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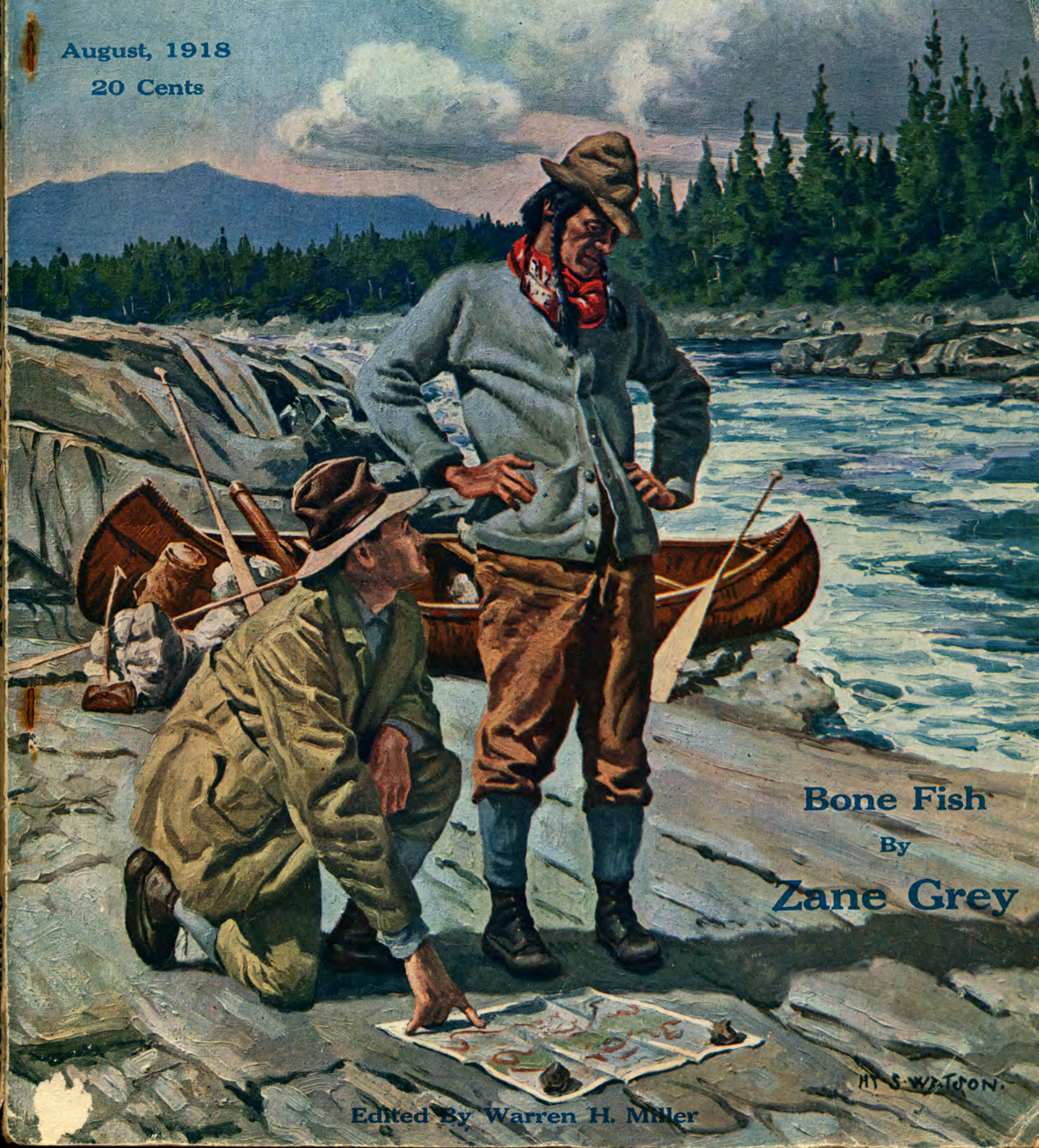


FIELD AND STREAM

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Bone Fish
By
Zane Grey

H. S. WATSON.

Edited By Warren H. Miller



August

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1918

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Bonefish

By Zane Grey



IN my experience as a fisherman the greatest pleasure has been the certainty of something new to learn, to feel, to anticipate, to thrill over. An old proverb tells us that if you wish to bring back the wealth of the Indies you must go out with its equivalent. Surely the longer a man fishes the wealthier he becomes in experience, in reminiscence, in love of nature, if he goes out with the harvest of a quiet eye, free from the plague of himself.

As a boy, fishing was a passion with me, but no more for the conquest of golden sunfish and speckled chubs and horny catfish than for the haunting sound of the waterfall and the color and loneliness of the cliffs. As a man, and a writer who is forever learning, fishing is still a passion, stronger with all the years, but tempered by an understanding of the nature of primitive man, hidden in all of us, and by a keen reluctance to deal pain to any creature. The sea and the river and the mountain have almost taught me not to kill except for the urgent needs of life; and the time will come when I shall have grown up to that. When I read a naturalist or a biologist I am always ashamed of what I have called a sport. Yet one of the truths of evolution is that not to practice strife, not to use violence, not to fish or hunt, that is to say, not to fight, is to retrograde as a natural man. Spiritual and intellectual growth are attained at the expense of the physical.

Always then, when I am fishing I feel that the fish are incidental, and that the reward of effort and endurance, the incalculable and intangible knowledge emanate from the swelling and infinite sea or from the shaded and murmuring stream. Thus I assuage my conscience and justify the fun, the joy, the excitement, and the violence.

