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AUGUST, 1926

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ROCKY RIFFLE

on the ROGUE RIVER

Fast water and faster fish, but luck has turned and the author catches them one after another

By ZANE GREY

SYNOPSIS

Zane Grey; his brother, R. C.; Ed and Ken, fishing chauffeurs, and George, the Japanese cook, an enthusiastic fisherman, are camped on the Rogue River for steelhead. Glowing reports of the wonderful fishing preceded them, but they failed miserably in their first efforts to take big trout with a fly. Friends, experts at the fly rod and steelhead game, take beautiful fish before their eyes. And then one morning a crowd of native anglers with long bamboo poles invades Rocky Riffle and yanks fish after fish from its waters. R. C. finally breaks the jinx. Other members of the party catch fish. George Takahashi hooks them, but they promptly go away with his tackle. And still Zane Grey has been unable to take a steelhead with the fly. Then his luck changes. Big, smashing steelheads take his fly viciously. An enormous fish carries him almost half a mile downstream to rough water, where the tackle breaks with the strain.

PART VII

UPON my return to the Rocky Riffle, where I had hooked the big fellow, I found Wiborn had arrived in his car, and was rigging up. Ed appeared on the high rock above, and the other boys had not materially changed positions.

Wiborn waded in below me, and I went back up

him, and as he was fighting it in the pool below, or coming back to begin over, I would hook another. I caught three small fish while he was landing one. I freed fish under five pounds.

Only once did Wiborn and I work close together. It happened when I was wading the middle of the



Zane Grey and the eight-pound trout with which he tied the score

some distance to whip the water over again. From that start, time ceased to exist for me. It sped by like a dream or else it stood still. I was hooked to steelhead almost continuously, it appeared, and whenever I thought to glance at Wiborn he was similarly engaged. Only he raised the big steelhead and I the smaller ones. He would hook a fish and go through with

rifle and he had started in above. I was not aware he had hooked a fish, until suddenly feeling one bumping into my legs I looked up with a start. Wiborn was trying to make his fish run between my legs. Almost he succeeded. Even so, he had fun out of the attempt.

Every time I waded through the riffle I either raised or hooked a steelhead. And when the fish ceased rising, I had caught eight, four of which had been released. At that, my string of trout was about all I could carry. Wiborn had four between six and seven pounds, one of them probably more.

To my great delight, R. C. had quietly stolen a march on me, and had watched me for a long time. We all compared notes. Wiborn said the fishing bore out Burnham's assertion—that it was the finest ever known in the Rogue.

"Once in a lifetime!" was Lone Angler's concluding remark.

"Well, I had hard work getting two," said R. C. "But I can't complain about chances. I had a lot of strikes. My bad luck has begun. . . . My score is now twenty-one."

"Only one behind you, old top," I asserted, with fiendish glee. "Eight today! But oh, if I could just forget those that got away! Why, R. C., a big one, twelve pounds if he weighed an ounce, took me way down round that bend."

But my brother was not sympathetic, or inclined to be thrilled. "You lucky-stab fisherman!" he ejaculated. "Eight steelhead and you've got a kick! One of your fish there will go over seven pounds. . . . And I like a chump lay off this riffle today! Well, I'm still one ahead of you."

THAT evening after supper when I happened to be sitting alone, with my back propped against an oak tree and my gaze riveted on the sunset-gilded peaks, R. C. came to find a seat beside me. "Do you know, I believe up until the last couple of days I've been having a fool's luck," he said, thoughtfully.

"Aha! Then things have been breaking against you lately?" I exclaimed.

R. C.'s expression grew illuminating. A half-amused, self-pitying and wholly realizing smile crossed his tanned face. He made an eloquent little gesture with both hands, and the silence that accompanied it added singular emphasis.

It was no time for me to howl with glee. He was too serious, too frankly humble for me to feel anything but understanding and sympathy. I divined at once that some tragical, thrilling, unforgettable fishing mishaps had followed hard upon his remarkable good luck. I longed to hear them, but he did not become more explicit.

