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The COUNTRY GENTLEMAN

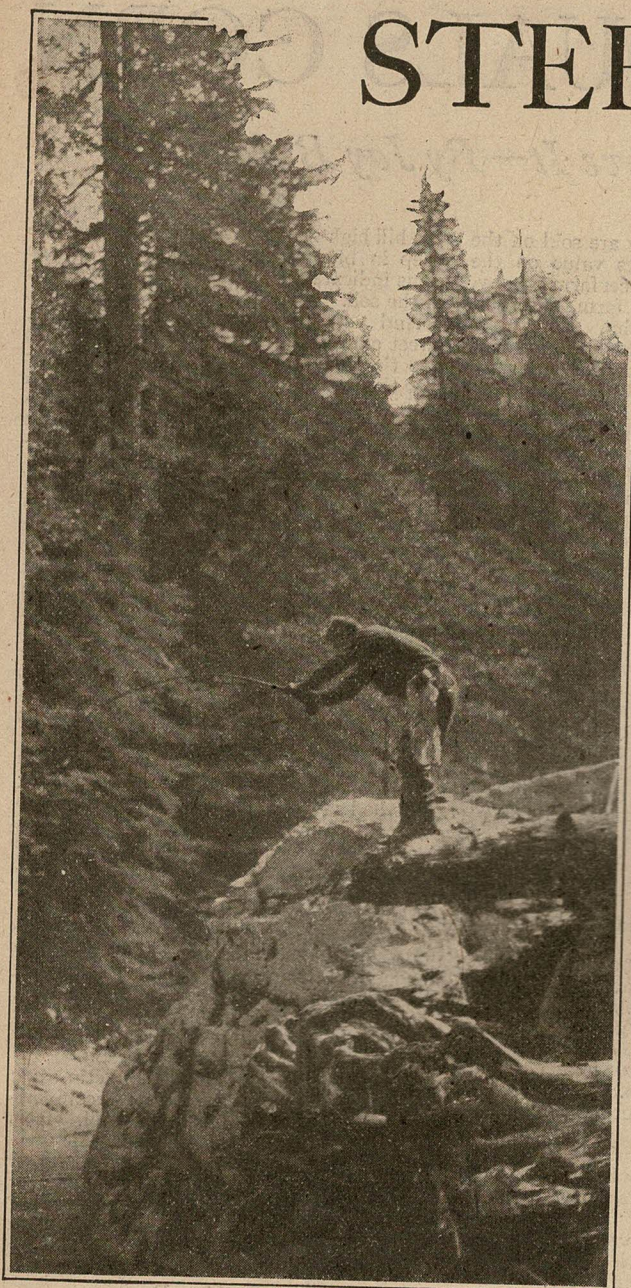
For the AMERICAN FARMER and HIS FAMILY



PAINTED BY PAUL BRANSON

PITTSBURGH-PLUS—By Samuel R. Guard

STEELHEADS—By Zane Grey



Fishing the Pool of an Angler's Dream

TWO unlucky and futile trips after the famous and elusive steelhead trout had in nowise dampened R. C.'s ambition nor Lone Angler's infallible optimism nor my unquenchable ardor. Indeed I fear I have inoculated my comrades with the peculiar fever in my blood that makes me long for the unattainable. How often I find myself realizing more and more that though to catch fish is the motive of angling it is not the all! The unattainable is not the fish. It is that beauty and spirit and life which Tagore felt when he saw the leaping fish of the Ganges River. It is what Hudson felt when he took his long, lonely, apparently objectless rides on the desert of Patagonia.

In August on our way to Vancouver we found ourselves in Seattle, with a week to devote to steelhead trout. Upon inquiring we learned that the run of steelhead was over. The recent rain was just what the fish had been waiting for. With the freshets the steelhead had gone up to the headwaters of the streams.

Seventeen-Pound Tackle Smashers

FROM several of the fishing-tackle dealers, who kindly lent us all the assistance in their power, we got vague information about the wonderful steelhead fishing in Deer Creek. Not one of them, however, had been there. They showed us Deer Creek on the map and claimed that it was almost inaccessible. But if we could get there—

R. C. and Lone Angler and I spent two days running that Deer Creek legend to earth. At length we met the two best steelhead anglers in Seattle—Hiller and Van Tassel. They vouched for the marvelous fishing we might find on Deer Creek—if we could get there. Neither of these fishermen had ever been near it. But one of their favorite steelhead pools was in the Stillaguamish at the mouth of

Deer Creek. Just recently that pool had been full of steelhead. When the rains came and the creek rose these fish disappeared. They had gone up the creek. This was logical, and I began to yield to my old weakness for pioneering.

Van Tassel rounded up an old G. A. R. man who fished Deer Creek and never went any other place. He showed us photographs of a mess of steelhead that made R. C. gasp, Lone Angler look queer and me dizzy. Seventeen pounds, the smallest! Tackle smashers! You had to have a heavy rod, line, leader and hook to hold those Deer Creek fish. The water was deep, swift, full of rocks. In fact the old gentleman emphasized how full of rocks and fish this creek was. In about ten minutes he had us three musketeers in a state of mental aberration. Finally the practical Lone Angler asked how to get to Deer Creek.

"Waal, I ain't been thar for two years," replied our informant.

"I'm gittin' too old to walk—an' you can't go any other way. Thar ain't no trail. What's wuss, them Finns have took to dynamitin' the creek."