FIVE years ago I had never heard of a bonefish. The first man who ever spoke to me about this species said to me very quietly with serious intentness: "Have you had any experience with bonefish?" I said no, and asked him what kind that was. His reply was enigmatical. "Well, don't go after bonefish unless you can give up all other fishing." I remember I laughed. But I never forgot that remark, and now it comes back to me clear in its significance. That fisherman read me as well as I misunderstood him.

Later that season I listened to talk of inexperienced bonefishermen telling what



Record Bonefish On 3-6 Tackle

they had done and heard. To me it was absurd. So much fishing talk seems ridiculous, anyway. And the expert fish-

ermen, wherever they were, received the expressive titles: "Bonefish Bugs and Bonefish Nuts!" Again I heard arguments about tackle rigged for these mysterious fish and these arguments fixed my vague impression. By and bye some bonefishermen came to Long Key and the first sight of a bonefish made me curious. I think it weighed five pounds—a fair-sized specimen. Even to my prejudiced eye that fish showed class. So I began to question the bonefishermen.

At once I found this type of angler to be remarkably reticent as to experience and method. Moreover, the tackle used was amazing to me. Stiff rods and heavy lines for little fish! I gathered another impression and it was that bonefish were related to dynamite and chain lightning. Everybody who would listen to my questions had different things to say. No two men agreed on tackle or bait or ground or anything. I enlisted the interest of my brother, R. C., and we decided, just to satisfy curiosity, to go out and catch some bonefish. The complacent smug conceit of fishermen! I can see now how funny ours was. Fortunately it is now past tense. If I ever conceived again I hope no one will read my stories.

My brother and I could not bring ourselves to try for bonefish with heavy tackle. It was preposterous. Three—four—five pound fish! We had seen no larger. Bass tackle was certainly heavy enough for us. So in the innocence of our heart and the assurance of our vanity we sallied forth to catch bonefish.

THAT was four years ago. Did we have good luck? No! Luck has nothing to do with bonefishing. What happened? For one solid month each winter of those four years we had devoted ourselves to bonefishing with light tackle. We stuck to our colors. The space of this whole volume would not be half enough to tell our experience—the amaze, the difficulty, the perseverance, the defeat, the wonder and at last the achievement. This season of 1918 we hooked about fifty bonefish on three-six tackles, that is, three-ounce tips and six-thread lines, and we landed fourteen of them. I caught nine and R. C. caught five. R. C.'s eight-pound fish justified our contention and crowned our efforts.

To date, in all my experience, I consider this bonefish achievement the most thrilling, fascinating, difficult and instructive. That is a broad statement and I

hope I can prove it. I am prepared to state that I feel almost certain, if I spent another month bonefishing, I would become obsessed and perhaps lose my enthusiasm for other kinds of fish.

Why?

There is a multiplicity of reasons. My reasons range from the exceeding graceful beauty of a bonefish to the fact that he is the best food fish I ever ate. That is a wide range. He is the wisest, shyest, wariest, strangest fish I ever studied; and I am not excepting the great *Xiphias Gladius*—the broadbill swordfish. As for the speed of a bonefish I claim no salmon, no barracuda, no other fish celebrated for swiftness of motion is in his class. A bonefish is so incredibly fast that it was a long time before I could believe the evidence of my own eyes. You see him; he is there perfectly still in the clear shallow water, a creature of fish shape, pale green and silver, but crystal-like, a phantom shape, staring at you with strange black eyes; then he is gone. Vanished! Absolutely without your seeing a movement, even a faint streak! By peering keenly you may discern a little swirl in the water. As for the strength of a bonefish I actually hesitate to give my impressions. No one will ever believe how powerful a bonefish is until he has tried to stop the rush and heard the line snap. As for his cunning, it is utterly baffling. As for his biting, it is almost imperceptible. As for his tactics, they are beyond conjecture.

I WANT to append here a few passages from my note books, in the hope that a bare, bald statement of fact will help my argument.

First experience on a bonefish shoal. This wide area of coral mud was dry at low tide. When we arrived the tide was rising. Water scarcely a foot deep, very clear. Bottom white with patches of brown grass. We saw bonefish everywhere and expected great sport. But no matter where we stopped we could not get any bites. Schools of bonefish swam up to the boat only to dart away. Everywhere we saw thin white tails sticking out, as they swam along, feeding with noses in the mud. When we drew in our baits we invariably found them half gone, and it was our assumption that the blue crabs did this.

At sunset the wind quieted. It grew very still and beautiful. The water was rosy. Here and there we saw swirls and tails standing out. And we heard heavy thumps of plunging fish. But we could not get any bites.

When we returned to camp we were told that the half of our soldier-crab baits had been sucked off by bonefish. Did not believe that.

Tide bothered us again this morning. It seems exceedingly difficult to tell one night before what the tide is going to do the next morning. At ten o'clock we walked to the same place we were yesterday. It was a bright, warm day with just enough breeze to ruffle the water and make fishing pleasant, and we certainly expected to have good luck. But we fished for about three hours without any sign of a fish. This was discouraging and we could not account for it.