"The strange thing to me is that it took us three years to get on to the wonderful nature of this steelhead game, and to learn it," he went on, meditatively.

"That's occurred to me often," I replied. "But it's easier than bonefishing, which you remember took us longer to master."

"How do you think it compares with the sport of bonefishing?" he queried.

Rocky Riffle on the Rogue River

"It's totally different, and I'm bound to say infinitely higher class. I doubt if there can be any finer sport than this fly-fishing for steelhead. We'll know for sure when we tackle the Atlantic salmon game. That has the prestige. The salmon is the aristocrat of fishes. It will be a most fascinating opportunity for comparisons, and I think we should not attempt to judge until we have caught Eastern salmon on a fly."

"Well, I'm afraid I must place this steelhead sport above that of bonefishing, which I thought would always be my favorite. And I'm wondering why."

"I'll tell you. Bonefishing is a game of hard salt-water, of the glaring coral shoals, open to sun and wind. It is grand sport when once you learn to catch those silver bullets. But we were not born and bred on the sea. We have no salt in our blood. As boys we hunted the swift, shady, babbling brooks. We loved clear, limpid, sweet water. This Rogue River magnifies the favorite places and fish of our boyhood. This river is indeed magnificent. Think. It is icy water, crystal clear. It runs between high mountain slopes of Oregon forests. And it is full of beautiful, savage, unconquerable fish."

"I'D be perfect if we could find riffles on it that were unfrequented by strings of city anglers and crowds of native fishermen—now wouldn't it?" he concluded, with an air of finality.

"I cannot conceive a more perfect river. And I believe those lonely places can be found. There's a hundred-mile stretch of the Rogue that runs down through the mountains to the sea. Only by horse and trail, or by boat, can that stretch be fished. So far as I know it has never been fished. And the prospect begins to loom up to me."

"Let's go," said R. C., his eyes lighting.

So right there under the oak tree we planned another wild trip to add to the list. How fascinating such anticipation! The world is wide and full of lonely, beautiful, unexplored places. And the only bitter drop in the cup of adventurous dreams is the sad reality that life is short—that even such a lucky man as myself can see only a few of the wild rivers of the earth, the untrodden desert wastes, the grand isolated mountain heights, and the vast uncharted areas of the sea.

