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Photograph by G. Gardner Richards

NEW STORIES BY ZANE GREY

Fishing for Swordfish and Tuna



The Stunts the Swordfish Performs Make Him the Most Spectacular of All Sea Fishes

These Hard Fighters Give the Pacific Angler Lots of Thrilling Sport

By Zane Grey

LAST summer at Catalina Island a good many Marlin swordfish were caught before I even had a strike. But that, no doubt, was owing to the fact of my fishing for tuna and broadbill swordfish all the earlier part of the Avalon season.

There is a great deal of difference between the Marlin, or roundbill swordfish, and old *Xiphias gladius*, the true swordfish. The latter has the flat or broad sword, and he is a bad fish to fool with. It took me several years to catch the only one I ever landed. Marlin swordfish are spectacular enough and hard-fighting enough to satisfy all but a few sea anglers.

My first strike of the season was off the east end of Catalina, rather close inshore, along about nine in the morning. The sea was rippling blue and green and, though not rough, it was still far from smooth. Other fishing boats showed up farther offshore. We saw a school of flying fish come out in a hurry and sail and skitter every way, and from this we knew they were being chased by tuna or swordfish. So we ran over in that direction. We had out several teasers—flying fish dragging at the ends of short lines, the object of which was to attract swordfish. I trolled my own bait a few yards back of the teasers.

Suddenly there was a splash at one of the teasers and it disappeared. I saw a purple flash in the water. Then two Marlin showed up back of the other teasers. They weaved to and fro, shy and bold by turns, and as the boatman began to haul in the teasers both swordfish charged them. I frantically wound in my bait, and got it in front of one swordfish as he was about to reach a teaser. With wonderful quickness he snapped my bait. Giving it a powerful jerk which made the line spin off my reel, he sheered away, his purple fins and stripes showing to beautiful advantage. The other swordfish pulled a teaser off in spite of the boatman's efforts to prevent it. Then he went down.

The Battle Was On

My fish ran off fast. I let him go a couple of hundred feet and then hooked him. He felt heavy. He came up with a roaring splash and showed himself, a fine fish of about one hundred and fifty or sixty. Then he began to smash round on the surface—to leap and dive. We did not have to chase him, as is often the case. He performed all round the boat.

I was hoping and looking for him to perform the stunt that made these Marlin swordfish the most spectacular of all sea fishes, and it was what we call walking on

his tail. This fellow appeared to be slow about making up his

mind, but at last he made up for lost time. He rose half out of the water, wagging his body, and by such violent motion he climbed higher and higher, until nearly all of him was in the air. He increased the wagging motion of his body, and, of course, maintained that position by the tremendous action of his tail. Soon all round him was white foam. He began to move across the water, and for a fish his size he was a good walker. He traveled fifty feet or so in this boiling white foam.

The beauty and ferocity of a swordfish under such circumstances could not be exaggerated. I had seen many perform this way, but I experienced all the old thrills. He waved his sword, spread wide his jaws, slapped his gills, wagged his head. Bronze and green and silver shone in his body and his purple stripes stood out brilliantly.

At last he went down with a crash. He sounded deep and settled down to submarine warfare, and headed out for sea. But, as was usually the case when a swordfish performed so violently on the surface, he tired out quickly, and in less than an hour I had him alongside the boat. He was hooked in the corner of the mouth. At close sight he appeared to be about ten feet long and to weigh about a hundred and eighty. At my direction the boatman leaned over the gunwale and cut the wire leader close to the hook. The swordfish rolled and floated slowly astern. He did not know he was free. Presently he made the discovery and he signaled his joy by a sousing splash. I saw the purple mass of him slowly vanish.

Before I began fishing again I saw an interesting and funny spectacle of a novice at the game, hooked to his first swordfish. Evidently his boatman was a novice also, because we saw him do the wrong thing all the time. He was afraid of that swordfish. Instead of following it he ran the boat away from it. Strange to relate the swordfish, a thumping big one, always turned and headed back for the boat. This was sheer luck, for if he had kept going away he soon would have parted the line. We drifted along and watched that fight. The angler worked frantically. He was beside himself with excitement. Although we were fully a quarter of a mile distant he yelled and yelled at us, and had his boatman wave at us. Probably he

thought we might run across his fish, or something like that.