So we moved. About half a mile down the beach I thought I caught a glimpse of a bonefish. It was a likely looking place, a dark weedy bottom in marked contrast to the white marl all around. Here I made a long cast and sat down to wait. My brother had lagged behind. Presently I spied two bonefish nosing along not ten feet from the shore. They saw me so I

made no attempt to drag the bait near them, but I called to my brother and told him to try to get a bait ahead of them. This was a little after flood tide. It struck me then that these singular fish feed up the beach with one tide and down with another.

Just when my brother reached me I got a nibble. I called to him and then stood up ready to strike. I caught a glimpse of the fish. He looked big and dark. He had his nose down fooling with my bait. When I struck him he felt heavy. I put on the click of the reel and when the bonefish started off he pulled the rod down hard, taking the line fast. He made one swirl on the surface and then started up shore. He seemed exceedingly swift. I ran along the beach until presently the line slackened and I felt that the hook had torn out. This was disappointment. I could not figure that I had done anything wrong but I decided in the future to use a smaller and sharper hook. We went on down the beach seeing several bonefish on the way and finally we ran into a big school of them. They were right along shore but when they saw us we could not induce them to bite.

EVERY day we learn something. It is necessary to keep out of sight of these fish. After they do bite, everything depends upon the skilful hooking of the fish. Probably it will require a good deal of skill to land them after you have hooked them but we have had little experience at that so far. When these fish are along the shore they certainly are feeding, and presumably they are feeding on crabs of some sort. Bonefish appear to be game worthy of any fisherman's best efforts.

It was a still, hot day without any clouds. We went up the beach to a point opposite an old construction camp. Today when we expected the tide to be doing one thing it was doing another. Ebb and flow and flood tide have become as difficult as Sanscrit synonyms for me. My brother took an easy and comfortable chair and sat up the beach, and I, like an ambitious fisherman, laboriously and adventurously waded out 150 feet to an old platform that had been erected there. I climbed upon this, and found it a very precarious place to sit. Come to think about it there is something very remarkable about the places a fisherman will pick out to sit down on. This place was a two by four plank full of nails and I cheerfully availed myself of it, and casting my bait out as far as I could, I calmly sat down to wait for a bonefish. It has become a settled conviction in my mind that you have to wait for bonefish. But all at once I got a hard bite. It quite excited me. I jerked and pulled the bait away from the fish and he followed it and took it again. I saw this fish and several others in the white patch of ground where there were not any weeds. But in my excitement I did not have out a long enough line and when I jerked the fish turned over and got away. This was all right, but the next two hours sitting in the sun on that seat with a nail sticking into me was not altogether pleasurable. When I thought I had endured it as long as I could I saw a flock of seven bonefish swimming past me and one of them was a whopper. The sight revived me. I hardly breathed while that bunch of fish swam right for my bait, and for all I could see they did not know it was there. I waited another long time. The sun was hot—there was no breeze—the heat was reflected from the water. I

could have stood all this well enough but I could not stand the nails. So I climbed down off my perch, having forgotten that all this time the tide had been rising. And as I could not climb back I had to get wet, to the infinite amusement of my brother. After that I fished from the shore.

Presently my brother shouted and I looked up to see him pulling on a fish. There was a big splash in the water and then I saw his line running out. The fish was heading straight for the framework on which I had been seated and I knew if he ever did get there he would break the line. All of a sudden I saw the fish he had hooked. And he reached the framework all right!

I had one more strike this day but did not hook the fish. It seems this bonefishing takes infinite patience. For all we can tell these fish come swimming along with the rising tide close in to shore and they are exceedingly shy and wary. My brother now has caught two small bonefish and each of them gave a good strong bite, at once starting off with the bait. We had been under the impression that it was almost impossible to feel the bonefish bite. It will take work to learn this game.

YESTERDAY we went up on the north side of the island to the place near the mangroves, where we had seen some bonefish. Arriving there we found the tide almost flood, with the water perfectly smooth and very clear and about a foot deep up at the mangrove roots. Here and there at a little distance we could see splashes. We separated, and I took the outside while R. C. took the inside close to the mangroves. We waded along. Before I had time to make a cast I saw a three-pound bonefish come sneaking along and when he saw me he darted away like an arrow. I made a long cast and composed myself to wait. Presently a yell from R. C. electrified me with the hope that he had hooked a fish. But it turned out that he had only seen one. He moved forward very cautiously in the water and presently made a cast. He then said that a big bonefish was right near his hook and, during the next few minutes this fish circled his bait twice, crossing his line. Then he counted out loud: one, two, three, four, five bonefish right in front of him, one of which was a whopper. I stood up myself and saw one over to my right of about five pounds sneaking along with his nose to the bottom. When I made a cast over in his direction he disappeared as suddenly as if he had dissolved in the water. Looking out to my left I saw half a dozen bonefish swimming towards me and they came quite close. When I moved they vanished. Then I made a cast over in this direction. The bonefish came back and swam all around my bait apparently not noticing it. They were on the feed and the reason they did not take our bait must have been that they saw us. We fished there for an hour without having a sign of a bite and then we gave it up.

To-day about flood tide I had a little strike. I jerked hard but failed to see the fish, and then when I reeled in I found he still had hold of it. Then I struck him and in one little jerk he broke the leader.

