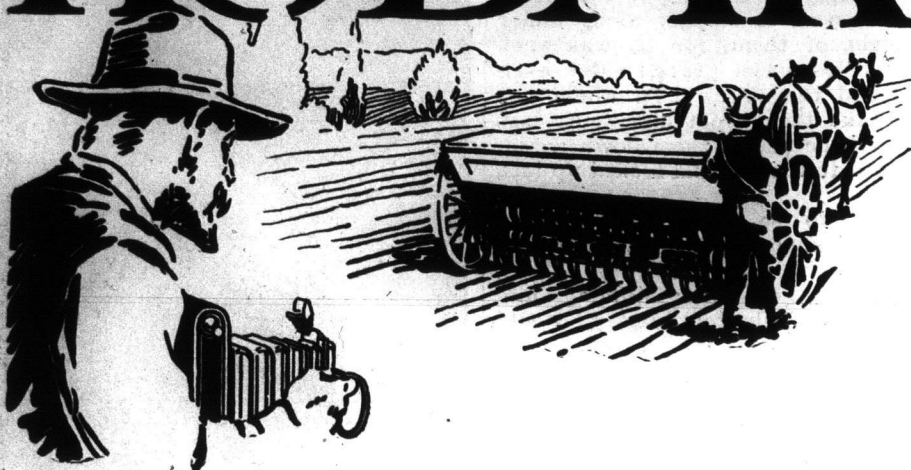


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About Fly Casting

By Geo. E. Goodwin

"FLY-CASTING! Why, of all the easy things in the world that is one of the simplest," said a man of thirty or thereabouts in the seat in front of my friend Stillman, as we were starting one morning in the latter part of May for a day with the bass, and Stillman's half audible "Is that so?" accompanied by a sharp dig in my ribs with his elbow, took me quickly back to another day, some years ago, when he, now one of the most expert of anglers, was a beginner in the art of handling the delicate tackle which brings to the devoted followers of Izaak Walton the acme of piscatorial bliss.



First Movement

In the early nineties, when returning one evening, tired but happy, with a well-filled basket of bass which I had taken during the day in the Seneca River between Baldwinsville and Jack's Reefs, I met Stillman and his wife on the street, and ventured the suggestion that an occasional day spent, as had been mine, would do him good, put color in his face, brightness in his eyes, and make a new man of him generally.

"Well," replied Stillman, "I don't know but you are right, and once in a while the thought has come to me that a day's fishing would just suit, but I haven't a single intimate friend who does anything of the sort except in the most expert fashion, and, while I know nothing of fly-fishing, and never expect to, I do know that an expert with the fly has no use for, and in fact cannot get along with, the fellow who fishes in any other way."

"If you really mean that, old man," I replied, "the matter can be easily arranged. I am going to have another try at them next Saturday, and will be only too glad to have you join me; and if you will run over some evening during the week I will put you through a course of instruction that, while it will not make an expert of you at once, will give you a very good idea."

"It's awfully good of you," answered Stillman, "but I don't believe it is in me to learn."

"Just leave that part all to me," I said, and so, after a little more urging, he yielded. Just as we were leaving the supper table the following Monday, he and his wife came up the walk.

We at once adjourned to the rear lawn, the ladies taking seats on a veranda overlooking it, and I produced the apparatus for the lesson. It consisted of an eight-ounce lancewood rod, to which was attached at the extreme butt a multi-wing reel containing seventy yards of light line, an ordinary black shoe-button and a leather strap about three and a half feet long, with a buckle on one end. Stillman looked at these things in wonder, but at my request removed his coat, and I meantime tied the shoe button to the free end of the line and hung the strap on the fence.

"Now, Stillman," I said, "come here and watch and listen, and I will try and make plain to you how it is done. The expert fly-caster can operate with either hand, but the beginner, of course, should use his right until he has acquired perfect control of rod and line."

"In the first place it must be kept in mind that the elbow of the rod arm, be it right or left, is to rest against the side and is to be kept there, and the movement in casting is to be confined to the forearm and wrist. The first position therefore is this—elbow against side, forearm extended forward and upward at an angle approximately thirty-five degrees, rod grasped firmly but easily around middle of handle above reel, with back of hand turned to the right, and extending forward and upward at same angle as forearm."

"Now we will disregard the line altogether for a time until we get the rod motion fully in hand. So, starting from the position just described, which we will call 'first position,' for the 'first motion,' which is also called the 'back-cast,' we raise the forearm without moving the wrist until the rod points directly upward; then, by turning the wrist backward until the rod is pointing backward over our shoulder and upward at an angle, as in the first position, of thirty-five degrees, we come to the 'second position.' The next, and 'second movement,' also called the 'forecast' or 'forward cast,' consists in reversing the first by bringing the rod to an upright position by a forward turn of the wrist and continuing it by extending the forearm until we bring arm, wrist and rod into 'first position' again. These two positions and motions embrace about all there is in fly-casting, so far as the rod is concerned."



Second Movement

"Is that so?" said Stillman, who had been paying very close attention. "I believe I can do it. Let me try."

"All right," I said, "come on and show your mettle."

He came up, took the rod, dropped easily into the first position, made the first motion and missed the second position by raising his elbow from his side and thereby dropping the point of the rod until it extended horizontally behind him. This corrected, he executed the second movement and brought arm and rod back to first position again without blunder, and after a few trials was able to execute both movements and strike both positions with but little trouble.

"You are doing so well, Stillman, that I think we can now consider the part the line plays in the game," and taking the rod at "first position," I began "whipping out" the line by means of the two motions we have considered, unreeling a bit each time the first position was reached by taking hold of it near the reel with thumb and forefinger of