Finally I took out my glass and through it watched the angler and his fight. His face begged description. I had to laugh, but I felt sorry for him. It was a certainty that he would lose that swordfish. The wonder was that he had not lost it already. I did not have to wait long for the climax. The boatman could not keep away from the fish. He got under the boat and evidently swam with it. The angler left his seat, and with the rod bent double over the gunwale he staggered all round the cockpit, trying, of course, to keep the line free of propeller or rudder. Just when the boatman steered to starboard the angler heaved with his rod to port, and the swordfish shot ahead. Then they got all tangled up.

The angler clambered up on top of the deck. How he ever did this I cannot imagine, but he did it. Manifestly he wanted to clear his line round the bow. I could see the jerk of his rod—saw it pulled down. The swordfish had gone under the boat to the opposite side. Then I saw the rod fly up quickly. That meant a broken line. Next I beheld that angler rush up on deck, slam his tackle down, and wave and fling his arms like a madman. The boatman also waved and flung his arms. They were yelling at each other. Their first swordfish! Gone! I certainly appreciated how they felt. Lastly, as we went on our way, I saw the unfortunate beginner at the game sitting disconsolately in his seat, with bowed head.

A few days later I had a second and more interesting adventure with a Marlin. This time my brother, R. C., was in the boat with me. Early in the morning we went way out into the channel, so far that we could not see any other boats. The sea was smooth, without a ripple, like a blue mirror. The fog was lifting and breaking, and through rifts the hot sun shone down. There was an almost imperceptible heave of the broad bosom of the ocean. No fish or birds were in sight. It was a vast, lonesome, silent expanse of water.

We ran across a line of driftweed. Kelp and grass and seaweed floated on the surface in a long, meandering line as far as we could see. Drifts like this were always worth looking over, for little fish live in and round the seaweed, and attract larger fish. Out at sea a floating mass of kelp was always a magnet for my eyes.

We trolled along this line of driftweed. In less than a hundred yards we raised two Marlin swordfish, one small and one a monster. The little one hit my bait, sheered off to R. C.'s, came back and took mine, while the big swordfish pulled R. C.'s off the hook. This one showed clear as he struck, and he was so huge that I yelled right out. I hooked my fish. He came right up and leaped, showing himself to be scarcely over a hundred pounds. "Say, the big fellow's following us," yelled the boatman. "Hurry up—pull that little one in—so we can get the other."

It sounded reasonable and desirable. So I began to pull. I expected to haul my quarry up to the boat in short order. But instead of my gaining line he took it out, hard and fast. We had to chase him and, of course, that kept R. C. from letting a bait back to the big fish. This little swordfish did not leap any more. It developed, however, that he was a fighter. He was fast, strong, tireless. At the start, for a quarter of an hour, it was all his way. We could look back and see the big Marlin on the surface, evidently cruising round for us. How exasperating! Redoubling my efforts I pumped and pulled until I was sure I would break the tackle, or else my back. My brother's remarks were not calculated to improve my temper.

R. C.'s Facetious Remarks

"Can't you yank in that infant?" he asked sarcastically.

"Hurry!" ejaculated the boatman. "Screw up your drag! Come on—we want that big one. He's layin' round back there waitin' for us."

I saved my breath and pulled for all I was worth. My fish appeared to get stronger.

"I'll tell you, cap," remarked my brother facetiously, "Zane is not so strong as he was. Writes and dreams too much! No wind! Let's get out the lunch and then have a nap."

All of which was calculated to drive me to desperation. But it did not bring the fight to any quicker finish. That swordfish was as game as any fish I ever hooked. I was wringing wet and burning all over when at the end of an hour I brought him up to the boat. Then he was so full of fight that we could not handle him to cut him loose. We had to gaff him and haul him on board. He turned out to be a round, short, heavily built Marlin, rather dull in color. His vitality was remarkable. When at length we got him tied down on the stern, and had rigged up tackle to go

back after the big fellow we had lost our bearings. We could not see him or find him, and after roaming round for a couple of hours we gave him up.

My youngsters' nurse, Cooky, they call her, is a remarkable woman. Big, powerful, tireless, indomitable, she can do anything a man can do. And a great deal more! She is the most clear-headed woman I ever knew. She is irrational on one thing only, and that is fishing. She talked so much about swordfish that finally I decided I would risk Captain Dan's disapproval and take her. So I did.

The morning of this enterprise was ideal, with a wonderful rippling blue ocean, pleasant sun and breeze, clear but not glaring, just enough fog high up to keep down the wind. Before we were two miles off the east end we saw one boat flying a swordfish flag, and another boat fighting a fish. I knew, and so did Captain Dan know, that with conditions right, fish striking, and a tenderfoot on the rod we were in for adventure. I was cheerful, but Captain Dan was gloomy. As for Cooky, she was in a seventh heaven. Before we ever saw a swordfish she must have had enough thrills to last a lifetime.