The Distant Lure

THIS was like dashing a bucket of cold water in our eager faces. We thanked the old angler and repaired to a spot of seclusion where we could confer on the matter.

"Same old gag!" muttered R. C. darkly and regretfully.

"Bum steer!" added Lone Angler tersely.

Both my comrades were for dispelling the Deer Creek idea as a myth. But I was loath to give it up.

"Nothing ventured, nothing gained!" was my argument. "We miss our goal many times, but now and then we do hit it."

So again, as often before, I prevailed against the better judgment of my trail partners. Moreover, they became imbued with my enthusiasm. Over the range, far away, was something calling. We decided to motor to McMurray, a lumbering town somewhere near the headwaters of Deer Creek; and there see if we could not find someone to guide us.

Our acquaintances, Van Tassel and Hiller, were enthusiastic over this project, but they prevailed upon us to go fishing with them first. Arlington, where they wanted to take us, was on the road to McMurray.

So next morning we rode fifty miles to Arlington through country most of which was a hideous black slash left by lumbermen.

Before dawn the next morning we were on our way to the Stillaguamish River. Day broke, the sun came up, and our road

led toward a great gap in a magnificent mountain range. It was a relief to get by the deforested areas and see something of Washington's thick and verdant forests. Before six o'clock we reached the Stillaguamish, a limpid little river, rushing and placid by turns. And the pool they selected to try lay at the mouth of Deer Creek.

It developed that these experts had a singular method of bait fishing. They used rather heavy fly rods with enameled silk lines, the same as those used for fly casting, a short heavy gut leader, transparent in the water, a sinker that would roll on the bottom with the current and very small hooks. For bait a small ball of fresh salmon eggs that hid the hook was essential. They strapped a wire or canvas basket, large as a small dishpan, to their waists. And on this strap depended also a bait box and a long rag to do service as a towel. I was soon to learn what a mess salmon eggs make on the hands.

The Expert at Work

THE use of the basket was unique. I was indeed curious about it. Van Tassel waded knee-deep into the water, put on a bait, and stripping off the reel a goodly length of line, which fell in coils into the basket, he gave his rod a long side sweep and flip and sent that bait clear across the stream. It was an admirable performance, and far from easy, as we anglers soon learned. After considerable practice I learned to master about sixty or seventy feet, which was half of Van Tassel's cast. Mostly I threw the bait off.

We fished, and our instructors fished, but not a steelhead did we raise. The fish must

be full of big rainbows and steelhead, that the distance was eleven miles over a bad trail up and down through forest.

"All right. We don't care how hard it is to get there or what it costs," I said concisely. "We are going to Deer Creek. Will you take us?"

It developed that scarcely a month had elapsed since Arnold had been operated upon for appendicitis, and he felt that he was hardly strong enough to undertake the trip. Furthermore there was absolutely no one else whom we could discover that knew how to get to Deer Creek. It appeared we had come to an impasse. R. C. and Lone Angler made facetious remarks. If there was no one to take us we could not go—that was all there was to it. But I was thinking. Not for an instant did I abandon my idea of going. Deer Creek had become a haunting, compelling obstacle to overcome. Finally I suggested that he take charge of our little expedition and not do any of the work himself.

"You can ride and get some men to do the packing," I concluded.

"Ride! Say, friend, there are no horses or mules in this country. If you go to Deer Creek you'll have to walk and pack your own outfit on your back."

R. C. and Lone Angler hailed this information with ill-concealed delight. It nettled me a little. Apparently it pleased them when I encountered insurmountable difficulties.

"Very well, we will walk," I replied, without the slightest hesitation. "Arnold, will you take us?"

"Guess I'll have to, seem' your heart's so set on it," he replied, with a smile. "I liked. 'How long will you want to stay?'"

"Only a few days—a week at most. We'll go light as possible. I'll give you money to buy supplies. We'll get tent and blankets at Arlington, and be here tomorrow morning."

"Better make it about one o'clock," he replied. "We'll ride on the lumber train to the logging camp. That'll save a couple of miles. An' mebbe we can hire some lumberjacks to help pack the outfit in to Deer Creek."

The Start

SO THEN and there it was settled, and we departed. My genial and effusive comrades could not fool me. Another wild-goose chase had I planned. Maybe! But despite their lamentations and misgivings I knew that deep down in their hearts, where the boy still lived, they were excited and thrilled. It could not have been otherwise.

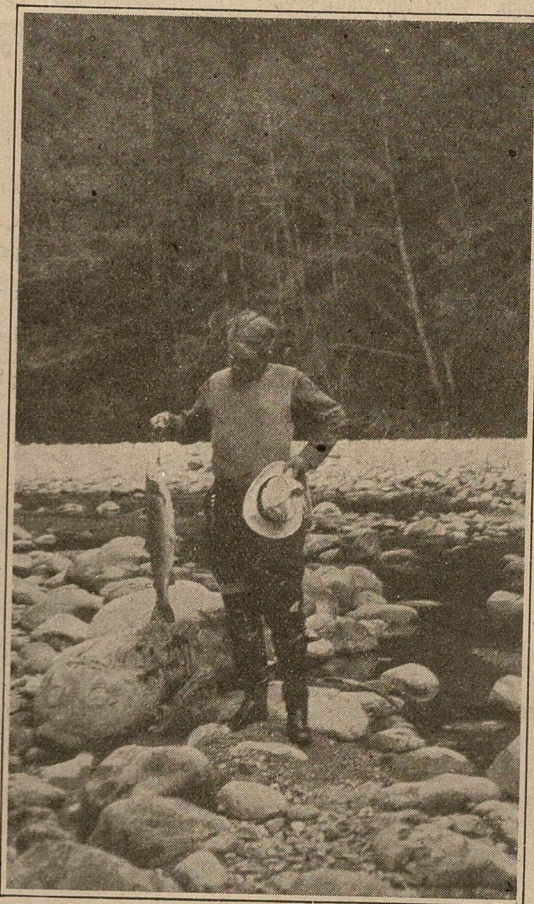
Next day at noon we arrived at McMurray with as little equipment as we could persuade ourselves was absolutely necessary. We brought no tent because there was none at Arlington, and only a few blankets which a kindly merchant lent us. Van Tassel came with us.