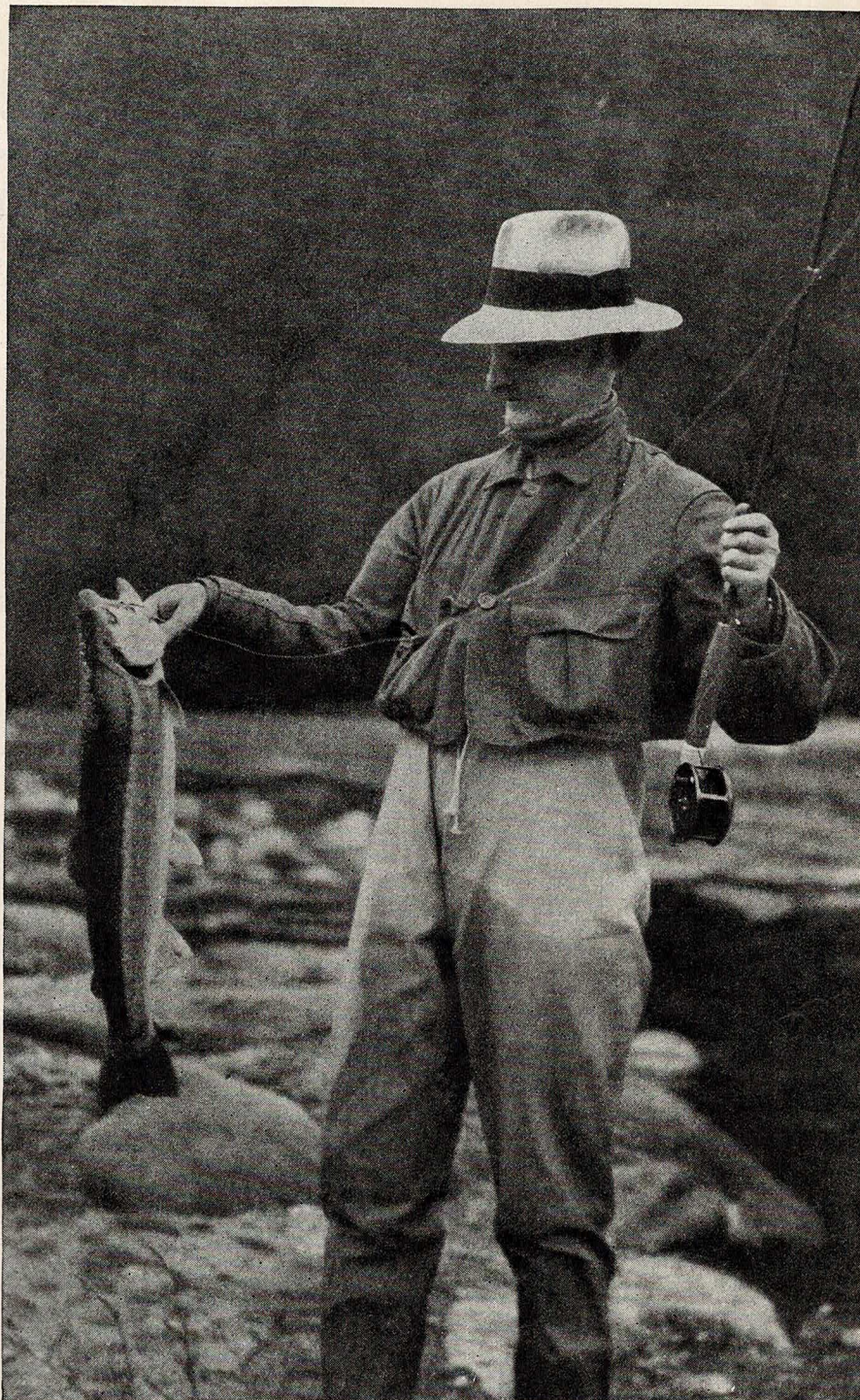
Next day, which was to be our last of fishing, we were all astir early, before the sun tipped the eastern rampart. The morning was clear, without the hanging veil of mist, and fleecy clouds moved out of the west.

Rocky Riffle disappointed us that day. Half a dozen fishermen were there ahead of us, and the steelhead were not rising well. A native fisherman with a long bamboo pole had desecrated Ken's hole to his grief and disgust. We fished and idled, fished and rested, hoping the crowd would take their flivvers and sedans and go home. But they fished relentlessly and persistently.

So early in the afternoon we trudged back to camp. We rested, packed a little, and then had supper. During these leisurely hours I took occasion to walk down to the bank several times to see if any fishermen were whipping the river. As luck would have it, I did not espy one. Wherefore I got into my waders. When I left my tent, I was not surprised to see R. C. in his angling regalia.

"I read your mind all right," he said, with a laugh.

"We'll raise a steelhead or two," I replied.



R. C. and his record steelhead that weighed 9 pounds plus

When we emerged from the woods on the bank of the river, I was singularly struck with the beauty of the time and place. Our side of the river lay in purple shadow pierced by golden shafts of sunlight. The bluff across caught the last brightness of the setting sun, and beyond the black slopes of timber climbed to a deep blue sky where huge white and gold clouds sailed. The glancing, dark river gleamed like a moving mirror, reflecting the fringed slopes and the white sails in the sky. There was promise of unusual color in the clouds.

R. C. paused a moment to take in the growing beauty, and then he said: "If we happen to raise a couple of fish this evening, it will put us on the bum for keeps."