We put out two teasers. And we let out our guest's bait only a few feet behind the teasers, and cautioned her to watch it closely, and if she saw a fish or felt one to let go of the line so it could run freely off the reel.

It happened I saw the first swordfish before she did. His big fin loomed up back of her bait, then there was a wave, then a vicious splash. Cooky did not yell until she felt an enormous jerk. It almost pulled the rod out of her hands. The swordfish hooked himself quickly and came up for surface play. To me he looked comparatively small, but to Cooky he must have seemed of huge and overpowering dimensions. She did not utter another sound. I tried to watch her face, and did see it pretty well, except when my eyes were so full of tears of laughter that they blurred. This was a terrible experience for Cooky. She who had confessed to wild rapture over a six-inch sunfish! The swordfish might have been created ideally just for her pleasure. He kept the water white half the time and the other half he was in the air. Fortunately he had out a good line, so that he did not leap close to the boat. If he had been close I would have been afraid Cooky might fall or leap overboard. He gave a beautiful exhibition. Then he settled down to fighting.

Cooky Sets a Record

Here we began to have trouble with Cooky. She could not manage the reel. The fish pulled the line out and she had extreme difficulty in getting it back. It took us fully an hour to teach her the way to pump and haul with the rod, and then reel in the few feet gained. At that she did exceedingly well. I have seen men who imagined they were experts make a mess of such work. It is not easy. But at last Cooky got the hang of it. Most assuredly she had strength, and she put all her weight, and that was considerable, into the task. Then for one hour and a half she labored like a Trojan, skinned her knuckles on the reel, wore blisters on her hands, and got thoroughly wet and disheveled. And she whipped that swordfish to a standstill, and brought him up to the boat.

But horrible and surpassing strange to relate, Captain Dan bungled with the gaff. He just pricked the swordfish enough to make him wake up and rush. Then I was not quick-witted and quick-handed enough to do what I should have done—and the line tangled and snapped. The swordfish gave a leap of freedom and was gone.

Cooky could not realize disaster. Her radiance was slow to change. She had to be told again and again that her swordfish was gone. Then she looked out into the sea where he had vanished, and as she looked her face became tragic.

I wanted to laugh, but I could not. It astonished me that she felt so dreadfully. Then I remembered my own first agonies. All she said was: "He's gone—yes—he's gone! But it wasn't my fault."

We persuaded her to try again, and she did so just to please us. She had no hope. But I had, and I knew one could never tell. In less than ten minutes another swordfish showed up behind her bait, rushed it, took it and swam off just right, so that when we called Cooky to jerk, she hooked him perfectly.

This one leaped twenty-eight times right close to the boat, and dazzled even my experienced eyes. He did everything. And also he exhausted himself. When he stopped his surface work, Cooky, unmindful of bloody hands, hauled so effectively on him that in about an hour and a quarter she brought him to the boat. Just at this moment Captain Dan espied another swordfish following us.

"Drop a bait back to him," he said gayly. "Just for fun!"

So we put a bait on my line and dropped it back to this second swordfish. Cooky looked on with intense interest. The Marlin saw my bait and came for it. He got it

and turned squarely round to run off, so that he had the line over his shoulder. I hooked him. He burst out in a clean greyhound leap, headed away from us, and when he went down he came right up again. We could not follow him, because there was Cooky holding her tired fish; so we had to let mine run as he liked. He was a magnificent fish, and one of the long, slim, leaping kind. He hardly made a splash. Every leap was clean, sharp, long. He made twenty-three of these leaps and took out nine hundred feet of line before he broke off.

I watched Cooky's face during this spectacle and I shall not soon forget it. When I wound in what was left of my line and laid the rod aside, we proceeded to set about getting Cooky's swordfish. It was on the surface, close to the boat and pretty well beaten. Captain Dan and I were careful not to bungle this job. We gaffed him, lassoed him, and in short order hauled him up on the stern and tied him down. Cooky gazed at the huge, wonderful, glistening fish in absolute bewilderment and rapture.

Only a couple of Marlin swordfish were on record as having been captured by women anglers, and these were small.

Cooky's fish weighed 173 pounds, and will probably stand as a record for many years.

The 1919 season for tuna at Avalon was the best for many years. What it might have been if the round-haul net boats had not haunted the channel, taking thousands of tons of tuna, no one could conjecture. Tuna were never before seen there in such numbers, both large and small.