Arnold was on hand to meet us, having with him four boys to pack the outfit. One of these was a sturdy fellow who carried an Alaskan pack board to sling on his back. He had packed his own outfit over Chilkoot Pass.

While waiting for the lumber train we talked somewhat of the difficulties of getting to Deer Creek, but mostly of the alluring possibilities. It is that unknown element of chance, of adventure, of luck that makes wild expeditions so thrilling.

When I saw the lumber train I wondered where we would ride. The cars were merely frames on trucks with huge iron spikes to hold the logs. It did not look at all safe. Lone Angler reversed his familiar speech. "We got here first, but I wish it'd been last and we'd missed this Pullman."

The train was long, and the longer it grew the more my doubts augmented. There was a caboose, however, and we threw our baggage into it and climbed



Zane Grey and His First Steelhead

have left the river for the creek. We returned to Arlington and had breakfast at noon, and afterwards we drove about ten miles to McMurray. There was one street, rather forlorn and deserted; and a beautiful lake; a huge sawmill belching smoke; and all around hills denuded of trees, stark and bare.

After considerable inquiry we located a fellow named Sam Arnold. It was he who had taken the old G. A. R. angler to Deer Creek. Then we were to learn that no one else had ever fished this stream, that it was

aboard. Several other passengers were bound for the logging camp. This camp was about seven miles away, but we had to travel twice that distance to get there.

The moment I climbed aboard I knew things were going to happen. They did, and they began at once. The engineer of the train knew, of course, that he had some new passengers, and he undoubtedly intended that we should remember the ride. He started off smoothly and evenly. R. C. and I went out on the back platform of the caboose. I was facing the door, looking in while holding on to the brake wheel with both hands. R. C., too, faced forward, but he did not have hold of anything. He was admiring the scenery. We were leaving McMurray and running rather fast, for a log train, when suddenly the engineer threw on the brakes. The caboose gave a terrific jerk. I thought there was a wreck. Everyone inside went plunging head over heels. I saw Lone Angler Wiborn fall from the back end to the front end, and turn upside down in a corner, and drop like a sack of potatoes. Everybody howled. R. C. suffered a catapultic slam against the side of the caboose. His face appeared pasted against the wood, and as he drew it away, in rage and pain, I saw a big bruise appear high on his cheek. Then he furiously arraigned me for leading him on this log train. Really, the way some people's minds work is beyond comprehension. As it turned out, R. C.'s hurt could not be compared with Wiborn's and with those of others inside the caboose.

The next happening was the advent of a loquacious brakeman who related hair-breadth escapes of the train crew while on duty. Never took a round trip without jumping the track, ditching a car or piling up logs!

"Aw, we don't mind shake-ups, unless when we're crossin' trestles," he averred nonchalantly. "Some of them trestles is high an' on curves."

A Hair-Raising Trip

THE first trestle was bad enough for me. It was long and on a curve, and it rattled and creaked and shook under the log train. If it did this under an empty train what would it do under a loaded one? I could only conjecture. My Deer Creek enterprise began to lose something of its allurements. We passed over the lowlands, and climbed the foothills, and then began to cross trestles, some of which spanned the heads of cañons over a hundred feet deep. I saw deep cuts on the railroad ties and woodwork where cars had run off the track. Moreover these high trestles wobbled so that my hair started to rise stiff on my head.

About half a dozen miles up in these foothills the sixth car in front of the caboose jumped the track. What a fearful lurch it gave us! The engineer stopped the train in less than a car-length. Dust rose in a cloud. We all climbed down, to find the rear wheels of the derailed car two feet off the track.

"Huh! We started out on a walking tour and I reckon we'll walk back to McMurray," grunted R. C.

But it turned out presently that such accidents were trivial to the resourceful train crew. They placed a heavy triangular piece of iron against the wheels, and then the engineer, starting slowly ahead, pulled the dislodged car back on the track. The operation did not consume five minutes.

We rode on without further mishap, around the slopes of denuded hills, and eventually arrived at the logging camp.

A great black and brown slash in the forest, a hideous clearing of stumps and burned tree trunks surrounded a number of buildings, large and small, all constructed of new yellow lumber. Railroad tracks ran here and there. This logging camp was owned and operated by an English company, and we were told that it was a model up-to-date camp in every particular. Verily it did appear so. Store, restaurant, billiard hall, reading room, messhouse, bunkhouses, all were spick and span. These lumberjacks had a chef, electric lights, hot and cold water, a doctor and all possible conveniences.