This remark did not appear to be an

elegant one, yet I had to admit its utter felicity. We went down the sandy bank and waded diagonally across to the wide gravel bar. When we reached a point opposite R. C.'s favorite water, we stopped, and I sat down on a rock and laid my rod across my knees. He was looking down upon me.

"TAKE a crack at that place, won't you?" he asked.

"No. I'll enjoy more seeing you raise one," I replied.

"I haven't fished it for two days. And I've never failed to get a strike there. Let's see. I've caught five there, hooked three that got away, and raised some I missed. It's the greatest place on this river."

(Continued on page 79)

watch your step every minute or else some part of your tackle will go, for the fish that are caught around these Virginian shores average forty pounds each and ninety percent of them are choke full of fight.

When you get him near the boat, have a care. If he goes under the boat to the other side, dip your rod under the stern deep enough so that the line will clear the propellor and rudder. Channel bass are great for doing this stunt.

When his struggles get feeble, draw him up to the boat carefully and get the boatman to sink the gaff underneath the fish up near his head. The scales on his back are tough and hard to penetrate with the heaviest halibut gaff.

In surf fishing pick out the same kind of a spot as you would for stripers, only rocks and jetties are not necessary. Fish the incoming tide. It is the opinion of a great many anglers who have caught many channel bass, both from the surf and from a boat, that he gives a far better account of himself caught from a boat than from the surf. The reason is that when you get him close to shore in the surf his gills become sanded and he soon gives up, whereas from a boat this does not occur.

In this article I claim no infallibility. But I do claim that because I love this game of fishing so much, I have done my best to set down here information that will make others enjoy it.

ROCKY RIFFLE ON THE ROGUE RIVER

(Continued from page 31)

And we fell to arguing as to who should fish it this last evening. Finally I had to refuse positively and remind him of the passing time. At that he waded in.

The river was wide here, swift and smooth, quickening its current for the incline below. The water was flecked by spots of sunlight. The sharp-toothed ledge of rock gleamed like bronze under the water, and the deep dark channels opened alluring mouths to the current.

R. C. waded out until he was up to his waist, and perhaps fifty feet above the tempting break in the level surface. He made several casts before he got his fly in line with the desired channel. Then he let it float down. I could see his leader shine.

He was elevating his rod, preparatory to making another cast, when it was bent double and pulled down straight. His reel screeched. Then a big steelhead came out so fast and so high that we both yelled. I got up and ran into the water. Where was my camera? He leaped again, prodigiously, shooting up out of the first broken water, and this time in the sunlight. He shone black and white. I had seen bigger steelhead, but not one such a jumper.

"Pile out and chase him," I yelled to R. C. "He's going through."

"I'll say he is," shouted my brother, surging toward shore. "Oh! look at him jump!"

Indeed I was looking. In fact I was spellbound. My delight at his marvelous exhibition was embittered by the thought of my neglect in not bringing my camera. Four times more the steelhead sprang convulsively into the air, the last two leaps being out of the white water of the rapids. He had taken a hundred yards of line while executing those pyrotechnics. But R. C. had a large reel and a long line.

(Continued on page 96)

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ROCKY RIFFLE ON THE ROGUE RIVER

(Continued from page 79)

He ran along the shore and I kept pace with him.

The steelhead went over both the falls before R. C. could wind back a yard of line. Below the rapids the river swept to the right, and presently opened out wide, with a deep cove running into the gravel bar. Here R. C. had it out with the fish. He made five more leaps before he yielded to the rod. Then R. C. drew him into shallow water where the bottom was clean sand.

The steelhead began that peculiar twisting, gyrating work which nine times out of ten tears out the hook. R. C. seemed divided by anxiety and caution. I was afraid to make a suggestion, for I saw the fish was far larger than any R. C. had landed.

"Waded in behind him," called R. C. sharply to me. "I'll try to beach him. If he breaks off, pitch him out."