But no matter how wonderful the fishing it was spoiled by these Austrian and Jap net boats. These round-haul boats have nets half a mile long and several hundred feet deep. When they surround a school of tuna it is seldom that any escape. If the tuna are very large, over one hundred pounds, then a great many of them are destroyed. Sometimes the weight of a large school is so great that the netters cannot handle it. In which case they take on board all they can handle and let the rest sink. Some of these tons of tuna go to the canneries at San Pedro, and a good many of them go to the fertilizer plants.

These market fishermen are aliens, and they break the state and Federal laws every day during the season. Catalina Island has a three-mile limit, inside of which no net boat is permitted to haul. One day this season I counted sixteen round-haul net boats within half a mile of Avalon Bay, and some of them were loaded so heavily that they sank in the water nearly to their gunwales; and the others were hauling their nets as fast as power and muscle could do it. I counted twenty Austrians pulling on one net. It was so full of tuna that they could scarcely budge it.

No wonder I was sick with anger and disgust, and bade the tuna good-by.

Blue-Button Tuna

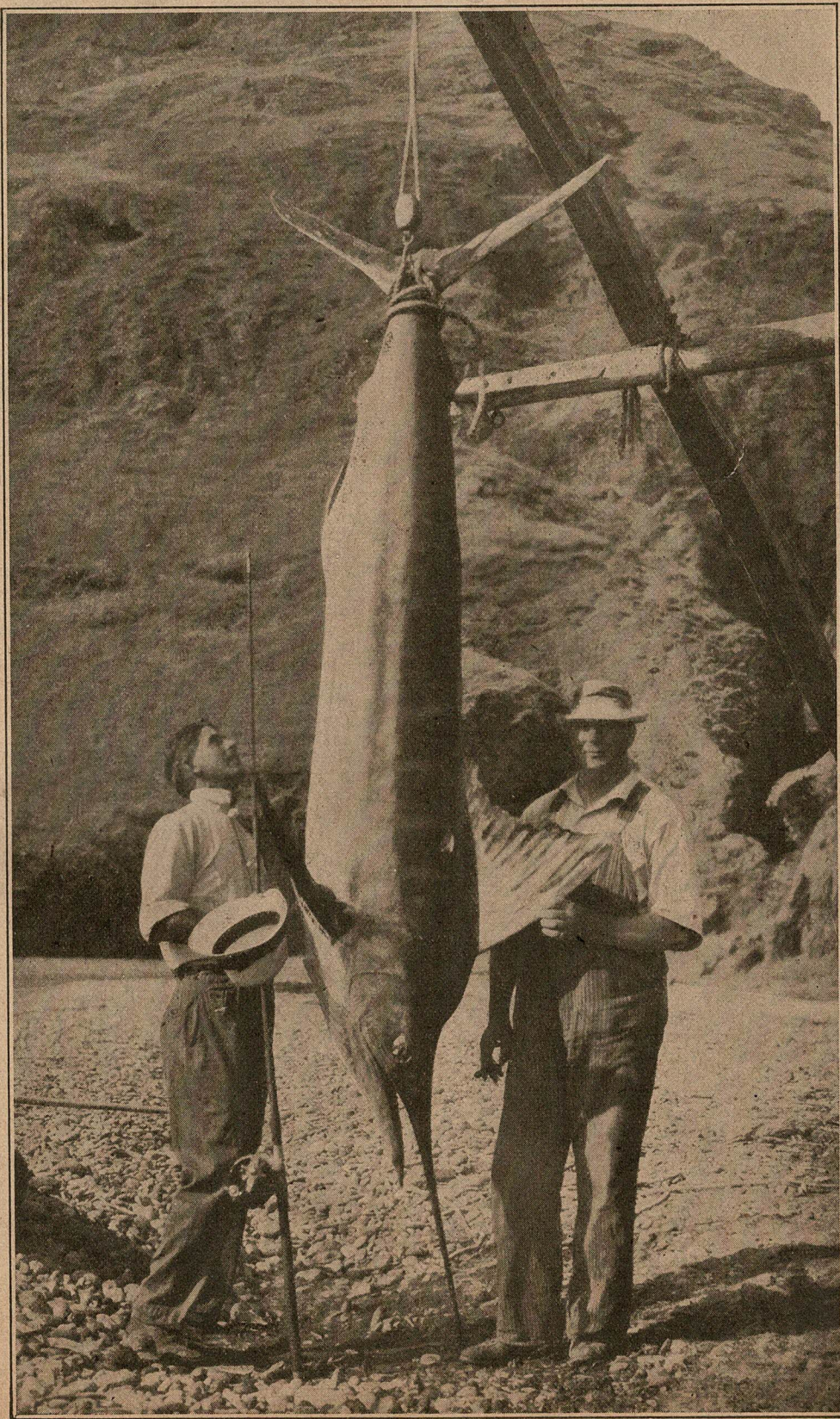
During the season I caught a good many tuna, more, in fact, than ever before. Captain Danielson averred that it was the best season I ever had at Catalina. This was owing to my catches of blue-button tuna. The Tuna Club of Avalon recognize only fish that weigh over one hundred pounds. I may say that it took me five years to catch my first blue-button fish. In 1919 my big tuna weighed 117 pounds, 114, 111, 109½ and 109. My brother, R. C., caught one of 107 pounds. Apparently this looks like remarkably good luck. But when I think of all the bad luck I had the good looks small in proportion.