Men of a Heroic Breed

WHILE Arnold was endeavoring to hire more men to pack us into Deer Creek I climbed an adjacent hill where the lumbering was in progress. There were several crews of men at work in that vicinity. I saw an engine they called the "donkey," mounted upon a huge log sled, pull itself through the forest, over logs and stumps. I saw another in actual operation. By means of a thick wire cable this engine pulled huge logs eight feet thick and a hundred long fully a quarter of a mile uphill, to load them on the steel-spiked trucks. What they called the spar tree was most interesting of all to me. It was one that dominated a central point on a hill, and had been shorn of branches and top, and braced by wire cables on all sides. The running cable from the "donkey" was attached high up this spar tree on a pulley, and it swung monarchs of the forest with incredible ease. The most astounding feat was to see a lumberjack prepare one of these trees for a spar. He wore long-spiked tree-climbers, and he had a rope looped round tree and himself. He gave the loop a hitch upward and then, holding the rope, he jammed his spikes into the bark and walked up several steps. Ax and saw dangled below him on a cord. Arriving at the first branch he leaned back in the loop of the rope, pulled up his ax, and in few strokes chopped off the branch. Up and up he scaled, cutting branch after branch, and when perhaps 200 feet from the ground he discarded ax for saw, and sawed the tree through at that point. A fifth of the huge cedar fell with a crash. The trunk swayed to and fro under the shock. Yet the lumberjack held his position securely and safely.

Men like this lumberjack and the flagpole painters on the city skyscrapers and the construction workers of steel buildings

are all of the same breed, men, heroic and daring, forgetful of self.

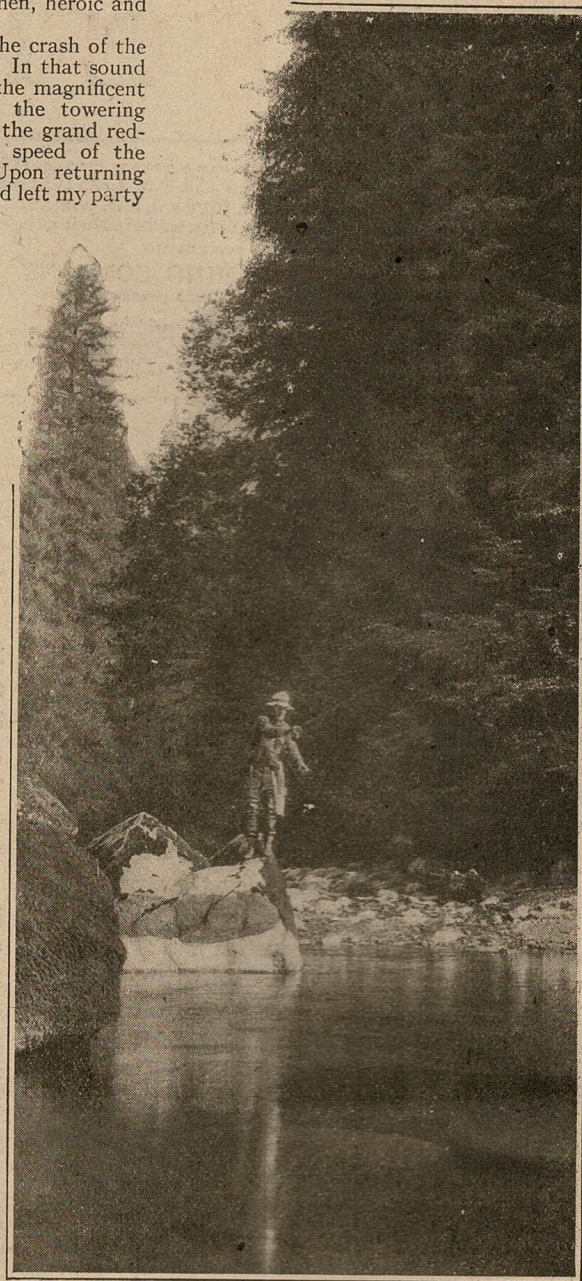
All around me sounded the crash of the falling giants of the woods. In that sound I heard the death knell of the magnificent cedars of Washington, of the towering beautiful firs of Oregon, of the grand redwoods of California. The speed of the Juggernaut appalled me. Upon returning to the water tank where I had left my party I found them packed and almost ready to start. Arnold had succeeded in hiring four lumberjacks to help us. This made ten men, counting Arnold and my chauffeur. Arnold insisted on carrying a pack. And as for R. C. and Wiborn and myself, we had a load that I grimly realized would grow heavy.

Our guide led off on an old, abandoned railroad track that soon left the camp and wound into the forest. All of a sudden I strode out of a ghastly naked blot on the earth, out of the hot glaring sunlight into what seemed long arched temples of green and amber, dark, shady, cool and fragrant. The forest primeval! How high the towers of lacy fringed foliage! These cedars were huge, round, straight, smooth-barked, brownish-gray in hue, with branches far aloft.

On the Trail

WE LEFT the camp at four o'clock. With all our load we could not tarry and rest, and our guide kept up a good pace. Once Lone Angler remarked: "If that guide hadn't been operated on lately he'd be running through the woods. We're sure lucky."

Half a mile out the railroad ended and we took to a trail. It was (Continued on Page 27)



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Steelheads

(Continued from Page 11)

one seldom used. For the most part it appeared so covered by the underbrush meeting overhead that we could scarcely see the forest trees, and nothing of the sky. About six o'clock we descended another heavily wooded slope, and at the foot of it came upon a dark body of water—Cavanaugh Lake.

