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THREE YEARS

The Country Gentleman

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"'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse" PAINTED

W. M. Jardine—Hubert Work—Jeffery Farnol—Zane C



THE WHITE FRIARS, HUGE ROCKS ON THE WEST COAST OF MEXICO. THE SKY IS DOTTED WITH WHEELING WILD FOWL

Rooster Fish and Leaping Whales

By ZANE GREY

A SWORDFISH IN MIDAIR. AT BOTTOM—SEVERAL KINDS OF WHALES WERE SEEN

AN OUTBURST of laughter on the lower deck led me to investigate.

Romer and George Takahashi appeared to be the center of mirth, and as my son looked the personification of fiendish glee, and on the moment beyond questioning, I turned to George:

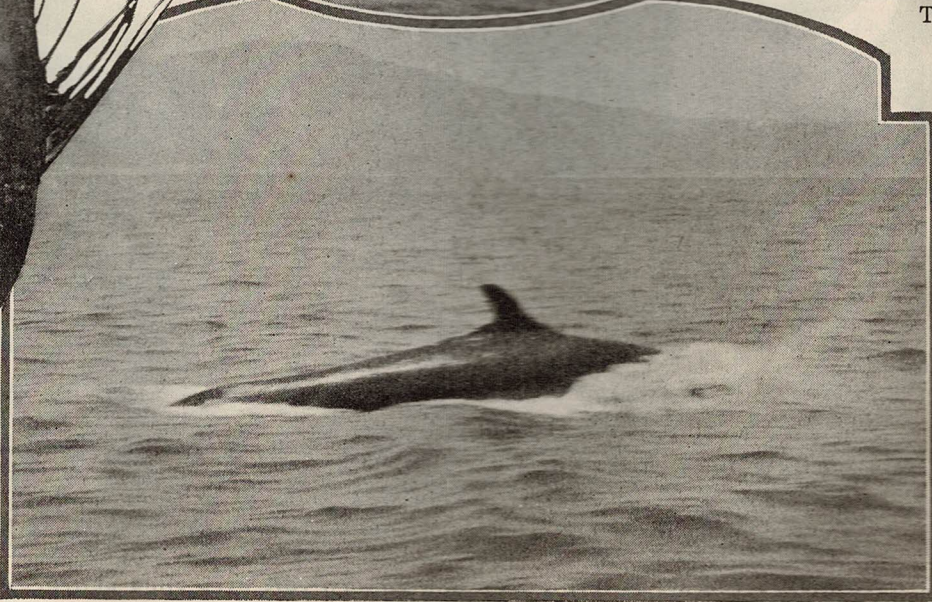
"What has he done now?"

"He think he play awful trick on me," replied the Japanese, with his broad grin.

"Tell me about it."

"Romer he want make bet," said George. "He say if I bend back with ten-cent piece on my forehead and funnel in the front of my pants I couldn't drop the ten cents right down in funnel. I no bet but I say I try anyhow. So I bend way back. Romer put ten-cent piece over my eyes and yell: 'Get ready!' I say 'all right.' When I just about to duck ten-cent piece off, Romer pour whole pitcher water down funnel into my pants.

GALLO, OR ROOSTER FISH, THE MOST PUGNACIOUS AND SPORTING FISH OF THE PACIFIC IT GROWS TO SIX FEET IN LENGTH, 100 POUNDS IN WEIGHT



Scare me! But I no mind. Everybody holler awful loud. Romer like go crazy. They all think big joke, funny trick on me. But they wrong. I keep ten cents. And I say I do that trick all day for ten cents every time."

Everything is relative. It is the way you look at it. Takahashi was shrewd, philosophical and thrifty. He was not without a keen sense of humor and I often noted how he lent himself to any comic situation though it were at his own expense. I was bound to confess that I thought he had the better of the boy's trick.

But Romer had as much fun out of that as he had the time he contrived to fasten a bucket on Jess Smith's fishing line, and make Jess think he had hooked an enormous fish. How mightily Jess had heaved on that submerged bucket! And to land a bucket on a fishing line from a moving boat is no slight task. When Jess' loggy fish came up and Jess saw it and stared, Romer's cup had indeed been full. And it was so in the trick he played on Takahashi.

A day's fishing, too, depends entirely on how you look at it. A fishing trip, long or short, is what a man makes of it. What you get out of life itself is what you give!

