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In Turquoise Seas

By

Van Campen Heilner

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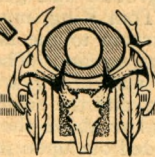
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EDITORIAL



Light Tackle

THE use of light tackle by experts for big game fish of the sea has come to be an established practice in American angling. A few years ago when sport with light tackle was exceptional, it required courage to flaunt its use in the faces of fishermen of experience and established reputation. Now the most noted fishing resorts on the Atlantic coast from Maine to Florida were, not many years back, places for hand-lines, and huge rods and tackle, and boatloads of fish for one man. Gentleman anglers have taken up the sport, and sportsmen's clubs claim such experts and fine exponents of angling as Heilner, Lester, Cassard, Crowninshield, Conill, the Schutts, and others, who can safely be trusted to advance the standard. Fishermen are like sheep: they follow the boldest leaders. And no one wants to be despised by the elect. Florida with its isolation, yet easy accession, its beauty and charm, its loneliness and quiet, its big game fish, will become the Mecca of high-class light-tackle anglers, who will in time answer for the ethics and sportsmanship of the Atlantic Seaboard.

ON the Pacific side the light tackle advocates have had a different row to hoe. With nothing but keen, fair, honest and splendid zealousness, Mr. James Jump has pioneered this sport almost single-handed against the heavy tackle record-holder who until recently dominated the Tuna Club and the boatmen, and the fishing at Avalon. To my shame and regret I confess that it took me three years to recognize Jump's bigness as an angler, and his tenacity as a fighter. But I shall make amends. It seems when I fished I was steeped in dreams of the sea and the beauty of the lonely islands. I am not in Jump's class as a fisherman, nor in Lone Angler's either. They stand by themselves. But I can write about them, and so inspire others.

JUMP set out to catch swordfish on light tackle, and incidentally tuna under one hundred pounds. He was ridiculed, scorned, scoffed at, made a butt of this particular heavy tackle clique, and cordially hated for his ambitions. Most anglers and boatmen repudiated his claims, and looked askance at him. Personally, I believed Jump might catch some swordfish or tuna on light tackle, but only one out of many, and that one not the fighting kind. I was wrong. It was Lone Angler who first drew my attention to Jump's achievements and possibilities. President Coxe was alive to them also, and he has rebuilt and rejuvenated the Tuna Club on the splendid standard set by its founder, Dr. Charles Frederick Holder; and with infinite patience and tact and labor, and love of fine angling and good fellowship, he has put down that small but mighty clique who threatened the ruin of sport at fair Catalina. This has not been public news, but it ought to be and shall be public news.

THE malignant attack recently made upon Mr. Jump's catches of Marlin swordfish on light tackle was uncalled for and utterly false. It was an unheard of attempt to belittle, discredit and dishonor one of the finest gentleman sportsmen who ever worked for the good of the game. I know and I will swear that Jump's capture of the three hundred and fourteen pound Marlin on light tackle in twenty-eight minutes was absolutely as honest as it was skilful, as sportsmanlike as it

was wonderful. A number of well-known sportsmen *watched* him take this Marlin. Yet his enemies slandered him, accused him of using ropes and Heaven knows what else! It was vile and it failed.

JUMP has performed the apparently impossible. Marlin swordfish hooked on light tackle can be handled by an exceedingly skilful angler. They make an indescribably spectacular, wonderful fight, on the surface all the time, and can be taken as quickly as on heavy tackle. Obviously, then, this becomes true of tarpon and sailfish and small tuna. What a world to conquer lies before the fine-spirited angler! A few fish on light outfits magnifying all the excitement and thrills of many fish on heavy outfits! There are no arguments against this, for men who have time and money.

WE pioneers of light tackle are out of the woods now. There was a pride in a fight against odds—a pride of silence, and a fight of example and expressed standards and splendid achievements. But *now* we have followers, disciples who have learned, who have profited, who have climbed to the heights, and we are no longer alone. Hence we can scatter the news to the four winds and ask for the comradeship of kindred spirits, of men who love the sea, and the stream, and the gameness of a fish. The Open Sesame to our clan is just that love, and an ambition to achieve higher things. Who fishes just to kill fish? Let me meet and talk with that man? In Florida last winter I met two self-styled sportsmen. They were eager to convert me to what they claimed was the dry-fly class angling of the sea. And it was to jab harpoons and spears into porpoises and manatee and sawfish, and be dragged about in their boat. The height of their achievements that winter had been the harpooning of ten sawfish, each of which gave birth to little ones while being fought on the harpoon! Ye gods! It would never do to record my utterances here.

But I record this fact only in the hope of opening the eyes of anglers. I have no axe to grind for myself. I have gone through the game, over to the fair side, and I want anglers to know.

WE are a nation of fishermen and riflemen. Who says the Americans cannot shoot or fight? What made that bunch of great Yankee boys turn back the Hun hordes? It was the quick eye, the steady nerve, the unquenchable spirit of the American boy—his heritage from his hunter forefathers. We are great fishermen's sons also, and we can save the fish that are being depleted in our waters.

LET every angler who loves to fish think what it would mean to him to find the fish were gone. The mackerel are gone, the bluefish are going, the menhaden are gone, every year the amberjack and kingfish grow smaller and fewer. We must find ways and means to save our game fishes of the sea; and one of the finest and most sportsmanlike ways is to use light tackle.

Jane Grey.