There was scarcely open space enough for a camp. But as darkness was not far away I thought we had better make a halt. Across the lake a big black mountain loomed up, forbidding in the dusk.

We pitched camp as best we could. There was no dry firewood and the expected cheerful hour was here comfortless and gloomy.

We were up at dawn, in the cool dark dampness of the forest, packing before we had breakfast. And when we left that camp the sun was just silvering the fog over the lake. Fresh and rested, we did not feel daunted at the prospect of a six-mile tramp to Deer Creek. But right off we struck an uphill trail and soon realized what it meant to pack heavy burdens. Our packers rested every quarter of a mile, but we seldom passed them. It took an hour to climb that wooded ridge.

Here we entered a denser forest and one strikingly beautiful and strange. I looked as I trudged along, although there were many places where the trail led over wind-falls, and deep narrow gorges spanned by fallen trees, and here I needed my eyes for careful stepping. The great cedars predominated, some of which were apparently ten feet or more thick at the base and towered straight and true so high that I had to crane my neck to see their tips. And then these tips seemed lost in a green spreading canopy pierced by shafts of golden sunlight and flecked with spots of blue sky.

At the end of two hours of climbing and plodding, packing more than I should have carried, I just about hated that forest. It developed, however, that I had no time for self-indulgence. At a fork in the trail the lumberjacks mutinied. Arnold could not change them. They wanted to quit then and there. By dint of persuasion and offer of extra money I got them to go on.

A Goal Worth Working For

SOON after that we reached the brow of the mountain and started down. R. C.'s quick ear, keen as an Indian's, first caught the low mellow roar of running water. It came from deep down in that green-choked abyss, and gradually grew stronger.

At last we descended to a point where, from under the giant cedars, we could look down upon Deer Creek. A beautiful green and white stream, shining here, dark and gleaming there, wound through a steep-walled cañon. It was worth working for.

The last descent into the bed of that cañon was performed with considerable rapidity and ease—we ran down a mossy incline, slid down a steep gravel bank and fell the rest of the way in soft clay. Then we walked down to the rocks and unpacking our rubber boots we waded after the men across to a sandy level on the opposite side. I paid the lumberjacks and dismissed them. Arnold and his boys I kept to do our camp work and help us get back. I calculated we would have considerably less to pack back and in case we could not take all the outfit these boys could make another trip in. Indeed I gave scant thought to our return trip. We were here on Deer Creek. Van Tassel, however, seemed immensely disappointed in Deer Creek. It was too low and the steelhead were not there.

We made camp with our limited outfit as best we could and then while the men busied themselves cooking a meal we anglers rigged up our tackle.

Right above camp there was a riffle and below that a deep-pool. Arnold informed us he had seen fish in it, but could not be certain they were steelhead. R. C. fished it carefully, after our method of trout fishing, without getting a strike. Van Tassel had no better luck. Lone Angler slipped off up the creek by himself, and I went downstream. Pools appeared to be scarce. Half a mile below camp I came upon a jumble of immense boulders, some as large as houses, that blocked the whole cañon bed, and through the labyrinthine passages the creek foamed and eddied and babbled in a most bewildering network of waterways. Deer Creek was the most beautiful

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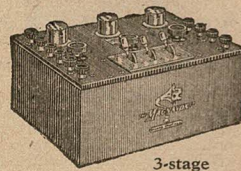
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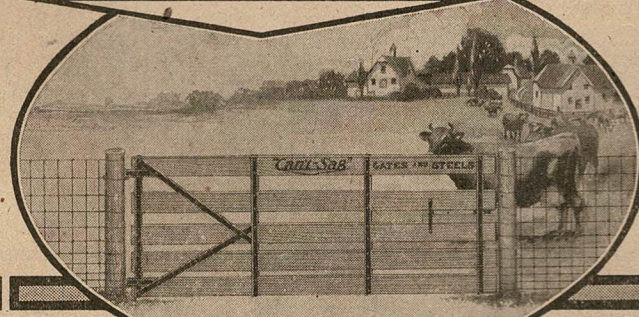


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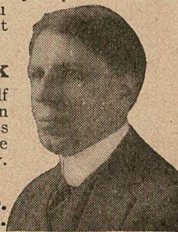
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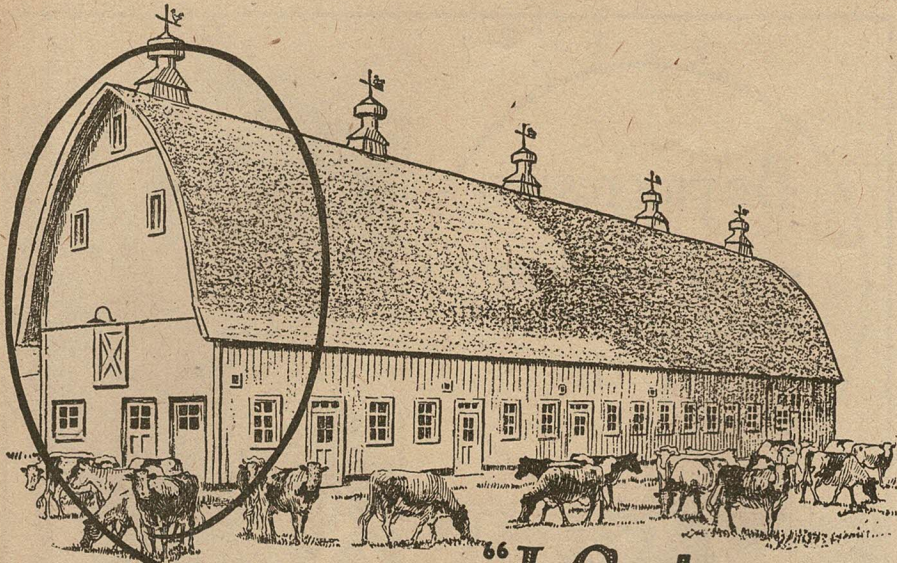
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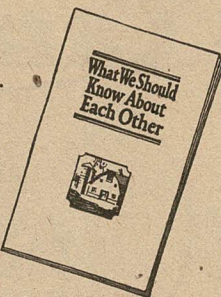
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trout water I had ever seen. Clear as crystal, cold as ice, it spoke eloquently of the pure springs of the mountain fastnesses. Under the water the rocks were amber colored, and along the banks they were green with moss and gray with lichen.