I have no idea how many very large tuna I hooked and lost during July and August. But there must have been at least twenty-five. I had exceptionally good fortune in locating schools of large tuna. Captain Dan and I were always roaming the sea, peering for the white spouts of water on the horizon.

One day when we had guests aboard and they were fishing, I put out a bait on my light tackle and trolled it close behind the boat. Right away there came a splash and a heavy pull. I had hooked a big tuna on my light outfit. The others, of course, had to reel in. My fish made the long, fast, diving run that is usually so destructive to tackle. But he stopped short of two hundred yards, and so for the moment I saved him. Captain Dan buckled a belt on me, and I stood up, with the rod in the belt socket and began to work on that fish. Work meant to pull and lift all the rod would stand, then lower it quickly and wind the reel. It is fun only a little while! My ambition, of course, was to land a hundred-pound tuna on light tackle—something which had not yet been done. So I was in deadly earnest. So was Captain Dan. This fish was so logy and rolly that we decided he was yellow-fin tuna of very large size. There are two kinds of tuna, yellow fin and blue fin. The blue fins are the hard-fighting fish.

My brother and our guests made considerable fun of me as I heroically struggled with that tuna. I

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Mr. Grey and a Morning's Catch—a 300-Pound Swordfish

Fishing for Swordfish and Tuna

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would lift him and wind him up a hundred feet or so, and then he would take the line away from me. It happened so often that it must have looked funny. All of a sudden my tuna started to sound. He did not run. He just plugged down and down and down. The reel screamed zee-zee-zee! This procedure grew alarming. Two hundred yards, three hundred yards, three-fifty, and finally four hundred yards of line he took straight down. This was the deepest I ever had any fish sound. Captain Dan stood beside me, watching the reel. He shook his head at every zee.

My rod lay in the hollow of my left elbow and the tip was doubled straight down. The zee-zee-zee grew markedly shorter in time and farther apart. Tremendous pressure of water on that tuna had begun to tell. Most remarkable about this incident was the fact that the nine-thread line had not broken. It resembled a very tight, wet banjo string. Finally the tuna stopped. I had half an inch of thickness of line left on the reel spool. Then I began to work, carefully lifting and winding. Inch by inch! And after a while foot by foot! This was harder work than heavy tackle. It took an hour to pump that tuna back up to his original position. I was as wet as if I had fallen overboard.

For two more hours I heaved and wound, gaining and losing in about the same proportion. What spurred me on was a certainty that little by little the tuna was weakening. But it was so little!

The very thing I feared he began again. He started down. Zee-zee-zee! Slower this time. Captain Dan left the wheel and stood beside me watching the reel. I laid the rod over my left arm and watched too. Zee-zee-zee! It was terrible to see all that hard-earned line slip off and off and off. I would lose him this time. That was inevitable. Zee-zee-zee! He plugged down. I could feel him banging the leader with his tail.

But the line still held. It seemed to me that the thing which had to snap was in my head. I was nearly crazy. The making of angling history is sometimes painful. Zee-zee-zee! Slower and slower! Then, incredibly, when a couple of zees more would have pulled all the line out and broken it, the tuna stopped. The strain eased. He could not stand the pressure of water. He had started back.

I wound and wound and wound that reel until I thought my arm would fall dead at my side. With a small reel it takes a great deal of winding to get in even a little line. This time it took perhaps half an hour to get all the line back. My tuna did not come readily all the time. He rested occasionally.

