

By the Grace of Joan

By E. G. Bayne

every fourth year, for there is a yearly run of fish. At the same time, and marking another peculiarity of many already cited in connection with this fish, every fourth year the swarm to spawn is greatly in excess of the former three. Among fisher and cannery men the years are known as "big" and "lean" ones; the various great rivers have their own big years, occurring at years different from each other. On the Fraser, 1917 should have been a big year in the cycle. But owing to the already related accident of the rock slide in 1913, and the fact that too many salmon were taken, and not enough allowed to reach the spawning grounds, the take was seriously affected. In former times the sockeye was the chief species taken by the cannerymen, and the dog and humpback were hardly bothered with. In 1917, however, these latter fish were sold as high as fifty cents apiece, while other species, taken for table use, brought as high as 20 cents a pound, where a few years formerly a whole fish could be bought for the same money. And in 1918 the people of the country will pay dearly for their salmon. All of which is directly due to proper conservation methods not being exerted.

The salmon are taken by fishermen in gasoline and sailing boats, the latter being chiefly used in Canadian waters. A fleet of these boats make a strikingly picturesque sight coming in from the grounds, their single brown sails filling to strong, fresh breeze. When fishing with drift nets in the open sea the boats are towed out in long strings by a steamer about two hours before sundown, so they reach the grounds just in time to drop their nets just before the orb of day disappears. This is to avoid the phosphorous, for after sundown any object dropped into the sea is affected so as to become plainly visible. With the nets this would be disastrous. When fishing with drift nets in the rivers the men work both day and night. This gives them an hour to an hour of fishing in every six. When fishing in open water the fleet arrives back at the cannery a little after sun up, and unload upon great receiving scows, where tally-men count the fish each man has taken. With the exception of spring salmon, the fishermen are paid so much apiece for each fish irrespective of size. The spring or king salmon is paid for by the pound. In 1917 fishermen got as high as 65 cents apiece for fish.

When the scow has taken the nightly catch it comes into the cannery and the fish are thrown on to the elevator which carries them to the first room known as the gut shed. Here is a wonderful machine, almost human, and called the Iron Chinaman. To it the fish are fed one at a time but with great rapidity. It cuts off the head and tail and cleans the body. From the "Chinaman" the salmon go on a conveyor belt to the washing troughs, where men and women generally Chinese, Indians and Japanese, thoroughly scrub the fish in trough supplied by continually flowing fresh water. This is known as sliming. The perfectly clean fish now moves to the slicer. This cuts the fish into streaks, varying in size according to the kind of cans being used. The chiefly used are known as "talls" and "flats" and hold one pound and half weight.

From the slicer the steaks stay an hour in the pickle barrels filled with salty water. They then go to the tins. These are loaded about a thousand at a time on to trucks and wheeled into the steel cooking rooms, where the fish is cooked four hours by steam process. The tinned salmon is then brought out, cooled labelled and cased, generally forty-eight tins to a case. These are piled awaiting the arrival of the coasting steamers.

This, in brief, is the history of the salmon from the egg to the tin. Some of the stages of the life of this most valuable of fish man is familiar with, but they are but a brief part of the whole history of this mysterious and wonderful denizen of the deep. And in closing, the words of that famous scientist and philosopher, Henri Fabre, when speaking of the gnat, may well be repeated: "Life has unfathomable secrets. Human knowledge will be erased from the archives of the world before we possess the last word that the gnat has to say to us." This, too, of the salmon.

"I don't like New York, mother," said the little girl. "Everything is in such a hurry—even the wind."

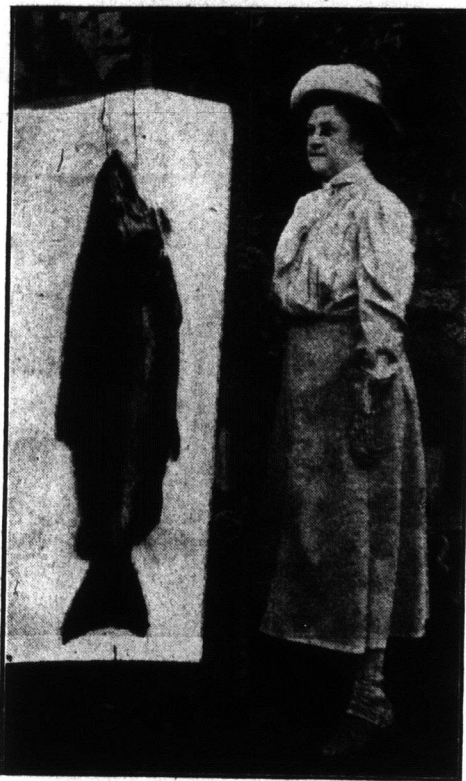
ONE of the most remarkable (and perhaps most significant) features of this war is the absolute immunity with which statues and pictures of the Maid of Orleans have come through fire and bombardment.—Press Despatch.