Van Tassel passed along the bank and worked on down the creek out of sight. In an hour or so he came back carrying a six-pound salmon. He had not seen a steelhead nor had a strike from one, and considered the fact most damaging to our hopes. He had found one large pool where steelhead should have been if they were anywhere in Deer Creek. We returned to camp. R. C. reported only numerous small trout. We hoped for better from Lone Angler. But about sunset, when we were ready for supper, he returned without a fish.

After supper I was tired and enjoyed a rest. Likewise did Wiborn. But R. C. took his rod and slipped off downstream to the pool just above the jumble of huge boulders. A big cedar tree had fallen across the creek.

Presently we were all roused by a ringing yell from R. C. Jumping up I looked to see him hanging on to a bent wagging rod. We all started to run to see the fun.

"What—you—got?" I queried, out of breath, as I looked at R. C.

He stood over to my left, nearly fifty yards, and judging from his face and the way he was working that tackle I anticipated much.

"Don't know what he is," he replied, "but I never had a fish nail a bait so hard. He went like a flash, down there. Thought it sure was good night. He's got most of my line, but think he's coming back."

R. C.'s Winning Fight

I HAD seen R. C. reeling frantically, and next I made the astonishing discovery that his line ran right under the log upon which I was standing. Suddenly a fish swam into my sight—a trout—gray-green, and of gamy shape, two feet long. For an instant I did not connect him with R. C. Then I saw the leader curved in front of him. I yelled and waved. The trout shot into deep water out of sight. By this time the rest of our contingent had arrived, to become interested spectators of the fight. Eventually R. C. led the tired fish out of the deep water, through the little channels among the rocks, and slipped him into a safe place where he lay gasping.

Not only was this the first steelhead we ever had captured, but the first we ever had seen. It was a strikingly beautiful fish, graceful, symmetrical, powerfully built, with great broad tail and blunt, pugnacious nose. The faint pinkish color, almost a glow, shone from a background of silver and green.

R. C. was very proud of his first steelhead. "You could never have made me believe he didn't weigh twice four pounds. Some fish!"

Then, wetting his hands, R. C. carefully unhooked the steelhead and gently slipped him back into the stream, which action greatly pleased Lone Angler and myself.

We went to bed, to discover that away from the camp fire the air was full of tiny invisible gnats. They annoyed us, bit severely, but in spite of them we fell asleep and had a restful night. R. C. was the first of us up. He fished the pool in front of camp before he washed his face. While the others were dallying over a bountiful breakfast I made off upstream as fast as I could travel over the slippery rocks.

I passed a number of likely looking pools that I left for my comrades. But presently I came to one that resembled the pool of an angler's dream. Above rushed a narrow fast rapid, white and foamy, and it ended in a deep dark lane between two rocks, and below widened out, and at last shoaled to a sand bar on the left and a shallow channel of rocks on the right.

I kept out of sight, and going round this pool I came down behind the big rock on my side and dropped my bait into the swift water. As it sank and floated down I certainly trembled. And scarcely had it gotten beyond the rock when a fish took it with a violent jerk and run.

Then came a solid pull, a screech of the reel and a heavy splash. The fish had leaped behind the rock. As I ran up on this boulder my line was going out so fast that I wished for anything but a fly reel. Besides there were only forty yards of line.

A dark gleam shot into the shallow water. How swift! Then it changed to a silver



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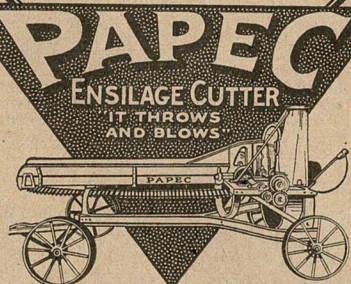
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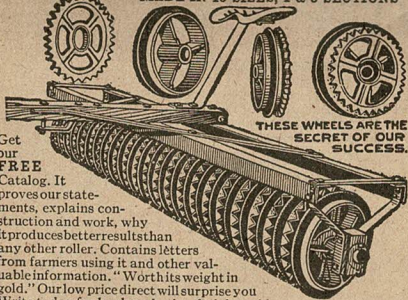
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flash with glints of red. I saw a big fish swoop up, and then come clear out into the air—a steelhead, savage and beautiful, fight in every line of his curved body. Then he plunged back, to dart toward me. Slack line! There were yards of it. I could not reel it in, and he ran past me, pulling a bagged line after him, and ran up into the white swift water. Instantly he turned back and ran the length of the pool. But I did not see him then. On his second run upstream, which was slower, I got the line tight and kept it so. He repeated his dash into the swift water and then darted again for the end of the pool. Evidently this time he meant to go down into the rapids below, but he miscalculated and got into the shallow water and over the sand bar.