We had three kittens on board the Fisherman. Two of these, Maltie and Nig, had been taken on board at Lunenburg, and the third, a tiny nondescript little cat that I called Checkers, had found a berth with us at Balboa. I asked a native to fetch me a pet—a monkey, tiger cat, iguana, parrot, anything; and next morning he appeared with a tiny, ragged, scrawny, starved kitten which I was so sorry for that I paid the enormous price demanded.

Not for several weeks did I give any particular attention to them, though I often saw them playing about the deck in coils of rope. They had all grown furry, plump and pretty, and divided their time between eating, playing and fighting. Nig's marked habit was to take possession of any fish, immediately it was brought aboard.

Bob King, being a Florida boatman keen on sailfish, took great pains to cut bait and keep the strips with jealous care. I happened to



THE BEACH AT ZIHUATANEJO, A VILLAGE ON THE LOWER COAST OF MEXICO, WHERE CORTEZ LANDED TO CAPTURE SLAVES. MANY OF THE INDIAN CHILDREN ARE WHITE-SKINNED

approach him while he was thus engaged; and it appeared that Nig had been stealing his cut bait. Perhaps Bob petted Nig more than any other of the men, but on this occasion he was engaged otherwise:

"You little black son-of-a-gun!" he was saying severely. "Stealin' my cut bait! Thinkin' I was cuttin' these heah baits for you! Wal, darn your black hide, if I ketch you at it again I'll use you for a broadbill swordfish bait. You didn't know little cats made good baits for swordfish, did you?"

"Wal, sir, that's how the Mexicans ketch swordfish. They tie the hook to a cat's tail and float him on a board in front of a swordfish, then pull him off. The cat begins to swim and attracts the swordfish. He waltzes up and swallows the cat, hook an' all. That'll shore be comin' to you, Nig, if you steal any more of my cut bait."

Outwitting a Huge Amberjack

WE HIRED a couple of pearl fishermen to accompany us, one on each boat, to the waters most frequented by swordfish. But we were not rewarded by even sight of a fin.

Whereupon we ran across the channel to the reefs and ledges off Pedro Gonzales.

Captain Mitchell, using a number 6 Wilson spoon, which was the most effective lure here, hooked a red snapper; and presently when he was drawing it close to the boat I espied a long yellow big-bodied fish coming with it. I thought it was a shark and told the Captain to hurry on his snapper. There was no question about the intention of this big yellow fish. It meant to devour the red snapper, and as I reached over to grasp the leader and haul hard it swooped up into plain view, giving me a shock and a thrill in one.

It was an amberjack, and twice as large as any I had ever seen before.

As I drew up the Captain's snapper this amberjack came to the surface, and I certainly yelled. One hundred and fifty pounds seemed a conservative estimate of its weight. It had a tail over a foot broad, and eyes as large as tea cups. A cavernous mouth gaped to take in the snapper, which I pulled away from the amberjack. Then whirling away, showing a broad amber side bright as a shield, it went down head first.

Captain Mitchell's luck at getting

BEYOND THE BEACH WERE PRIMITIVE TROPIC HABITATIONS



strikes again manifested itself. I was standing when a fish hit his spoon. The swirl and smash were proof of a game fish, but I was not able to say that it was an amberjack. After the first few runs, however, and subsequent jerkings on the rod, I assured Captain Mitchell he had a jack.

A Big One

"FEELS like a whale," replied the Captain.

We worked the fish away from the rock, out into the deep water, and there after (Continued on Page 121)

ROMER GREY WITH RECORD ROCK BASS, 66 POUNDS, CAUGHT AT CAPE SAN LUCAS



Rooster Fish and Leaping Whales

(Continued from Page 21)

half an hour of hard work Mitchell brought it to gaff. It was a magnificent specimen of amberjack, weighing eighty-two and a half pounds. The largest I ever caught at Long Key was sixty-nine pounds; the largest I ever saw was eighty-four, and the largest I ever heard of being taken was ninety-three.

The day following we started on our long 1700-mile sail to our next harbor, Zihuatanejo, State of Guerrero, Mexico.

We had a fine breeze out of Panama Bay, and passed by many beautiful tropic islands in green review.

As we sailed north day after day, through the mild summer nights, moonlit and lonely, the temperature gradually cooled. And what was most welcome was the increasing signs of fish life on the sea.

On March eleventh I looked so intensely and steadily, with such thrilling excitement, that toward sunset my eyes pained and blurred.