We had occasionally read items in the papers like this, but we generally passed them up with a knowing smile. Press agent dope! Oh, sure! Anything to spring a thrill on the folks back home when real war news was suffering a slump!

Well, we have learned better. "I hope this isn't going to be another of those blood-and-thunder war stories." I hear somebody groan. "If those writers who work their imagination overtime on the battle stuff would leave it to the ones who have really experienced—"

Sh! Sh-h! Podd and I have really experienced it at first hand, so don't jump on us, please. We have been through most of it from the first battle of Ypres on, and we are still going strong.

Well, I had just finished reading one of those items about Joan's marvellous escapes. It was in the Morning Chronicle—a greasy, mud-spattered, month-old copy—and we were sitting in a front line trench waiting for Fritz to open up, as



A sixty-pound king salmon.

he usually did just at that ghastly hour of the winter dawn. Podd had a bit of candle and we were sharing the feeble ray between us, he reading over for the eleventh-seventh time a letter from his girl received several days before. We both hail from Saskatchewan, but I can tell you it's a long long way to the Qu'Appelle Valley from where we were, and still are.

"Say, did you ever see one of those famous statues of the girl warrior?" I asked Podd.

"Yep. Country's full of 'em," he replied. "Don't you remember that swell one on horse back in front of Rheims Cathedral?"

"Was that her?" I asked innocently.

"Yes, bonehead. She is the spirit of France, the guiding star of its destiny so to speak. The most devout among the French believe that she actually saves souls, that her invisible form leads the troops to-day to victory, just as her real form rode before the French army centuries ago, inspiring courage in their shrinking hearts."

"Oh, piffle!"

"I'm only telling you what they believe—the simple peasant folk hereabouts."

"Do you believe that she does?" I demanded.

He shrugged his shoulders, a trick he had learned from the chasseurs in the billets.

"Well, remember the Marne. Wasn't that checking of the Huns there something in the nature of the supernatural?"

"It certainly was close to a miracle," I agreed.

"And then Verdun—with only that one narrow road left to the French to get supplies and men—up to the forts. The Huns swept everything else with shell fire. Think of that, one road chock-full of transport wagons day and night! The maid walks along this road," said a simple little Poilu to his captain, and in that short statement was embodied the man's whole philosophy."

At this moment our officer, the one in command of our platoon, rounded the corner of the intersecting trench and came up to where we were sitting.

"McDermott, and you, Podd, I want you two to go back to L—and bring up that consignment of bombs, or find out what has happened to the army transport. I've been trying to telephone, but something has queer'd our connection," he said, and we could detect an accent of deep anxiety in his voice. "Go at once, one a little ahead of the other, so that if one of you—"

He broke off significantly and we rose and nodded. These bombs should have arrived hours ago, as a raid had been arranged for five-thirty.

"Go down to trench three, climb the parapet there and follow the road to the wood on the left," he continued, recovering his old manner of cool courage. "Then skirt the wood, unless the bombardment comes on before you get that distance in which case you'll have to go through the wood, which will take longer. Don't run any fool risks but carry the message to Garcia. Do you get me?"

There was nothing we wouldn't have done for him. Silently we nodded and passed down to trench three. We both knew the risk we ran in crossing open territory under the almost continuous flare of the Hun star-shells which exposed every moving object to those watchful enemy eyes. Neither of us thought so much of danger though, nor even of our bounden duty, as of the fact that we were doing something for our platoon commander. He was the most lovable officer we had ever known.

Now I am going to skip a whole lot of local color, war atmosphere, description of dodging shells (you never really dodge them you know, you just think you do because you never, of course, hear the one that's meant for you, it puts you out of business too speedily), and I shall spare you the account of the awful ground—mixed snow and mud and putrid water and disintegrating cadavers—and shall only say that we each got along with a whole skin until we reached a certain crossroads and there observed the tardy transport crawling cautiously along to the front with that precious load of munitions. It was just a question whether it would make the distance before dawn, but we couldn't help any. We knew it was doing the best it could. Our little trip had been a sort of wild-goose chase, and it was up to us to look out for ourselves now. We were nearly four miles from our little wet home in the trench, three from the village of L—, it was getting on toward daylight and we were trying to decide whether to make a run for it and follow that transport or proceed to L—and chance the return trip in the evening.