The Reel Stuck Tight

But I got him up, closer than ever before. He lazily rose to the surface about sixty feet or so from the boat. I heard him break water, but as the light was bad I could not see him. R. C. was on top of the deck. Captain Dan leaped up on the stern. They both saw the tuna. How strangely silent and tense they were! But I was too much exhausted and riveted to my post to have any thrills left. The tuna rolled round out there. He was a beaten fish. I realized it.

"Easy now," warned Captain Dan. "He's licked. Pull him along easy."

Then all of a sudden the reel stuck tight. The handle would not turn. The line

would not run out. I could not tell Captain Dan. I was speechless. But he saw it. Quick as a flash he grasped a screw driver and began to loosen the screws in the reel plate. How swiftly he worked! I heard him pant. My tuna was lolling round out there. Once I saw his saberlike tail and the size of it would have paralyzed me if I had not already been paralyzed.

Captain Dan got some of the screws loose. The spool grew less tight. One moment more and he would have the friction eased! But in that moment my tuna decided to loll and roll a little farther off, and he snapped the line. Five hours!

Some time afterward when I was in condition to stand shocks Captain Dan and R. C. both told me that they had seen the tuna, that he had been a beaten fish, and would have weighed at least a hundred and fifty pounds.

A Huge School of Tuna

Tuna fishing has many poignant moments. Many as I have experienced, I never had but one as painful as this one I shall tell about, and how it was prolonged unendurably.

It happened in late August. I had on board a guest, a publisher from New York, and I wanted him to hook a Marlin swordfish. R. C. was also on board, and last, though certainly not least, was my

boy, Romer, the irrepressible. Apparently the tuna season was ended. No boatman had seen tuna for days. We were convinced that the run of 1919 had passed into history. We steered off to the eastward toward San Diego and along the middle of the channel south, and finally turned west. We saw not a swordfish fin nor a break on the surface. The sea was calm, dark blue, heaving and wonderful. The day was perfect. My friend grew tired of fishing and climbed up on deck to rest and invite his soul. There was just enough breeze blowing to ripple the water. I tired of fishing also. R. C. was asleep.

Then I happened to look up to the westward. Far across the heaving blue on the horizon line I saw a white spout of water. I peered more keenly.

Another white spout! Then another! I climbed up and stood on the gunwale. I wanted to be sure before I woke anybody. Plainly I saw more white spouts. Tuna! The sight thrilled me through. Then farther to the westward, over toward Clemente Island, I saw a white wall of water, the greatest line of tuna I had ever seen.

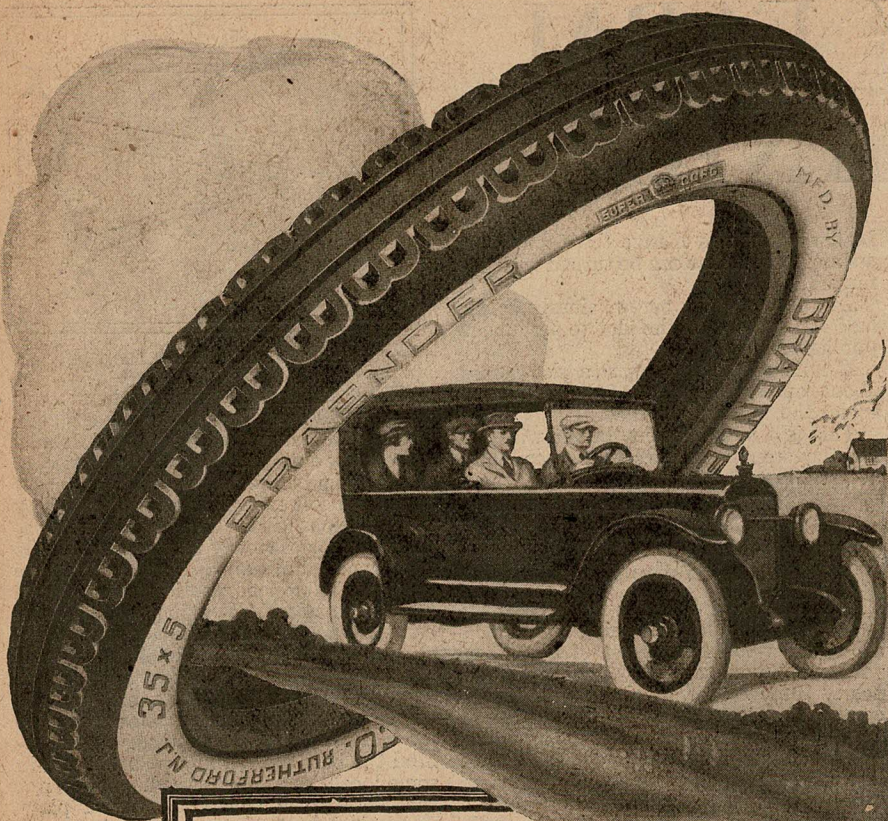
I hailed Captain Dan. He took one look and yelled: "There's a million of 'em! Wind in. We'll put up the kite. An' we've got to hurry!" He slowed down the boat and then got out the kite. It did not fly readily so he had to speed up the boat. I wound in my bait and took off my leader. Suddenly I saw tuna dark and sharp in the air against the blue horizon.

