

TRIBUTE TO MISANTHROPE

The Only True Sportsmen Are Solitary Ones—Says "Thid"

OF all the solitary sports, there is surely nothing quite so pleasing as the sport of throwing stones in rivers; unless it is throwing stones into ponds. The pond, perhaps, should be preferred. In the river there is the delight of the missile's swift contact with the water, the splash, and the surprise of its almost instantaneous disappearance as the flood gathers itself about the stone and its ripple and hurtles both to the sea. But throwing stones should be a quiet sport. If it is not the arm gets tired. There is satisfaction in selecting a round, flat pebble from the beach, doubling the body, and flicking the disc so that it skips across the waters. But this exercise cannot be made to last.

Pleasure in Ponds

With ponds, however, a well trained, solitary sportsman can find unending pleasure. One stone, lobbed to drop with the proper plop, makes a fascinating ripple. To follow it closely with another, judiciously placed, and then another, and another; to watch them fall, to see the column of water rise about the hole their entrance makes, to observe it hesitate, belly out, and subside, and finally to see each concentric pattern of ripples hurry away to the banks, merge with the others, and play patterns with the sun and shadow; here indeed is the real ecstasy of doing nothing and doing it well.

BEAUTY'S BEST FRIEND



THOSE UNSIGHTLY
PIMPLES REPELLED HIM

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Exist if You Use
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LOTION FOR SKIN DISEASES

The Faults of Fishing

Not that solitary sport is confined to throwing stones into water. There are people who go fishing by themselves. But of these there are so many that the solitude of the early morning intention is lost in the gregarious forgathering of mid-day. Besides, fishing is itself such a dull, monotonous, wearying, dampening, disillusioning, and disappointing sport, that most fish stories cannot avoid admitting the essential truth that beer must be carried in the basket as well as flies, casts, and a change of underwear. Beer loses its flavour unless a friend's face is reflected in the bottom of the glass—amber, companionable, sympathetic for the perfection of a thirst properly slaked.

Fishing, then, can be discounted as inferior among the solitary sports. Throwing stones must be preferred. As far as the fish are concerned, in fact, it serves much the same purpose, disturbing them without barbing their tender mouths with cruel hooks. Which calls to mind the fact that it is possible, after all, to go fishing and still be solitary; to catch fish without being cruel, to catch them, indeed, while giving them pleasure.

Tickling Trout

Tickling trout is an excellent solitary occupation, and requires a companion only if the tickler is one of those vain persons who must forever have someone by him to whom prowess can be displayed for approval. Tickling by itself is an art, whatever the acclimatisation societies might say about minnows, flies, and such other truck. Anyone, given a dexterous wrist and some sort of judgment in his eye, can swing out a light line with a fly on the end.

Fish, after all, must be pretty stupid. Fishermen would not otherwise have survived as long as they have. A fly can be shaped and cast in a manner reasonably like the real thing. The fish will be deceived, so long as he is hungry, and so long as the cast is not made with any less delicacy than that employed by a longshoreman heaving a line from ship to jetty. It takes more skill to persuade a trout that a human hand is not its enemy.

Beware the Eel!

It takes some nerve, too, to go tickling. In most New Zealand rivers the nooks and crannies that shelter the

trout could quite as easily shelter the fierce eel. When roused, the eel can bite, and when he bites he hangs on to his victim as tenaciously as he hangs on to life, even though bashed about the head with stones, trodden on, bent double, twisted, cut about, and generally mashed.

The solitary sportsman must have more than a distaste for company. He must be bold. He must have nerve

Note For The Puzzled

This week, we regret to announce, the Puzzle-Puddler is sick — not with a surfeit of ciphers, but with common 'flu. Rather than imperil the mental health of other members of the staff, we are holding over our Puzzle Page for an issue.

enough to paddle lonely beneath dark, dripping bushes, to risk his fingers under water-feeding roots, among small caverns in rocks, in dark places where he cannot see.

He has his reward. He may try for an hour without success; cold, probably hungry, shivering from the water in his boots as much as from the sight of a long, round green body lying ready for him in the murk of the deep water. But when success comes, his heart will lift gloriously to the breath-taking excitement of the moment when his fingers first tip against the live flesh of his fish. Nose dive in an aeroplane, race a train to a level crossing in your car, take a ski-jump for the first time, wait with an empty rifle while a pig charges at you down a narrow track, burgle a guarded bank! You will still come short of appreciating this thrill of touching the trout hidden in the swirl below a boulder in a stream. Unluckily it is illegal to give this pleasure to the fish. They must be caught, unpleasantly, by hook; and tickling is catching them by crook.

Alone in a Boat

There is also something to be said for sailing a boat without a crew. Early this year a yachtsman sailed his craft from Wellington to Lyttelton, alone, to join in the Centennial Ocean Race. The

Atlantic has been crossed in a canoe. Craft that were little more than dories decked over have travelled the seas of the world. This has its own fascination. Its interest lies not so much in the tricks of navigation and the satisfaction of swinging the bows for a point in mid-ocean and getting there; not so much in surviving storms, in rationing food and water through long calms; not so much in watching the wind in the sails; but rather in the pressing comparison between the size of the craft and the unmeasured dimensions of landless seas.

Photography Also

Solitary sport is not confined to aquatic activity. Photography is a game that can be played inland. It is a game that is better played alone. A photographer out walking with a companion who has never owned a camera, and never wants to, is as incompatible as a snail strolling with a terrier. When his friend wants to run, or jump, chase rabbits, or pluck wild flowers, the photographer must lag and study the balance of a picture, fiddle with his exposures and apertures, fumble in his case for a filter, wait while a cloud adjusts itself to the requirements of his eye for composition. When the friend wants to lie in the sun, the photographer wants to run with mad haste to catch the silhouette of some tree against the sky. The photographer is better by himself.

And yet even solitary photographers do not quite come up to the best standard of solitary sportsmanship. When they return they dive straight into a darkroom and cannot even wait to wash the acid from their hands before someone must be found to admire the result. The true solitary sportsman writes his own panegyrics, sings his own praises, gives his own thanks. Photography can only be thoroughly enjoyed as a sport for misanthropes if it is handled carefully.

Few photographers could attain the perfect renunciation of all the empty praises and rivalry and boasting that make doing things worth while for most people. They may as well be cancelled out with the rest of those who play to enjoy gain, just as they work; instead of playing to gain enjoyment. The solitary sportsman is the only true sportsman. He carries his own world about with him and does without sycophants.

He is hard to find; a rarity, valuable for his rarity just as precious metals are valuable. He may turn up anywhere. If you would seek him out, look first along the banks of the stream, through the bush, beside the pond. If he is not there, you may find him enjoying the best of all the solitary sports; which is sitting in the sun.

Men Everywhere Prefer—

BRILEASIA HAIR CREAM de luxe

1/6 EVERYWHERE IN THE BOTTLE WITH THE BLUE CAP