We were hurriedly debating this question when a shell came along unexpectedly and decided it for us. It made such a rumpus and came so close that we ignominiously beat it in the direction of the village and when we paused for breath we found that we had been hit by flying fragments. Podd rather seriously. His wound was in the leg. The bombardment was in full swing by this time and the earth quaked under us, so we ran on, scarcely knowing where we intended to bring up but looking for some shelter such as a wood or a shell hole.

Podd fainted once and I had to carry him for nearly a mile. Then I spied a little school-house, one of those quaint stone buildings with a bell tower and a cross, and a flag pole sticking up in the front yard. It had little or no roof to speak of, having undergone a peppering at no distant period from Fritz's big guns, but into that tiny building we gratefully crawled and I bound up Podd's wound and my own slighter one, and then I

guess we both must have either slept or swooned for a time. Anyway the next thing I knew, someone was prodding me gently in the ribs.

I rolled over, opened my eyes and sat up. Two men stood there, one a little cockney sergeant of an English regiment, and the other a Hun and evidently his prisoner.

"Ello," said the former cheerily. "Wot's happened to you blighters?"

In a few words I told him.

"Grite scott, wot luck!" he exclaimed.

"Ere I been 'opin' an' pryin' fer to knock hinto some person as speaks God's langwidge an' 'ere you are! I'm fed hup listenin' to this cove 'ere an' tryin' to myke 'im hout. I s'y, that chap beside you looks done in. Give 'im a shot o' this 'ere bellywash. Hit 'll buck 'im hup."

I took the battered water-bottle with the German ensign on the sign (it had evidently been taken from the prisoner) and poured some of the contents between Podd's white lips. He had lost a good deal of blood, but I had a good firm tourniquet on his leg. Presently he came to and, though very weak and sick, sat up.

Almost the first words he said were: "I told you so!"

This was spoken in his half-banter way and he pointed up to the teacher's platform behind us where, in an alcove of the wall looking down over what had once been the pupil's forms, stood a white marble—or perhaps it was plaster—figure of Joan of Arc. Although all about her was indiscriminate destruction she stood forth unharmed amid the debris. Crumbling walls, weather-beaten woodwork, rain-sodden books and maps, broken furniture—all told the terrible tale. But Joan rose from amongst the desolation like a pure white flame, the very incarnation of immutability! And it wasn't her alcove that had saved her, for the arch only was left and behind her we could see the dull December landscape and a little flurry of snow falling.

"My word!" declared the sergeant, softly. "This is the plice where thirty children were killed by a shell. Hi'm not superstitious but to ply syfe hi shall cross myself like I see the poilus doing hat their mass."

And he crossed himself earnestly.

"What time of day is it?" asked Podd. "The sua—wot there was—as gone down long since. Hi should fawncy it to be six or seven of the clock," answered the sergeant.

What was the use of mentioning hunger when there was nothing with which to satisfy it? So we huddled together in the only sheltered corner of the place and tried not to talk dismally, a feat that has been mastered by the British Tommy and which we Canadians are rapidly learning. When things are going smoothly and the goose hangs high, our friend, T. Atkins, is a confirmed grouser, but he is the cheeriest soul alive under conditions that would make even a Spartan shrink.

Not that we thought ourselves in any great peril. We were just sticking round until dark when Podd and I would return to the trench and the sergeant proceed on his way to the village with his hostage. At least Podd thought he would return to the firing line and we humored him so far as to seem to assent. But his fever was mounting steadily and we made up our minds to rush him back to the base hospital as soon as the merciful darkness set in. The assiduity of a Hun sniper was what had driven the sergeant into the school-house and he entertained us with a graphic account of his wonderful escape.

"Ad hi been a 'Un now, hi should 'ave put this 'ere bounder between the sniper hand me, but that's not plyin' the gyme," he said. "Ere you, wot tykes you to that window so hoften?"

The prisoner, who seemed restless, had been pacing about, stopping from time to time at the gaping hole across from us that had once been a window. From it he could look over the shell-torn fields to the east, across two miles of country to where a yellow gash in a hillside far away marked a flank of the enemy lines.

"The blighter's lonesome!" laughed the sergeant, and pulled a deck of cards out of a pocket of his muddy uniform. "Ave a and at rummy, sir?"

"Don't sir me," I said. "Sure. Deal her out."

We sat around on the floor and played as long as the light permitted. Because I haven't said anything about the noise