At this juncture I leaped off the rock and ran along the pool, beyond the shoal place, and then I had him at a disadvantage. He made surges here and there, stirring up the mud, and splashing like a crippled duck, but when he essayed to cross the bar back into the pool I held him. And so we fought it out there until he was vanquished. I put him on a string before I weighed him. Six and a half pounds! Van Tassel came along and warmly congratulated me. R. C. and Wiborn next hove in sight. We saw a dozen long gray wavering fish shapes deep in the lower end of that pool—big steelhead—but we could not induce them to bite.

I wandered off up the creek, passing on my way the most wonderful pool I ever saw in my life. Heroically I left that for my comrades and departed upstream. In the next mile and a half I found some likely places and saw some fish, but did not have another strike. The water was too low and clear. Perhaps I was gone several hours, and when, on my return, I reached the wonderful pool, my three companions were there, talking across the creek, rods idle, lazily sunning themselves.

A Boyhood Trick

"SOME whales in here," said R. C. "No good. Won't bite. Make you sick!" "If we had fresh bait we'd catch one," added Van Tassel, who was on my side of the creek. R. C. and Lone Angler sat perched upon an enormous boulder, fully twenty feet above the pool. Joining my comrades I looked down where they pointed.

Deep in the limpid eddying water I saw many fish shapes, some of them so large as to seem in that comparatively small stream an exaggeration of the sight. But this particular pool could have harbored a swordfish. It held a great deal of water. And these fish were steelhead.

The enormous boulder projected far out into the pool. Just at the point where I stood it was narrowest, and the water appeared fifteen feet deep, gradually shoaling below, and widening into a broad space full of rocks and channels. But for thirty yards it was the tail end of a quiet pool, and I could see the amber bottom and little trout with startling clearness. In front where the steelhead lay the deep part began and ran up into the other half of the pool, black and swirling, with rock-lined banks, constricting to the swift water where I had crossed.

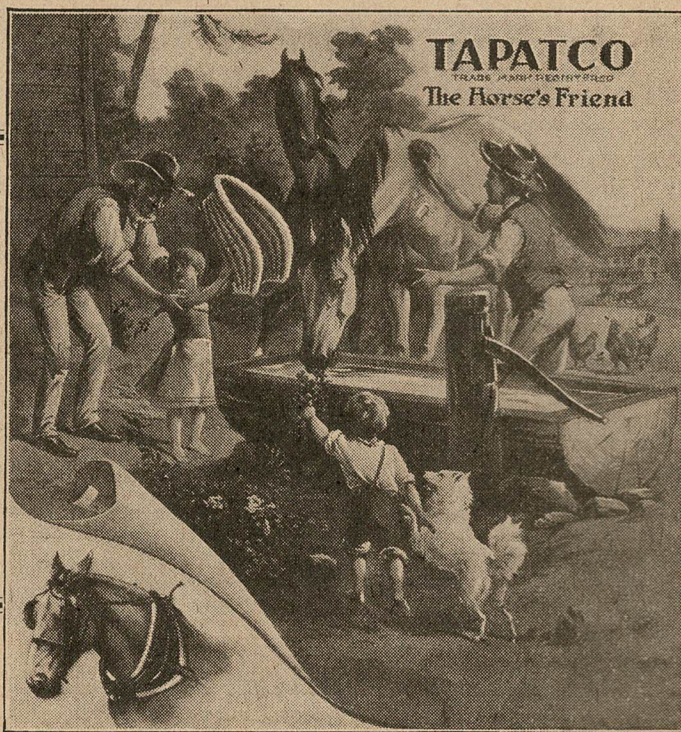
My brain conjured up days and tricks of my boyhood. Surely one of these steelhead could be caught, by hook or crook.

At the last pool above I had put on a little spinner to try, and it occurred to me now to twist off the small shiny spoon, leaving the tiny triangular gang of three hooks. Above this I slipped on a heavier lead, and then, half in earnest and half to deceive my comrades, I put on a small lump of salmon eggs. Thus equipped I stepped to the brink of the rock and cast out over the shadowy steelhead, and let my lead go to the bottom. My comrades took my move as an insult to their skill.

But I paid little heed. When I saw the big steelhead paid no attention to my line I knew positively there would be a startling surprise for my lofty companions.

Very cautiously I drew my line, toward me. I could feel the lead dragging on the bottom. I could see my line stretching down and beyond the big steelhead on the outside. I expected to have a little fun, yet instinctively there was more than that in my thrill. Then I jerked hard.