It was a wonderful day on the ocean. Along slow swell and a gently rippling sea came from the west. The Fisherman sailed along about five miles offshore from the wild and magnificent Sierra Madre Mountains of Mexico.

Before breakfast next morning we sighted seventeen sailfish, which leaped from several to ten times. We were all jubilant.

About noon several whales appeared straight ahead about a mile. They plowed through the sea, puffed and sounded with wide-forked flukes high in the air.

As we sailed on they came up off the port bow, nearly as far away. We watched them sound again. Then, suddenly, with a paralyzing unexpectedness, a majestic and stupendous black whale propelled itself high into the air, poised a few seconds, or seemed to, and then fell back with a crash we plainly heard.

Greatest of Living Beasts

A HUGE black blunt head stuck up and heaved higher and higher, until two-thirds of the whale was in the air. I snapped my camera. He soured back, making a high wave. Another came out a little way, then slid under.

These were sperm whales. The enormous heads, fully one-third of the entire length, and the blunt noses were sufficient evidence of this species. I could scarcely believe in my good fortune—that I had actually seen with my own eyes the leaping of the strangest and most terrible creature of the sea; indeed, the largest and fiercest of all living beasts.

For a whale is a mammal, and sperm whales, or cachalots, have been recorded by naturalists and whalers to have sunk many ships and crushed many small boats in their massive jaws. Ever since I had read Melville's wonderful story about the White Whale I had longed to see a sperm.

About ten o'clock the next morning, in a smooth dark glancing sea, we encountered another and larger school of sperm whales. When first sighted four of this school were spouting a mile off our port bow. I signaled the sailor at the wheel to throw the ship over a point or two.

I was searching the rippled water with a glass when wondering and awestruck shouts thrilled me. Looking up quickly I saw the descent of a magnificent green and white geyser, and its smoothing out into a patch of foam. Next my ears were assailed by a sodden crash. I saw a wave move ahead of the white spot.

An Amazing Spectacle

I LEVELED my glass at the bulging wave. As I found it, the sea opened to let out a black snout, glistening and huge. Slowly it rose. It was followed by a vast bulk, black, shiny, dripping waterfalls from its sides. Then it pitched down and forward, to spread a furrow like that made when a ship is launched.

At this instant another whale shot up, much quicker, right in the rear, and the two of them showed more out of the water

than in—an unparalleled sight in all my sea roving. They went down into the maelstrom they created, only to lunge into the air again, rising above the horizon, wreathed in white spray, monstrous beasts that seemed incredible. Again—again—again! Nine leaps in all, the first being wholly out of the water, and the succeeding ones plunges and lunges, with half and two-thirds of the whales above the sea!

It took almost two weeks for the Fisherman to

reach Zihuatanejo Bay. We had to lay to outside all night, as it was impossible to see the narrow entrance to the bay.

When daylight came we found the entrance to the bay.

The officer of the port came out to us in a canoe hollowed out of a tree, and with the Mexican flag tied to one of the paddles. After the formalities were over we went ashore in one of our launches, and when I stepped out on that wide white strand I thought it no less than the beach of an island of the Marquesans.

A low wide slope of sand stretching in a curve led up to a line of tropic habitations. Several huge glossy-green tentlike trees made great spaces of shade on the sand, under which children were playing, women were cooking, men were hewing boats out of logs. The children were beautiful, white skinned, with great dark Spanish eyes. I waded through the deep sand of the one street and enjoyed the most picturesque scene it had ever been my privilege to see. Dogs, parrots, deer, pigs shared the shade with the children.

Next morning we were up before daylight and out on the ocean before sunrise.

I watched Romer hook and fight a silverfish near the shore. It leaped high and often. I could see that he was having a hard time of it, but he got the fish, and when he returned was wild with excitement about a new kind of fish, and a terrific fighter. We classified the fish as a gallo, or rooster fish. It was indigo blue on the back, silver underneath, very admirably shaped, with long strong body, forked tail and big head. The dorsal fin somewhat resembled the comb of a rooster, at least enough to give it that name.

On the way up to the White Friars next day we sighted a broadbill swordfish, and

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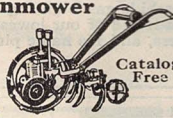
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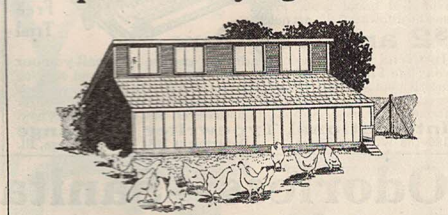
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tried to pass him a bait, but did not make a good job of it, and before we could circle him again he went down.

