

with screws into the sides of the minnow, he bored a hole in the body of the wooden bait, and using again his copper wire, passed it back and forth through the body of the minnow and through the eye of the treble hook on each side. He knew that no fish would break all these strands of copper wire, although he felt that Old Muskie might break the hooks.

The next Tuesday morning Lee again hooked Old Muskie. Again the big fish got to the treetops, and again Lee felt the dead pull that meant that he had no longer a fighting fish to deal with. Reeling up as Carl paddled the boat toward shore, Lee found that Old Muskie had entangled the line among the branches, and getting a chance to use his great strength, had broken the heavy silk line. Lee was delighted to see that it had been broken above the point where he had spliced it to the copper leader.

"What can you do about that?" asked Carl.

"I'm not sure," said Lee, "but every time thus far the old fellow has run straight away from the direction in which I was reeling my minnow. I believe that if we come at him from near the shore he will take a run toward the open lake, and we'll have a chance at him."

During the week that followed, Lee again spliced a copper leader to his line. Again he "made over" a big casting-minnow, and when Tuesday morning brought its opportunity, Carl put the canoe along the shore, but as far out as the end of the submerged treetops. Three casts were made, each farther and farther forward, without results. The fourth, however, a perfect cast of over one hundred feet, which fell just beyond the farthest treetop, was rewarded; the water broke in a great eddy as Old Muskie took the bait. Lee struck with all his might, and pulled with all the force he dared to use although he was pulling almost straight back toward the treetops.

As he had hoped, Old Muskie pulled the other way, and with a tremendous rush, left the treetops, and started toward the channel into the open lake. Half-way across he gave an astonishing leap into the air, showing the boys for the first time just what a monster they had succeeded in hooking.

Hope more lively than any they had felt before filled the hearts of the young

fishermen, as the monster maskinonge rushed across the cove. But instead of hitting the narrow open channel into the main lake, he rushed across the wide bar, through a veritable forest of bulrushes.

Then the fight was quickly over. The fish had been hooked only on the treble hook in the rear of the casting-minnow; the hooks on the side dragged through the rushes, and caught upon so many of them that the hook was torn from the mouth of Old Muskie, and again Lee reeled in his line without the big fish at the end of it.

Both boys sat in the canoe for several minutes as blue as boys could be. It certainly was discouraging. But presently Lee raised his head, and with a flash of the eyes said, "I'll catch that fellow yet!"

And Carl Mills, with admiration and determination both on his face, said, "Right! And I'll help you do it!"

A big maskinonge lives a life much like that of a rogue elephant in its isolation.

He selects some spot,—a cove filled with lily-pads, a bend of a river, or a sunken treetop like the home of Old Muskie,—and there he will stay, month after month, if not year after year. So there was little danger of Old Muskie's leaving Forest Lodge Cove that summer unless he was caught or killed or died the mysterious death that comes to the great fish of the streams and lakes.

Lee Henly and Carl Mills knew this, and they had been learning more and more of the habits of this particular maskinonge. In every new thing that they learned they felt that they had one more aid toward the final capture of Old Muskie and the realization of Lee's ambition for college that year.

Lee had learned that hooking the big fish was the easiest part of the work of capturing him. He decided that he must provide by every possible means against the entanglement of his casting-bait.

With this in view, he made a wooden

casting-minnow himself. He took a spinner and the glass eyes from an old one he had used, and from a bit of red cedar he whittled out the shape for the body. He had bought a very heavy, although not a very large, hand-forged treble hook. He took a heavy, spring-steel wire, and had the old blacksmith at Kessler's Corners weld an eye in it through the eye of the treble hook. He put on the back spinner, and passed the wire through the wooden minnow. He used no front spinner, as it might catch in the rushes.

The front eye he made in the wire himself by bending and twisting till he was sure beyond all question that it was safe. Then he fastened his copper leader into this eye, put the glass eyes into the head of the minnow, and with careful painting his bait was complete.

The season was now growing late. College was to begin September 23rd. On Tuesday, September 9th, Carl and Lee set out at daybreak on their quest. They fished long and carefully, but got no strike. They left the cove for half an hour, then tried again. This time the great fish struck, but was not hooked. Soon Forest Lodge was astir, and fishing for Old Muskie ended for that day.

Then came the last day. Carl was to leave for college the following Monday. "We just must get him this morning!" he said, as they pushed out from the landing with the first glow of daylight. They knew a little later in the day would be better, but they felt that they must lose no time.

Carl worked the canoe down the shore, the little craft slipping through the water as quietly as a floating swan. Lee outdid himself in length of cast, for he did not wish Old Muskie to take fright because they were too near.

At the fifth cast the big fish hit the bait. He rushed savagely at it, and closed his jaws down squarely upon it. Lee struck as if for his life, and drove the hooks deep into the fish's jaw, and with click and drag both on the reel and his thumb adding to the pressure, he pulled all he thought his tackle would bear—pulled straight back toward the treetops, which he was most anxious to avoid.

Stubbornly the big fish pulled in the opposite direction, and with a rush started across the cove. So fast did the line run out that Lee's thumb was almost blistered, but he held it hard against the spinning reel, and the fish rushed on across the cove.

Straight through the forest of rushes he dashed, and Lee and Carl held their breath, as the line cut through the water. Lee held the rod high, Carl sent the canoe along the track taken by the fish; and in a few dizzy seconds Old Muskie was through the rushes and out into the open lake. And now Lee made no effort to check him, but let him run as far as possible from the shore, although he continued his mad rush till less than thirty feet of line remained on his reel.

Forest Lodge was quickly awake and astir. Mr. Gardner was just at the landing for a trip across the lake, when out in front of him came the canoe as if being towed by the great fish, which leaped high into the air.

He rushed into Forest Lodge and roused Mr. Cameron and all the rest by beating upon his door and crying, "Get up! Get up! Your fifty-pound maskinonge is hooked, and by a boy!" No further call was needed, and the beach was soon lined with a score of fishermen and their wives hastily, and some of them grotesquely, dressed.

Meanwhile, Lee and Carl had begun working together to regain the line that had been run out. The victory could never have come to the young fisherman but for the masterly way in which Carl handled the canoe. He made it almost a part of Lee. It moved with his motion always responsive, always steady.

When the fish went out toward the open lake, the boat went with him, that he might go as far as he would. When he made a wild rush for the shore, the paddle sent the boat off at an angle to his course, that the steel rod might exert a pull sidewise, and thus turn him from his course, and back toward the open lake.

And all this time, Lee was putting on his tackle all the strain that he dared holding the line so taut that his arm ached before the fight had been on ten minutes—and it lasted fifty-five.

When Old Muskie would leap frantically into the air, fiercely shaking himself down would go the tip of the rod, clear

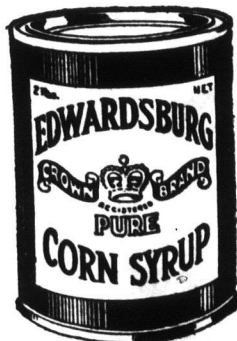


The Germans have been forced to abandon huge stores of loot in their hurried flight from France. Collected by organized looting parties, great quantities of supplies were foraged from occupied French towns. This French Official Photograph shows a huge collection of books taken from the public library of Montdidier. The books were piled behind the enemy lines to be taken away, but the French advance was so rapid that their plan was thwarted.

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