My hooks caught. My rod bent. It quivered. Then suddenly my line sped upstream and off my reel. The screech of that reel galvanized my comrades. It did more to me. Actually I had hooked that big steelhead. I yelled with the sheer fun of it. The boys sprang up, amazed. Such a run! That fish took all the line off and



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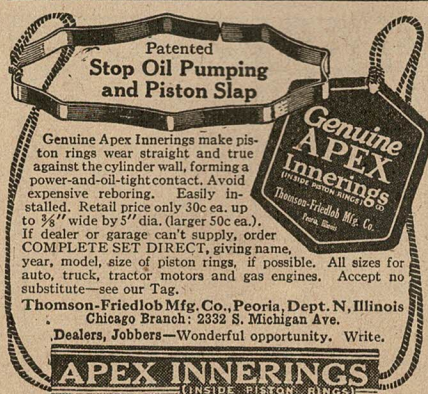
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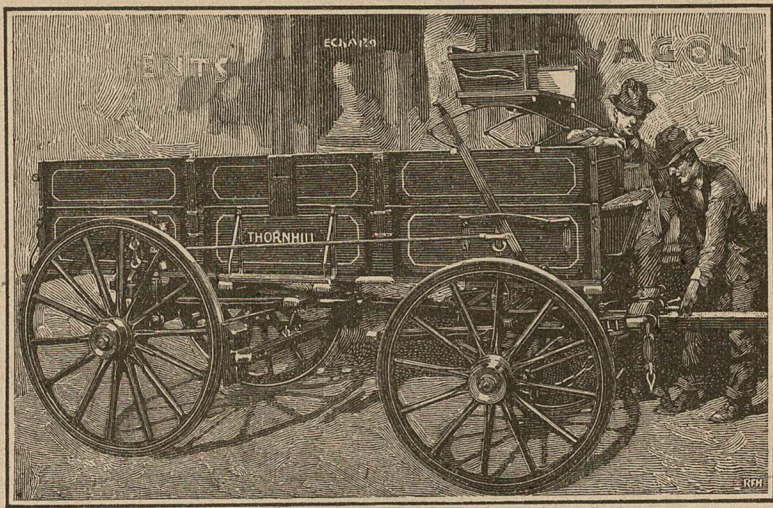
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up there in the fast white water he leaped into the air.

The steelhead hung up in the white water. He had every inch of the line out, and it stretched as tight as a wire. I went to the extreme edge of the rock and extended the rod as far as possible. Suddenly the fish turned and came back, not swiftly, so that I was able to reel in the slack line. Slowly he swam toward me, deep, about in the middle of the channel. He passed out of the dark water into plain sight.

"Oh! Oh!" exclaimed R. C.
"Look at that trout!" added Lone Angler.

I saw, but I could not express my feelings. I felt like a lost man. Retribution had overtaken me! Yet—it was possible to land this fish. He swam easily, then made a run that for sheer speed and vigor completely dazzled me. I thumbed the reel—checked him. Manifestly he did not like the hooks. He refused the strain. But he came to the surface and smashed the water white.

Then for a long time he sulked on the bottom, while I worked all I dared. Next he swam to and fro, and around, up and down, and then ran up into the swift water to hang there as if anchored. But the steady strain I put on him gradually drew him out of the current. Down he came.

When I pulled hard enough he turned on his side, and that moment was indescribable. Half a foot broad! A wide flare of deep rose color and silver!

"What'll he weigh?" I panted.
"Twelve pounds—Oh, maybe more," replied my brother. "You'll get him."

"Look at him, R. C.," I burst out. "Just look—so you'll never forget. He'll go all of fifteen pounds—And I'll never hold him."

My fish worked around the rock, and up the pool again.

"Can't you get across—on the other side?" queried R. C. "Then you could keep him away from these snags under the rock."

It was fully a ten-foot jump down to a log behind the rock, and more than that to the ground. When the steelhead got well upstream I essayed to go round with him. When Wiborn saw my intention he yelled: "Don't try it. That's how I broke my leg!"

The Victorious Moment

NEVERTHELESS I made the bank in two jumps, holding my rod up in both hands. Then as luck would have it the steelhead took a notion to go back, and this time he went fast. My line went round and over the rock. I had to get back. How I accomplished it I never knew, but I climbed straight up to R. C.'s outstretched hands. The contrary steelhead fooled round, swam back and suddenly, without giving Wiborn any chance to get ready to photograph a leap, he came up and out, fully ten feet into the air, a most prodigious performance, something unequalled in my experience of a beautiful and wonderful sight. The steelhead plunged back. I believed that last effort had used him up.

Whereupon I led my fish down stream, through the deep water of the pool below to the place where the shoal began. Here I half led, half dragged him into six inches of water. He was almost spent.

"Scoop him out!" yelled R. C.

"Aw, no, you'll lose him," replied Van Tassel in consternation. That was a trying situation for him. He was afraid to take the risk. But I knew, as my fish began to slip and work out of that favorable position, that we had lost our opportunity.

"Try it again," shouted R. C. "Then hand your rod to Van, and take the chance yourself."

This appeared the best of advice. I attempted it. The steelhead got his head and swam away, very wearily and ponderously. He could just wag his tail. But he was so heavy that I dared not check him entirely. I eased up, let him go a little, then pulled carefully to turn him. More than once I had his head coming round. I reeled in the line he had taken. Slowly he floated, tail towards us, gradually yielding. His broad tail waved. His great mouth gaped. He turned on his side, flashing pink and silver in the sunlight, and just when I realized he was a vanquished fish, most beautiful in the moment of surrender, the hooks tore out. For another moment he did not realize he was free. Then he righted himself and swam off very slowly, his great shape gradually growing dim, until he vanished in the depths of the pool.

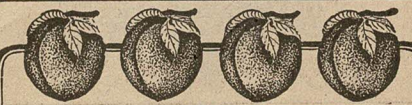
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