The White Friars were a group of rocks large and small rising sheer out of the sea, and remarkable for their striking shape and white color. At long distance the larger rocks somewhat resembled monks kneeling at prayer, hence the felicitous name.

The closer we got to them the more imposing they grew, until the main rocks, great rock islands, loomed up in stately grandeur, like marble monuments out of the green sea.

The sky was dotted with wheeling wild fowl, and I soon made out that the rocks were literally covered with birds, mostly boobies.

We discharged a rifle. And at once a dense black cloud of birds rose, darkening the sun, giving rise to a loud strange roar of flapping wings, and a strong wind that we actually felt pass over us. Thick as a cloud of locusts!

The Sea A-Swarm With Fish

WE MADE another discovery under the White Friars. The sea was as full of fish as the air of birds! Monster Gallo and enormous red snapper, six-foot yellowtail, and a horde of the other fish—that voracious biter and hard fighter, the crevallé. Our stay at Zihuatanejo had not reached ten days when we had bought all the parrots and parakeets the natives could muster.

Romer had nine parakeets, one of which was so tame it perched on his hand and climbed all over him. Johnny had four. The collection of the Smiths was innumerable. George Takahashi's list included three yellowhead parrots, splendid talkers—in Spanish, of course. The crew also had invested in parakeets.

My especial prize was a huge macaw—guacamallo, the natives called it—for which I had paid twenty pesos. This bird was a beauty to look at, but dangerous to handle. He had a cunning eye and an enormous bill. His color was a glossy green, with tail feathers of blue and maroon. He had a topknot of red.

The wonderful fishing weather continued, one day like that preceding, cool and dark in the morning, with rosy sunrise over an opal sea, gradually brightening to a hot cloudless noon. With the afternoon came the westerly wind and ruffled water. Nineteen straight days of such weather began to spoil us.

We were scudding over the blue sea, mile after mile, dragging our teasers and baits. After several hours I stood up in the cockpit to ease my cramped legs.

A Huge Marlin Gives Battle

THE sea was blue, rippling with slow swell. I heard a solid splash and looked down to note that some kind of fish had smashed at the teaser. While I reeled in my bait I called Sid to pull in the teaser. He did so, until it was not more than two feet from the stern, right in the boil of water from the propellers. I saw a flash. Then the teaser disappeared. I reeled my bait in until the swivel on the leader was up to the tip of my rod.

Suddenly it was taken by a powerful fish, almost without a splash. I let the line play out, then set the drag, and struck. I came up on a tremendous weight.

The fish broke water with a roar, and I was almost paralyzed by sight of an enormous Marlin swordfish, the largest by far that I had ever seen.

It leaped four times and took line so swiftly I ordered Sid to speed up with both engines. The other boat followed us.

The Marlin shot out like the ricochet of a cannon ball over the water. He hit on his side and skittered with terrific speed across the sea, parallel with our boat and about a hundred feet distant. His back was turned toward us, and I saw his immense girth, fully as large in the middle

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as a barrel. His length must have exceeded twelve feet.

Right there I estimated his weight, too, and was positive it reached 600 pounds. He went clear round us, in the air all the time, beating the water with his tail. The sound was amazing. When he went down it was in front of our bow and the bag of my line extended far astern.

When he sounded for good and the fight began I realized that I had hooked the most wonderful Marlin I had ever seen on a light tackle—medium rod and twelve-thread line. It made me sick. It was a terrible catastrophe. There was no hope to defeat such a monster on that rig.

A Golden Opportunity Lost

NEVERTHELESS, I settled down to the hardest battle I ever had on light tackle. I fought incessantly for over four hours, during which the fish took us miles out to sea, and never showed again.

Then I found that I could get the double line over the reel. It was staggering. I did it again and again. Thus hope to capture that magnificent fish was born in my breast. Most of the time we had to chase the fish. But gradually he tired. After four hours and a quarter he stayed close. We saw him often. When I got the double line over the reel and held on for all it would stand we could see him—a huge purple fish shape, appalling to the gaze.

Then I got the leader up to where Heisler could grasp it. He pulled. Slowly the great Marlin sheered away and upward, coming to the surface, rolling out, his black back, his barred sides and wonderful purple fins bright in the sunlight.