I JUST had a talk with a fellow who claims to know a good deal about bonefishing. He said he had caught a good many ranging up to eight pounds. His claim was that soldier crabs were the best bait. He said he had fished with professional boatmen who knew the game

thoroughly. They would pole the skiff along shore and keep a sharp lookout for what he called bonefish mud. And I assume that he meant muddy places in the water that had been stirred up by bonefish. Of course, any place where these little swirls could be seen was very likely to be a bonefish bank. He claimed that it was necessary to hold the line near the reel between the forefingers, and to feel for the very slightest vibration. Bonefish have a sucker-like mouth. They draw the bait in and mash it. Sometimes, of course, they move away drawing out the line, but that kind of a bite is exceptional. It is imperative to strike the fish when this vibration is felt. Not one in five bonefish is hooked.

We have had two Northerners and the water grew so cold that it drove the fish out. The last two or three days have been warm and to-day it was hot. However, I did not expect the bonefish in yet, and when we went in bathing at flood tide I was very glad to see two fish. I hurried out and got my rod and began to try. Presently I had a little strike. I waited and it was repeated; then I jerked and felt the fish. He made a wave and that was the last I knew of him.

Reeling in I looked at my bait to find that it had been pretty badly chewed, but I fastened it on again and made another cast. I set down the rod. Then I went back after the bucket for the rest of the bait. Upon my return I saw the line jerking and I ran to the rod. I saw a little splash, and a big white tail of a bonefish stick out of the water. I put my thumb on the reel and jerked hard. Instantly I felt the fish, heavy and powerful. He made a surge and then ran straight out. The line burned my thumb so I could not hold it. I put on the click and the fish made a swifter, harder run for at least a hundred yards and he tore the hook out.

This makes a number of fish that have gotten away from me in this manner. It is exasperating and difficult to explain. I have to use a pretty heavy sinker in order to cast the bait out. I have arranged this sinker, which has a hole through it, so that the line will run freely. This seems to work all right on the bite, but I am afraid it does not work after the fish is hooked. That sinker drags on the bottom. This is the best rigging that I can plan at the present stage of the game. I have an idea now that a bonefish should be hooked hard and then very carefully handled.

I fished off the beach a while in front of the cabin. We used both kinds of crabs, soldier and hermit. I fished two hours and a half from the late rising tide to the first of the ebb without a sign or sight of a fish. R. C. finally got tired and set his rod and went in bathing. Then it happened. I heard his reel singing and saw his rod nodding; then I made a dash for it. The fish was running straight out heavy and fast, and he broke the line.

This may have been caused by the heavy sinker catching in the weeds. We must do more planning to get a suitable rig for these bonefish.

DAY before yesterday R. C. and I went up to the Long Key point, and rowed in on the mangrove shoal where once before I saw so many bonefish. The tide was about one-quarter in, and there was a foot of water all over the flats. We anchored at the outer edge and began to fish. We had made elaborate preparations in the way of tackle, bait, canoe, etc., and it really would have been re-

markable if we had had any luck. After a little while I distinctly felt something at my hook, and upon jerking I had one splendid surge out of a good heavy bonefish. That was all that happened in that place.

It was nearer flood tide when we went back. I stood up and kept a keen watch for little muddy places in the water, also bonefish. At last I saw several fish and there we anchored. I fished on one side of the boat and R. C. on the other. On two different occasions, feeling a nibble on his line, he jerked, all to no avail. The third time he yelled as he struck, and I turned in time to see the white thresh of a bonefish. He made a quick dash off to the side and then came in close to the boat, swimming around with short runs two or three times, and then, apparently tired, he came close. I made ready to lift him into the boat, when lo and behold! he made a wonderful run of fully three hundred feet before R. C. could stop him. Finally he was led to the boat, and turned out to be a fish of three and a half pounds. It simply made R. C. and me gasp to speak of what a really large bonefish might be able to do. There is something irresistible about the pursuit of these fish and perhaps this is it. We changed places, and as a last try anchored in deeper water, fishing as before. This time I had a distinct tug at my line and I hooked a fish. He wiggled and jerked and threshed around so that I told R. C. that it was not a bonefish, but R. C. contended it was. Anyway he came towards the boat rather easily until we saw him and he saw us, and then he made a dash similar to that of R. C.'s fish and he tore out the hook. This was the extent of our adventure that day, and we were very much pleased.

NEXT morning we started out with a high northeast trade wind blowing. Nothing could dampen our ardor.

It was blowing so hard up at No. 2 viaduct that we decided to stay inside. There is a big flat there cut up by channels, and it is said to be a fine ground for bonefish. The tide was right and the water was clear, but even in the lee of the bank the wind blew pretty hard. We anchored in about three feet of water and began to fish.

After a while we moved. The water was about a foot deep, and the bottom clean white marl with little patches of vegetation. Crabs and crab holes were numerous. I saw a small shark and a couple of rays. When we got to the middle of a big flat I saw the big white glistening tails of bonefish sticking out of the water. We dropped anchor and much excited were about to make casts when R. C. lost his hat. He swore. We had to pull up anchor and go get the hat.