That looked to me a very wise move, and I quickly waded to a point outside the fish. Not until R. C. had dragged him on his side in a few inches of water did I appreciate the size of that steelhead. He was so big that R. C. could scarcely budge him. Suddenly the hook tore out. I sprang to scoop the fish up on the bar. But it was not necessary. He only gaped with wide jaws and curled up his broad tail.

"Ten pounds!" I yelled, with wild enthusiasm, and picking up the steelhead I carried him to a safe distance up the bank. There R. C. weighed him on the little scales. An ounce or so over nine pounds! R. C. was too elated to talk. Not for long years had I seen his face alight like it was then. Not even when he landed his 400-pound broadbill swordfish or his 638-pound tuna had he looked so happy.

The steelhead lay flat on the gravel. I stared, longing for the art of the painter so as to perpetuate the exquisite hues and contours of that fish. All trout are beautiful. But this one of this sea species seemed more than beautiful. He gaped, he quivered. What a long, broad shape of muscle! He was all muscle. He looked exactly what he was, a fish-spirit incarnate, fresh run from the sea, with opal and pearl hues of such delicate loveliness that no pen or brush could portray them. He brought the sea with him and had taken on the beauty of the river. He had a wild, savage head, game as that of an eagle, jaws of a wolf, eyes of black jewel, full of mystic fire.

"WELL!" breathed R. C. at last. "That'll be about all for me. . . . I've a notion to let this fish go. I hate to kill him."

R. C. dispatched him finally, and then accompanied me back up to the head of the rapids. There, while he watched, I had my first try at his favorite water. On my second cast I turned a fish over, saw him flash gold and leave a swirl. That was the best I could do there; so we reluctantly moved down.

I fished through the upper rapids with no better luck. Next came the heavy white water, roaring and tumbling, and that led into wide reach where the current slowed to slide over a beveled ledge into the last pool. Here, between two currents, was a dark, swirling spot with a sunken rock in the center. It was a beautiful nook for a steelhead to lurk, and many a time I had tried to raise one there.

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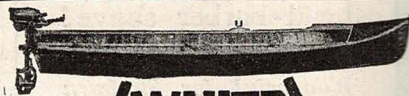
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I had to wade far out and cast my hardest to reach the desired water. I covered it from every angle, and finally abandoned hope. But R. C. was watching, and I was casting wonderfully for me; so I thought vainly to try one more cast, right in the center of that dark water, close to the rock. And I did.

The feathered fly fell and floated. A lazy, golden shadow soared out of the depths, turned pink and white, and appropriated my fly. I hooked a fine steelhead. He ran up-current into the deep water of the rapid, and sulked there. I pulled on him. When he turned, he came down with a rush, made a tumbling leap and dashed on over the last fall. In the pool below, where R. C. had landed his, I finally beached a plump, rosy five-pounder.

"Still one behind me," jibed R. C. smiling.

WE started to walk below to the next riffle, and it seemed then we were stopped and waylaid by the gorgeous color effects of river, cloud and sky. The sun had set behind the mountain, yet it still shone on the clouds. They had turned deep rose and intense gold. The valley seemed full of a supernatural light, a glory too great for land or sea. Purple shadow invested the steep forest slope to the west, and opposite the mountain climbed out of shade into the warm, rich hues of the afterglow.

The river, however, took on the most transcendent beauty. It was a living medium of color, a moving ribbon of rose with rocks of gold, reflecting the slopes and clouds and sky. Every second the transfiguration went on, and not until we reached the head of the riffle did the vividness begin to pale.

Wading in at the head of this rose-flushed riffle, I began to cast, and worked down rather fast, till I came to the swift, ruffled water at the foot. Here was another fine place, where R. C. had taken several good fish and I had lost some. The water rippled out of the shallow rapids, gradually deepening.

I had not waded a dozen steps, nor made half so many casts, when something heavy and slow took my fly. I struck, and came up hard against a strong fish. He did not make even a swirl and ran off deep. I hurriedly waded to shore, where with R. C. beside me I watched a run that gathered proportions and at last beat any other I had experienced. R. C. and I looked for a leap, but none came.

