of fishermen, who will tell you stories of terrible suffering and hopeless wanderings through the blinding storm, stories of wonderful rescues and tales of men who went out and never came back, of how the instinct of the dogs has been resorted to as the last means of finding the way home, of how this, too, has sometimes proved unavailing and the dogs have crouched, whining and shivering, in the drifts, refusing to move. You will hardly find an old fisherman but has some such tale to tell, usually about one of his own family.

"You mind my nephew, Charley? Fine, big, strong feller he was, but he was young an' he thought he knew it all. Wouldn't put back last year when the big February blizzard come up. Luck was too good, he said. He stayed, but his dogs knew better. They ran away and got home alive. We didn't find Charley that winter, but when the ice broke up two of the boys found a man an' a sled frozen in a big piece. From the clothes we thought it was Charley. You couldn't tell by the face 'count of the gulls. He must have got muddled and wandered 'way out beyond the furthest fishing posts."

The wise man always carries a compass in his pocket, but there are many careless and improvident ones who do not think of it until the time when they would exchange everything they possess for a wobbly, nervous little needle in a brass box. There was a March night last year when the weather-wise among the Buffalo fishermen looked out over the wind-swept ice, shook their heads, pulled their caps down tight and then sought shelter indoors. Those who did go out kept close to the breakwater. At various points along the south coast, some, more venturesome or less experienced, braved the storm and went out among the white swirls that sprang up suddenly here and there, spinning about like whirling dervishes and then darting off in blinding columns before the whip of the wind. Ere night one of these parties was caught like fish in a net. A streak of water, a black deadline, opened between them and the shore and the wind pounded their brittle ice raft to fragments. Some of the bodies were found, others were never discovered.

At Dunkirk, fifty miles west of Buffalo,



**T**HE above half-tone gives but a faint idea of the first page design of the new "Outing" Calendar for 1902. There are two other designs in Miss Stamm's happiest mood, and rather than attempt a description we have given each a name which will convey to you some idea of these clever sketches:

**"The Hunt for Happiness"**  
**"Landing a Speckled Beauty"**  
**"Bruin's Fate."**

The "Outing" calendar is uniform in size and style with the "Century Girl" and may be had upon the same terms. Don't forget the coupon and don't wait until all are gone before you order. Address

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