Unfortunately this scared the fish. Also it presaged a rather hard luck afternoon. In fishing, as in many other things, if the beginning is tragedy all will be tragedy, growing worse all the time. We moved around up above where I had seen these bonefish and there we dropped anchor. No sooner had we gotten our baits overboard than we began to see bonefish tails off at quite some distance. The thing to do, of course, was to sit right there and be patient, but this was almost impossible for us. We moved again and again, but we did not get any nearer to the fish. Finally I determined that we would stick in one place. This we did and the bonefish began to come around. When they would swim close to the boat and see us they would give a tremendous surge and disappear as if by magic. But they always left a muddy place in the water. The speed of these fish is beyond belief. I could not cast where I wanted to; I tried again and again. When I did get my bait off at a reasonable distance, I could feel crabs nibbling at it. These pests robbed us of many a good bait. One of them cut my line right in two. They seemed to be very plentiful, and that must be why the bonefish were plentiful, too. R. C. kept losing bait after bait, which he claimed was the work of crabs, but I rather believed it to be the work of bonefish. It was too windy for us to tell anything about the pressure of the line. It had to be quite a strong tug to be felt at all. Presently I felt one, and instead of striking at once I waited to see what would happen. After a while I reeled in to find my bait gone. Then I was consoled by the proof that a bonefish had taken the bait off for me. Another time three bonefish came along for my bait and stuck their tails up out of the water, and were evidently nosing around it, but I felt absolutely nothing on the line. When I reeled in the bait was gone.

We kept up this sort of thing for two hours. I knew that we were doing it wrong. R. C. said bad conditions, but I claimed that these were only partly responsible for our failure. I knew that we moved about too much—that we did not cast far enough and wait long enough, and that by all means we should not have cracked bait on the bottom of the boat, and particularly we did not know when we had a bite! But it is one thing to be sure of a fact and another to be able to practice it. At last we gave up in despair, and upon paddling back towards the launch we saw a school of bonefish with their tails in the air. We followed them around for a while, apparently very much to their amusement. At sunset we got back to the launch and started for camp.

This was a long, hard afternoon's work



Where The Bonefish Feed

for nothing. However, it is my idea that experience is never too dearly bought. I will never do some things again, and the harder these fish are to catch, the more time and effort it takes—the more intelligence and cunning—all the more will I appreciate success if it ever does come. It is in the attainment of difficult tasks that we earn our reward. There are several old bonefish experts here in camp, and they laughed when I related some of our experiences. Bonefishermen are loath to tell anything about their methods. This must be a growth of the difficult game. I had an expert bonefisherman tell me that when he was surprised while fishing on one of the shoals, he always dropped his rod and pretended to be digging for shells. And it is a fact that the bonefish guides at Metacumbe did not let anyone get a line on their methods. They will avoid a bonefishing ground while others are there, and if they are surprised there ahead of others, they will pull up anchor and go away. May I be preserved from any such personal selfishness and reticence as this! One of these bonefish experts at the camp told me that in all his years of experience he had never gotten a bonefish bite. If you feel a tug, it is when the bonefish is ejecting the hook. Then it is too late. The bonefish noses around the bait and sucks it in without any apparent movement of the line. And that can be detected first by a little sagging of the line or by a little strain upon it. That is the time to strike. He also said that he always broke his soldier crabs on a piece of lead to prevent the jar from frightening the fish.

Dr. B—— tells a couple of interesting experiences with bonefish. On one occasion he was fishing near another boat in which was a friend. The water was very clear and still, and he could see his friend's bait lying upon the sand. An enormous bonefish swam up and took the bait, and Dr. B—— was so thrilled and excited that he could not yell. When the man hooked the fish it shot off in a straight-away rush raising a ridge upon the water. It ran the length of the line and freed itself. Later Dr. B's friend showed the hook that had been straightened out. They measured the line and found it to be 555 feet. The bonefish had gone the length of this in one run, and they estimated that he would have weighed not less than fifteen pounds.

On another occasion Dr. B—— saw a heavy bonefish hooked. It ran straight off shore for one hundred yards, and, turning, ran in with such speed that it came shooting out upon dry land and was easily captured. These two instances are cases in point of the incredible speed and strength of this strange fish.

R. C. had a splendid fight with a bonefish to-day. The wind was blowing hard and the canoe was not easy to fish out of. We had great difficulty in telling when we did have a bite. I had one that I know of. When R. C. hooked his fish it sheered off between the canoe and the beach and ran up shore quite a long way. Then it headed out to sea and made a long run and then circled. It made short quick surges, each time jerking R. C.'s rod down and pulling the reel handle out of his fingers. He had to put on a glove. We were both excited and thrilled with the gameness of this fish. It circled the canoe three times, and tired out very slowly. When he got it close the very thing happened that I feared. It darted under the anchor rope and we lost it. This battle lasted about fifteen minutes,

and afforded us an actual instance of the wonderful qualities of this fish.

Yesterday R. C. hooked a bonefish that made a tremendous rush straight off shore, and never stopped until he had pulled out the hook. This must have been a very heavy and powerful fish.

I had my taste of the same dose to-day. I felt a tiny little tug upon my line that electrified me and I jerked as hard as I dared. I realized that I had hooked some kind of fish, but as it was wiggling and did not feel heavy, I concluded that I had hooked one of those pesky blowfish. But all of a sudden my line cut through the water and fairly whistled. I wound in the slack and then felt a heavy fish. He made a short plunge and then a longer one, straight out, making my reel scream. I was afraid to thumb the line so I let him go. With these jerky plunges he ran about 300 feet. Then I felt my line get fast, and handing my rod to R. C. I slipped off my shoes and went overboard.



Three Flashes Of Molten Silver

I waded out, winding as I went, to find that the bonefish had fouled the line on a sponge on the bottom, and he had broken free just above the hook.

YESTERDAY the fog end of the northeast gale still held on. But we decided to try for bonefish. Low tide at two o'clock.

