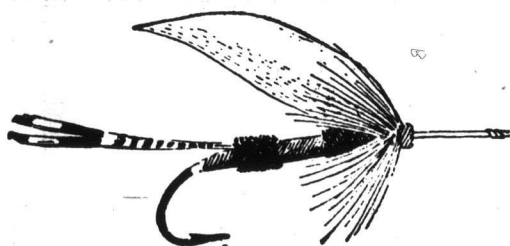


left hand and running it off by an outward and downward motion of the left arm from two to three feet, and retaining the end of the loop thus made between thumb and forefinger until the first motion had progressed far enough to get the free end of the line well started in its backward swing; then, on releasing the loop, the momentum of the line took up the slack and the rod went back to second position with the line well straightened out in the rear and lengthened by the amount I had run off in the loop. I kept this up until about ten yards of line had been run off, explaining the different steps meantime and impressing the fact that even in getting out the line extreme care is to be used regarding the correctness of both motions and positions. Stillman watched this very closely, and I was not surprised when he broke in with:



"Here, that's easy enough. Let me see if I can do it," and I thereupon reel in the line, hand him the rod and stand aside in his favor. He takes first position, strips a couple of feet from the reel with his left hand, makes the first motion, finds the loop taken up and the line straight as second position is reached, and then brings rod back again to first position. He repeats the process successfully until he has gotten out about six or seven yards of line, when, as he makes his forward cast for first position, up comes his elbow, out goes his arm, and in his effort to throw the line out ahead he strikes an attitude that resembles Ajax defying the lightning as much as anything else.

"Ha, ha, ha, Stillman," I laughed, "I knew you would do it. They all do at first. It is almost impossible for a beginner to acquire confidence enough in the power of a light rod so that he will trust it to handle a line, but insists, as you have just done, on trying to aid it by giving it a good strong throw forward. Now, as a matter of fact, when you do that you deprive the rod of its power, and will be unable to get your line out at all. As your rod comes forward in making your forward cast, or second motion, it is bent backward by the weight and resistance of the line, and at the moment your forearm, wrist, and butt of rod reach the first position, the rod itself is curved backward in a semi-circle, and does not get into first position with the butt and your forearm until it has straightened itself out, and it is in this straightening process that the power of a light rod to handle a long line lies. Now let me show you. I make the back cast, give the line time, while at second position, to straighten well out behind, then make my forward cast, or second motion, and stop hand, wrist, and butt of rod in first position and hold it there while that springy piece of lancewood takes leave of its curved form and straightens itself out into first position with a snap which will send a line and a set of flies almost any distance over the water. If, on the other hand, you try to throw the line out by force, you get the rod in such a position that this spring or snap is neutralized, and you are in about the same predicament you would be with your line fastened to the end of a stiff stick. Now try it again."

But the result is the same. Up and outward goes the arm, regardless of correct position, and down comes the line within half its length. A second and a third trial bring no better results, so I get my strap off the fence, and putting it under Stillman's left arm, buckle it firmly around his waist and over the right arm just above the elbow, and tell him to try it again. This he proceeds to do, and, being unable to follow his inclination and throw rod and arm forward, he not only gets the eight yards of line out straight and true, but gradually increases it until he is handling at least twelve yards with ease.

By this time the late twilight had begun to fade and we adjourned to the house and discussed and completed our plans for the following Saturday over our cigars.

Seven o'clock of the morning of that day saw Stillman, attired in old clothes, flannel shirt and slouch hat, standing guard over a large lunch basket on the station platform, awaiting my arrival; and the bright look in his face as he greeted me, laden with rod case and willow hamper, the latter containing lunch pail, tackle box, landing net and rubber coat and blanket, gave me full assurance that the day had much in store for him. A few moments later found us comfortably ensconced in a double seat in the smoker, our traps carefully deposited in the corner, our pipes giving off volumes of fragrant smoke, and we, fully at peace with the world, rushing along behind the great puffing engine toward the little village where we were to take our boat and begin active operations.

The first person we saw as we stepped from the train was Frank. Frank, hale and hardy after his fifty years of life spent mostly on the water, genial, companionable and willing, acquainted with the bass, their habits and lurking places, and ready at all times to put one in the way of making a good catch if the conditions made it possible. If honest effort in the interest of one's employers, unselfishly exerted, ever brings contentment and peace during life's declining years, old age to Frank should be a period of highest earthly enjoyment.

Stillman seated himself in the bow from choice, and after I had stowed myself away in the stern, Frank took his place at the oars and began pulling quietly up the river toward the bars where, on many a morning like this, the vicious snap of a hungry bass had sent a shock over the light rod and aroused in me a feeling of expectancy that was only dissipated when the line was reeled in for the last time as the shadows of approaching night warned me that all things, even a day of bass fishing, must have an end.

Trailing our leaders through the water in order to have them well softened, and in consequence less liable to breakage, we approached the first bar, and Stillman, who was in a fever of expectancy, responded to my "Now, old man, get ready," in short order, and with a look of stern determination on his face, began whipping out his line. He did very well until he had played out about five yards, and then, in attempting to make his back-cast before the leader showed above the water, he brought line, leader, and flies in a mass against the rod, and the result was as beautiful a "bunch" as one often sees.

"Now, Stillman," I began, as he a little impatiently, I fear, was untangling the snarl, "patience is as much of a virtue in fly-fishing as in anything else, so just make up your mind to keep cool and take things as they come. Bunching comes to the best of us, and you



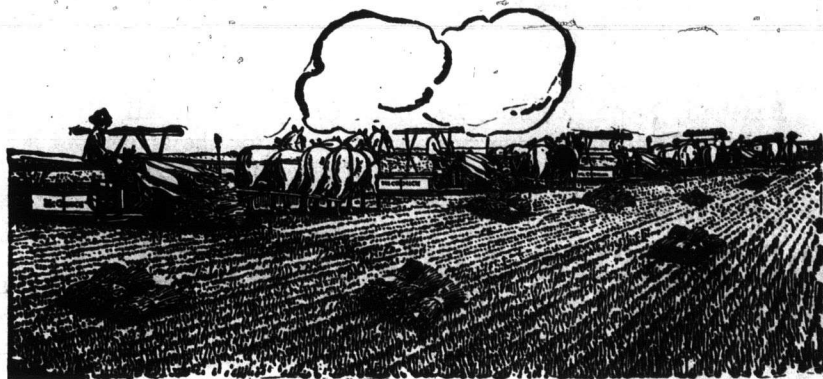
must expect your full share. However, if you will remember and never start your back-cast until your leader begins to show above the water, and then always give line and leader time to straighten out behind you before starting your forward cast, you will avoid lots of trouble."

"Well," he said, picking out the last tangle, "I will do the best I can, but this confounded leader and all these flies present a very different problem from the shoe button. I don't believe I can ever learn to handle it in the world."

"Oh, yes, you can," I replied encouragingly; "just keep at it and you will master it before you know it."

And keep at it he did, sometimes getting his line out fairly well and then

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