"Dan, look! By George! I believe that school is feeding," I exclaimed.

"Feedin'?" I should say so. They're drivin' the flyin' fish offshore. You're goin' to see a sight pretty quick!"

Assuredly I warmed to the occasion. R. C. climbed up on top and lifted the youngster after him. Captain Dan needed me to help him with kite and bait, so I could not look ahead. He let the kite up about three hundred yards, broke the kite line, and gave it to me to hold. Then he put a fresh flying fish upon my leader.

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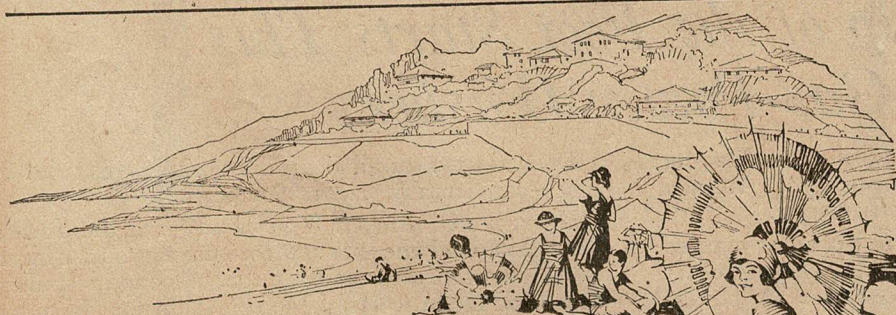
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This took time. It is a complicated job, this baiting a hook for tuna. When he had done this he tied my fishing line to the leader. Then, taking the kite line, he tied that at the juncture of my leader and fishing line. That done he threw the bait overboard and told me to let out line. I let go of the reel and my line paid out. The kite soared and lifted on my bait so that it skipped along the surface. I let out about a hundred yards. The kite swung my bait round at right angles with the boat, and when I jerked my rod a little, the bait would leap exactly like a live flying fish. We were now ready for the tuna, and I turned my head rather breathlessly.

Ahead of the boat, only a few hundred yards distant, the air was full of flying fish. Huge blue and green and silver flashes gleamed out of the wall of water. They were coming fast. Already the flying fish were round us, over us.

Then the voracious school of tuna appeared to surround us. They closed all but one quarter of the circle, and that was to the east. They had no fear of the boat. The roar of the water was so loud that it sounded like the rapids of a river. The quick sharp cracks on the surface were like reports. A tuna rushes his prey, curls as he strikes, and literally smashes the water white. His speed, his power, his savage spirit, are indescribable. I saw dozens in the air at once, some small, mostly large, and now and then a huge one over two hundred pounds.

I saw a giant tuna swimming on his side, right under a flying fish that was in the air. I saw the great black staring hungry eye of the tuna as he shot past the boat. He made a bulge on the water, and by that bulge I followed him as he kept even with the poor flying fish until it fell. Then—smash! The water went furiously white in a ten-foot circle.

"Look out!" boomed Captain Dan. "There's one after your bait! Jump it! Wow! No, he missed. Look out, now—that tuna will go over two hundred!"

My wonderful spectacle had become alarmingly specific. The largest tuna I had seen was lunging at my bait. In my excitement I jerked it away from him. But it is impossible to jerk a bait altogether away from these swift monsters. He lunged again. I saw his back, dark blue and thick, his wide tail, so instinct with power. He made a splash as big as the stern of our boat. I jerked my bait. It shot right out of the jaws of this tuna. Then he went into the air as though from a catapult. The anger, the hunger, the beauty, the wild nature and terrible life expressed by that long round glistening fish simply made me gasp breathlessly. When my bait alighted he was there. He got it. And so tremendous was the strike that he broke the line.

"Wind in! Hurry! They're all round us," yelled Dan.