I waded up shore with the canoe, and R. C. walked. It was a hard job to face the wind and waves and pull the canoe. It made me tired and wet.

When we got above the old camp the tide had started in. We saw bonefish tails standing up out of the water. Hurriedly baiting our hooks we waded to get ahead of them. But we could not catch them wading, so went back to the canoe, and paddled swiftly ahead, anchored, and got out to wade once more.

R. C. was above me. We saw the big tail of one bonefish and both of us waded to get ahead of him. At last I made a cast, but did not see him, any more. The wind was across my line, making a big curve in it, and I was afraid I could not tell a bite if I had one. Was about to reel in when I felt the faint tug. I swept my

rod up and back, hard as I dared. The line came tight, I felt a heavy weight; a quiver, and then my rod was pulled down. I had hooked him. The thrill was remarkable. He took a short dash, then turned. I thought I had lost him. But he was running in. Frantically I wound the reel, but could not get in the slack. I saw my line coming, heard it hiss in the water, then made out the dark shape of a bonefish. He ran right at me—almost hit my feet. When he saw me he darted off with incredible speed, making my reel scream. I feared the strain on the line, and I plunged through the water as fast as I could after him. He ran 400 feet in that dash, and I ran fifty. Not often have I of late years tingled and thrilled and panted with such excitement. It was great. It brought back the days of boyhood. When he stopped that run I was tired, and thoroughly wet. He sheered off as I waded and wound in. I got him back near me. He shot off in a shoal place of white mud where I saw him plainly, and he scared a school of bonefish that split and ran every way. My fish took to making short circles; I could not keep a tight line. Lost! I wound in fast, felt him again, then absolutely lost feel of him or sight of him. Lost again! My sensations were remarkable, considering it was only a fish of arm's length at the end of the line. But these bonefish rouse an angler as no other fish can. All at once I felt the line come tight. He was still on, now running in shore.

The water was about a foot deep. I saw the bulge or narrow wave he made. He ran out a hundred feet, and had me dashing after him again. I could not trust that light line at the speed he swam, so I ran to release the strain. He led me in shore, then up shore, and out toward sea again, all the time fighting with a couple of hundred feet of line out. Occasionally he would make a solid thumping splash. He worked off shore some two hundred yards, where he led me in water half to my hips. I had to try to stop him here, and with fear and trepidation I thumbed the reel. The first pressure brought a savage rush, but it was short. He turned, and I wound him back and waded in shore.

From that moment I had him beaten, although I was afraid of his short thumps as he headed away and tugged. Finally I had him within twenty feet, circling around me, tired and beaten, yet still strong enough to require careful handling.

He looked short and heavy, pale checked green and silver; and his staring black eye, set forward in his pointed white nose, could be plainly seen. This fish made a rare picture for an angler.

So I led him to the canoe, and ascertaining that I had him well hooked I lifted him in.

NEVER have I seen as beautiful a fish. A golden trout, a white sea bass, a dolphin, all are beautiful, but not so exquisite as this bonefish. He seemed all bars of dazzling silver. His tail had a blue margin, and streaks of lilac. His lower (anal) fins were blazing with opal fire, and the pectoral fins were crystal white. His eye was a dead, piercing black, staring and deep. We estimated his weight. I held for six pounds, but R. C. shook his head. He did not believe that. But we agreed on the magnificent fight he had made.

Then we waded up shore further and began to fish. In just five minutes I had the same kind of strike, slight, almost imperceptible, vibrating, and I hooked a fish

exactly as I had the first one. He was light of weight, but swift as a flash. I played him from where I stood. This time I essayed with all skill to keep a taut line. It was impossible. Now I felt his weight and again only a slack line. This fish, too, ran right to my feet, then in a boiling splash sheered away. But he could not go far. I reeled him back and led him to the canoe. He was small, and the smallness of him was such a surprise, in contrast to what his fight had led me to imagine he was.

R. C. had one strike and broke his line on the jerk. We had to give up on account of sunset at hand.

There was another hard thunderstorm last night. The last few days have begun the vernal equinox. It rained torrents all night and stopped at dawn. The wind was northeast and cool. Cloudy overhead with purple horizon all around—a forbidding day. But we decided to go fishing anyhow. We had new, delicate three-six tackles to try. About seven the wind died away. There was a dead calm, and the sun tried to show. Then another breeze came out of the East.

We went up on the inside after bait, and had the luck to find some. Crossing the island we came out at the old construction camp where we had left the canoe. By this time a stiff breeze was blowing and the tide was rising fast. We had our troubles paddling and poling up to the grove of coconuts. Opposite this we anchored and began to fish.

Conditions were not favorable. The water was choppy and roily—the canoe bobbed a good deal—the anchors dragged—and we did not see any fish. All the same we persevered. At length I had a bite, but pulled too late. We tried again for a while, only to be disappointed. Then we moved.

We had to put the stern anchor down first and let it drag till it held and the canoe drifted around away from the wind, then we dropped the bow anchor. After a time I had a faint feeling at the end of my line—an indescribable feeling. I jerked and hooked a bonefish. He did not feel heavy. He ran off, and the wind bagged my line and the waves also helped to pull out the hook.

Following that we changed places several times, in one of which R. C. had a strike, but failed to hook the fish. Just opposite the old wreck on the shore I had another fish take hold, and upon hooking him, had precisely the same thing happen as in the first instance. I think the bag of my line, which I could not avoid, allowed the lead to sag down and drag upon the bottom. Of course when it caught the bonefish pulled free.