I recognized the chance and yelled for Heisler to haul the fish closer. But Sid, in his excitement, countermanded my order. Heisler hesitated for the several seconds when the fish rolled there. We had time to get him close and gaff him. But the golden opportunity was lost. The fish sounded.

A dozen times after that I got the leader to Heisler and then to Sid. But neither could hold the fish.

Finally I strained every last ounce of muscle I had for the last time to get the leader up to Heisler's eager hands. Then the double line broke.

Whereupon I fell down in the cockpit and lay there, utterly prostrated.

It was a long two hours' run back to the bay. For once the blue sea and the grand mountains had no charms for me. I could not get over the horrible exasperating inevitable nature of that catastrophe.

The Thrill of the Explorer

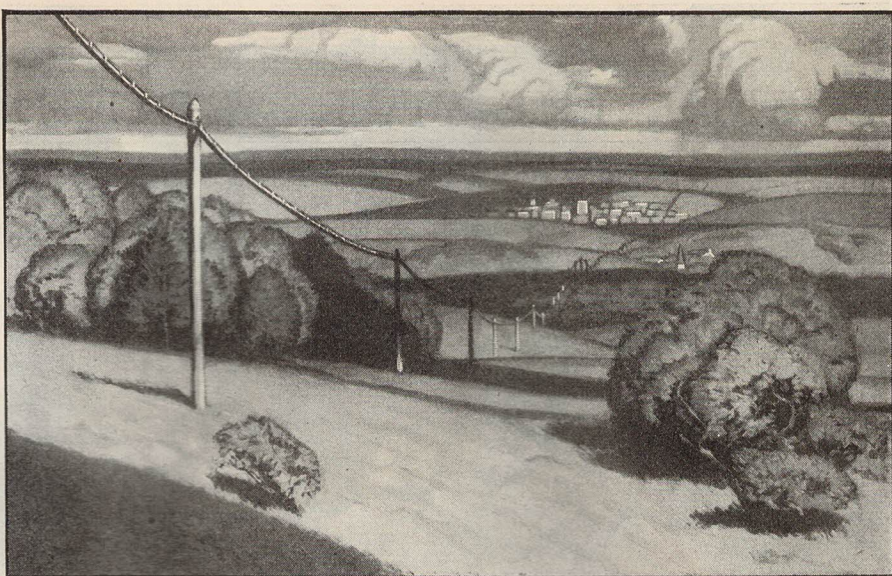
WE LET that end our fishing at Zihuatanejo. Not easy indeed was it to quit!

It was sunset, and an unusually colorful one, when we passed out of Zihuatanejo Bay, rising to the great slow heaving swells that ridged the shimmering water. I gazed back with strange emotion at the line of white beach, and brown thatched-roofed huts, and the green coconut palms.

I felt the thrill and pride of the explorer, the discoverer of an enchanted land. How blue and grand gloomed the Pacific, darkening after sunset! What splendid vista of foothill, valley and mountain, and wavering line of dim peaks! Here was a primal untouched world; and Zihuatanejo was practically as wild, lonely and self-sufficient as when Cortés sailed there in his Spanish galleons to capture slaves.

Right then I knew I would return. And that recalled the giant Marlin swordfish I had so nearly captured. The long painful fight recurred in memory. Perhaps that poignant memory and the crystallizing sense of loss were necessary to me. Such things always happen! They make for an angler's full experience, for the lessons of defeat so hard to learn, for the appreciation of life in Nature from which comes the soul of man.

(TO BE CONCLUDED IN JANUARY)



Safeguarding the lanes of speech

The New York-Chicago telephone cable has been completed and is now in service. A triumph of American telephone engineering, the new cable is the result of years of research and cost \$25,000,000 to construct. Its first reach extended along the Atlantic seaboard, then steadily westward until this last long section to Chicago was put into service.

To the public, this cable means dependable service irrespective of weather conditions. It is now not likely that sleet storms, which at times interfere with the open wire type of construction with 40 to 50 wires on a pole, will again cut off the rest of the nation from New York or from the nation's capital as did the heavy sleet storm on the day of President Taft's inauguration.

The new cable means speedier service, as it provides numerous additional telephone circuits and will carry a multitude of telephone and telegraph messages. It would take ten lines of poles, each heavily loaded with wires, to carry the circuits contained in this most modern artery of speech.

This cable, important as it is, is only one of the Bell System projects that make up its national program for better telephone service to the subscriber. It is another illustration of the System's intention to provide the public with speedier and even more dependable service.

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