In less than a minute we had another bait overboard. The turmoil round us was now at its height. Fearfully I watched my bait as the kite dragged it across the foamy water. I had reason to gaze fearfully. That bait did not get forty feet away before a small tuna, verily the smallest in that vast school, hit it on the leap, hooked himself, and went down. My reel whizzed. The kite began to lower. Then the kite line broke and the kite soared up and sailed away.

The prolonged poignant moment was upon me. I was hooked to a small tuna, but he was large enough to hold me powerless for a while. And I had to sit there and hold the bobbing rod while that vast school of magnificent fish swiftly worked away from me. How swiftly I could see! The white wall and white patches and splashes on the water, the dark darting gleam of tuna, the cloud of flying fish in the air like a swarm of frightened bees swiftly passed on to the south, and long before I had subdued the unappreciated fish on my line they were out of sight beyond the blue horizon.

EDITOR'S NOTE—This is one of a series of articles on fishing by Zane Grey. The next will appear in an early issue.

Diamond Rock

(Continued from Page 44)

Half an hour later he and Simon had carried the baskets in wheelbarrows to the tool shed, where they carefully concealed them beneath a pile of old gunny sacks, tool handles, odds and ends of all sorts.

By six o'clock supper was over and Joe, with a promise to return in good time, set out for Amos Rambo's, down the Valley.

Amos was almost Joe's equal in age, though a little slower and heavier in build. He was the proud owner of some of the best coon dogs in all the Valley.

"Hullo, Joe! Thought something must have happened to thee. It's awfully late."

"I'm sorry, Amos, but we had to get in the last potatoes. I'm a month late with them as it is."

"How's that strike thee, Joe? A new one from Lower Merion way!" Amos pointed to a hound.

"Crickets! When did thee ever get him? Trade in for him?" Joe dropped on his knees as he looked the new hound over in the fast-fading light.

"Blue-ticked, isn't he? That's nice bone he's got, all right—true and straight like arrows!"

"Will thee just look at his feet! He'd make a good foxhound, I guess, wouldn't he, with such round, tight pads? The man we got him from said he had hunted fox—down country with the Gloucester Hunt."

"Thee's lucky to get him!"

Both lads started at a fast walk for the Slate Ridge, the boundary of the Valley.

The Rambo farmstead lay on the banks of a large brook at a point where the latter crossed the Swedesford Road about half a mile above the little hamlet of Howelltown. Thence to the Slate Ridge was not more than a twenty-minute walk across the close-cropped pastures and fields of corn stubble where the shocks stood in orderly array, looming up in the gloaming like the tents of an army.

On reaching the woodland without a find the hounds, five in all, crawled eagerly through the fence, while the boys followed after as best they could. Amos acted the part of huntsman.

"To him! You—wheel! Sturrock! Sturrock!"

Amos raised his hand to his mouth and sent his hunting cheer ringing far and wide among the trees of the forest. As the echoes died away the silence of early nightfall again closed in. The only disturbing sound was the faint crackle of dried leaves far up on the ridge where the hounds were working for a scent.

"Sturrock! To him, Mingo! Get him, Bing! You—wheel! Whoa hark!"

This time the cry rang loud and clear far away by Valley Forge and up the distant ridge toward Diamond Rock. The answer followed close upon it. A full, deep note broke suddenly upon the quiet air. The boys stood rigid, then Joe clutched his chum's arm as he whispered:

"That's old Bing! It's coon, sure as ever! Let's —"

"Hush! Wait for the new one! There he goes now! That's Mingo!"

Amos shook his arm free and broke into a run as the second hound chimed into tongue. For fully a minute the woodland echoed and rang with the full-throated bay of the find. The rest of the pack ran loyally to cry, joining in with a will as they struck off the line. A moment more and all were off along the ridge. No need to cheer them now. Amos saved his breath and directed all his energy toward keeping as near them as he could. With a shout he stumbled over a fallen log, smashing his way through the underbrush.

Through tangles of grape and wild honeysuckle, greenbrier and laurel bushes, the boys managed in spite of all to keep in hearing of the chiming pack. Always they ran the inner circle, cutting up and down the slope by narrow paths and byways that were visible to them only because they knew the Slate Ridge like a book. For full fifteen minutes the chase swung its rambling course through the trees. The quarry doubled more or less, as a coon will, but when at last it stopped at a tree the panting hounds and gasping boys found themselves well over a mile west of the point where they had started.

Joe looked dubiously at the size of the trunk, while Amos made vain efforts to

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