In some places we found the water clearer than in others. Flood tide had long come when we anchored opposite the old camp. R. C. cast out upon a brown patch of weeds where we have caught some fine fish, and I cast below. Perhaps in five minutes or less R. C. swept up his rod. I saw it bend forward, down toward the water. He had hooked a heavy fish. The line hissed away to the right, and almost at once picked up a good-sized piece of sea weed.

"It's a big fish!" I exclaimed, excitedly. "Look at him go! . . . That sea weed will make you lose him. Let me wade out and pull it off?"

"No! Let's take a chance. . . . Too late, anyhow! Gee! He's going! . . . He's got two hundred yards off!"

Two-thirds of the line was off the reel, and the piece of sea weed seemed to be a drag on the fish. He slowed up. The line was tight, the rod bent. Suddenly the tip

sprang back. We had seen that often before.

"Gone!" said R. C. dejectedly.

But I was not so sure of that, although I was hopeless. R. C. wound in, finding the line came slowly, as if weighted. I watched closely. We thought that was on account of the sea weed. But suddenly the reel began to screech.

"I've got him yet!" yelled R. C. with joy.

I was overjoyed, too, but I contained myself, for I expected dire results from that run.

Zee! Zee! Zee! went the reel and the rod nodded in time.

"We must get rid of that sea weed or lose him. . . . Pull up your anchor with one hand. . . . Careful now."

He did so, and quickly I got mine up. What ticklish business!

"Keep a tight line!" I cautioned, as I backed the canoe hard with all my power. It was not easy to go backwards and keep head on to the wind. The waves broke over the end of the canoe, splashing me in the face so I could taste and smell the salt. I made half a dozen shoves with the paddle. Then, nearing the piece of sea weed, I dropped my anchor.

In a flash I got that dangerous piece of sea weed off R. C.'s line.

"Good work! . . . Say, but that helps. . . . We'd never have gotten him," said R. C., beaming. I saw him look then as he used to in our sunfish, bent-pin days.

"We've not got him yet," I replied, grimly. "Handle him as easily as you can."

THEN began a fight. The bonefish changed his swift, long runs, and took to slow sweeps to and fro, and whenever he was drawn a few yards closer he would give a solid jerk and get that much line back. There was much danger from other pieces of floating weed. R. C. maneuvered his line to miss them. All the time the bonefish was pulling doggedly. I had little hope we might capture him. At the end of fifteen minutes he was still a hundred yards from the canoe and neither of us had seen him. Our excitement grew tenser every moment. The fish sheered to and fro, and would not come into shallower water. He would not budge. He took one long run straight up the shore, in line with us, and then circled out. This alarmed me, but he did not increase his lead. He came slowly around, yard by yard. R. C. reeled carefully, not hard enough to antagonize him, and after what seemed a long time, got him within a hundred feet, and I had a glimpse of green and silver. Then off he ran again. How unbelievably swift! He had been close—then almost the same instant he was far off.

"I saw him! On a wave!" yelled R. C. "That's no bonefish! What can he be, anyhow? I believe I've got a barracuda!"

I looked and looked, but I could not see him.

"No matter what you think you saw that fish is a bonefish," I declared, positively. "The runs he made! I saw silver and green! Careful now. I *know* he's a bonefish. And he must be big."

"Maybe it's only the wind and waves that make him feel so strong," replied R. C.

"No! You can't fool me! Play him for a big one. He's been on twenty-three minutes now. Stand up. I'll steady the canoe—and watch for that sudden rush when he sees the canoe. The finish is in sight."

It was an indication of a tiring fish that he made his first circle of the canoe, but

too far out for us to see him. This circling a boat is a remarkable feature, and I think it comes from the habit of a bonefish of pulling broadside. I cautioned R. C. to avoid the sea weed and to lead him a little more, but to be infinitely careful not to apply too much strain. He circled us again, a few yards closer. The third circle he did not gain a foot. Then he was on his fourth lap around the canoe, drawing closer. On his fifth lap clear round us he came near as fifty feet. I could not resist standing up to see. I got a glimpse of him and he looked long. But I did not say anything to R. C. We had both hooked too many big bonefish that got away immediately. This was another affair.

He circled us the sixth time. Six times! Then he came rather close. On this occasion he saw the canoe. He surged and sped out so swiftly that I was simply paralyzed. R. C. yelled something that had a note of admiration, of sheer glory in the spirit of that fish.

"Here's where he leaves us!" I echoed.

But, as luck would have it, he stopped that run short of two hundred yards; and turned broadside to circle slowly back, allowing R. C. to get in line. He swam slower this time, and did not make the heavy tugs. He came easily, weaving to and fro. R. C. got him to within twenty-five feet of the boat, yet still could not see him. It was my job to think quick and sit still with ready hands on the anchor rope. He began to plunge, taking a little line each time. Then suddenly I saw R. C.'s line coming toward us. I knew that would happen.

"Now! Look out! Reel in fast!" I cried, tensely.

As I leaned over to heave up the anchor I saw the bonefish flashing nearer. At that instant of thrilling excitement and suspense I could not trust my eyesight. There he was—swimming heavily—and he looked three feet long—thick and dark and heavy. I got the anchor up just as he passed under the canoe. Maybe I did not revel in pride of my quickness of thought and action!

"Oh! He's gone under the rope!" gasped R. C.