"Reckon you'll have to run after that bird," advised R. C.

So I ran a hundred paces down the rocky shore, getting back a proportionate amount of line. Here I tried to hold the steelhead. The strain angered him and he took another long, hard, deep run. I had to follow. Again I wound back half my line. Only to lose it again! Plunging, jumping, slipping, running where I could, I caught up with this stubborn fish the third time.

R. C. advised great caution. He thought I had hooked a salmon or a very heavy steelhead. The uncertainty was most exciting. And the work of running, holding up my rod, and winding the reel began to tire me. Two more hundred-yard dashes this fish gave me, which brought me to deep water along the shore and impassable brush out on the bank.

"You can't go any farther," said R. C. "Get out on the point of ledge and hand it to him."

My fish, feeling the hard strain again, started off on his determined downstream course. I let him go, but gradually tight-



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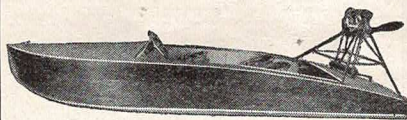
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ened my hold of the line as it slipped through my left hand. I had to hold him or lose him. How he fought! He never ceased tugging until he had most of my line out.

Then began the slow work of drawing him back foot by foot. It took so long that dusk had fallen by the time we got our first glimpse of his color. He bored deep under the ledge and gave ground but slowly. The time came when he rose to the surface, and I saw clearly a bigger steelhead than I had landed. The luck of it! I felt sure of him. I had no torturing doubts or fears. And I gave him the strain of the rod until he was beaten. When I slid him into a little cove, R. C. took him by the gills and lifted him up.

"H'E'S a peach," averred my brother, putting the fish on the little scales while I stood by, panting and glowing and wet with sweat. "Eight pounds! I thought he'd go more. . . . Well, darn if you didn't tie me! What do you know about that? I'm glad. It's something never to forget. After all my good luck and all your bad, we split even—twenty-two steelhead each!"

We walked back in the dusk, with the last pale rose fading out of the sky. The river glanced darkly, swiftly flowing by. From above came the murmuring melody of the falls, and through the black wall of trees glinted a bright speck of camp fire. Lastly we had the thrill and excitement of fording the Rogue at night, marking our course by the sound of the rapids and current and depth and the black mountain peak with its crown of white stars.

In due time our hunting trip ended and we reached Altadena. What was my amaze to find a letter from Burnham awaiting me. Among other things he said: "A week after you left I raised thirty-two steelhead. Another fresh run! They were bigger and faster. Nine of those I hooked cleaned me out."

Nine! . . . Burnham meant nine steelhead had run off, breaking line or leader. Bigger and faster fish!

Exclamations or thoughts were futile to relieve me. I had to rush to tell the news to those who had shared my wonderful days on the Rogue. Somehow I instinctively felt that they would answer to this stunning information with sanity and reason. So I collected them and read Burnham's letter. Then I stared, awaiting their verdicts.

The cool, practical, ironical Ken did not seem in the least staggered. "Why, there's nothing extraordinary about that," he said. "Not in the Rogue River!"

"Bingo!" burst out Ed. Takahashi's brown visage wreathed in the pleasant grin. "My gracious! We awful lucky to come way."

My brother sagged in his chair. Like me he had been struck deep. He saw pictures of the past, and visions of the future. "Fresh run of steelhead! . . . Bigger and faster!" he whispered, weakly. "Goodnight!"

THE END

WHEN A PIKE IS A MUSKA- LONGE

(Continued from page 23)

muskies come few and far between, though I have caught many of a foot length on the fly-rod, spinner-and-fly combination having been used. However, the small musky is far less apt to strike a lure than the small pickerel or pike.

Mr. Calvert, who won a FIELD AND STREAM prize for a large musky caught in the Lake of the Woods region, tells me that he can obtain hundreds of muskies



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