"No!" I yelled sharply. "Let your line run out! Put your tip down! We'll drift over your line."

R. C. was dominated to do so, and presently the canoe drifted over where the line was stretched. That second ticklish moment passed. It had scared me. But I could not refrain from one sally.

"I got the anchor up. What did you think I'd do?"

R. C. passed by my remark. This was serious business for him. He looked quite earnest and pale.

"Say! did you see him?" he ejaculated, looking at me.

"Wish I hadn't," I replied.

We were drifting inshore, which was well, provided we did not drift too hard to suit the bonefish. He swam along, in plain sight, and he seemed so big that I would not have gazed any longer if I could have helped it.

I KEPT the canoe headed in, and we were not long coming to shallow water. Here the bonefish made a final dash for freedom, but it was short and feeble, compared to his first runs. He got about twenty feet away, then sheered, showing his broad, silver side. R. C. wound him in close, and an instant later the bow of the canoe grated on shore.

"Now what?" asked R. C. as I stepped out into the water. "Won't it be risky to lift him into the canoe?"

"Lift nothing! I have this all figured out. Lead him along."

R. C. stepped out upon the beach while I was in the water. The bonefish lay on his side, a blaze of silver. I took hold of the line very gently and led the fish a little closer in. The water was about six inches deep. There were waves beating in—a miniature surf. And I calculated on the receding of a wave. Then with one quick pull I slid our beautiful quarry up on the coral sand. The instant he was out of the water the leader snapped. I was ready for this, too. But at that it was an awful instant! As the wave came back, almost deep enough to float the bonefish, I scooped him up.

"He's ours!" I said, consulting my watch. "Thirty-three minutes! I give you my word that fight was comparable

to ones I've had with a Pacific swordfish."

"Look at him!" R. C. burst out. "Look at him! When the leader broke I thought he was lost. I'm sick yet. Didn't you almost bungle that?"

"Not a chance, R. C.," I replied. "Had that all figured. I never put any strain on your line until the wave went back. Then I slid him out—the leader broke—and I scooped him up."

R. C. stood gazing down at the glistening opal-spotted fish. What a contrast he presented to any other kind of a fish! How many beautiful species have we seen lying on sand or moss or ferns, just come out of the water! But I could remember no other so rare as this bonefish. The exceeding difficulty of the capture of this, our first really large bonefish, had a great deal to do with our admiration and pride.

For the hard work of any achievement is what makes it worth while. But this had nothing to do with the exquisite indescribable beauty of the bonefish. He was long, thick, heavy and round, with speed and power in every line; a sharp white nose and huge black eyes. The body of him was live, quivering silver, molten silver in the sunlight, crossed and barred with blazing stripes. The opal hues came out upon the anal fin, and the broad tail curled up, showing lavender tints on a background of brilliant blue. He weighed eight pounds. Symbolic of the mysterious life and beauty in the ocean! Wonderful and prolific as nature is on land she is infinitely more so in the sea. By the sun and the sea we live; and I shall never tire of seeking and studying the manifold life of the deep.



Photographing the Sawtooths

A HIKE AFTER CLOSE-UPS OF THIS RANGE

HAVING plenty of time to dispose of, and being somewhat awe-stricken by the country, Cherry had led me into and (by good luck and the help of Providence) out again, I expressed a desire to put in a few days among those crags, photographing them. I had some great tales to unravel to skeptical Boise friends, and I wanted a few close-ups of some of that country to bear me out in some of my statements as to its being fittingly named Sawtooths, and other things (that would not pass "The Board of Censorship") by goat hunters in general.

Cherry was my right bower again and seemed very anxious to take the hike with me. We spent a good half day lounging around and getting equipped for our second invasion into the heart of the Sawtooths.

And the next morning found us swing-

ing along over the rolling country, bright and early. We were soon across the outlet of Petit Lake and headed for the ridge between this beautiful body of water and Yellow Belly Lake. This ridge started gradually from the flat prairie-like valley of Salmon River, and made an easy approach to Mount Parks, where this same back bone of nature finally broke out above timber line with a rough granite dome that registered an altitude of 10,200 feet.

We were swinging along the lower stretches of this ridge, where the pines seem to march down in little groups to affiliate with the thinning ranks of sage brush. Cherry was setting the pace, while I trudged along in his wake with my excess baggage of about 30 pounds of camera and picture paraphernalia. Conversation lagged a bit, as it seemed we needed most of our breath to keep a good pace up the ever-increasing grade.

OF a sudden, I was brought to earth from the line of thoughts that will crowd a fellow's mind, when trudging along in this manner, by the clickety click of the action of Cherry's rifle as he jumped ahead a step or two and threw the gun to his shoulder. I was soon be-

By
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side him, loading as I went. A beautiful big buck deer was bounding across the sage brush opening about 75 yards in front of us. He was a magnificent sight, carrying a set of antlers that looked like a rocking chair. In the course of about 20 yards he would be lost in a thicket of lodge pole pine, toward which he raced for all he was worth.

It was Cherry's shot, as he had seen the buck first, so I waited. It seemed a shame to attempt to do harm to such a nimble, glorious creature. How much more graceful and awe-inspiring was this fleet-footed thing, than the deliberate, slow goats of a few days before.

Bang! went Cherry's gun and I forgot all about the buck's grace and beauty. He was still racing for the timber in great bounding leaps, but came down with a crash when I touched off the old .30-30.