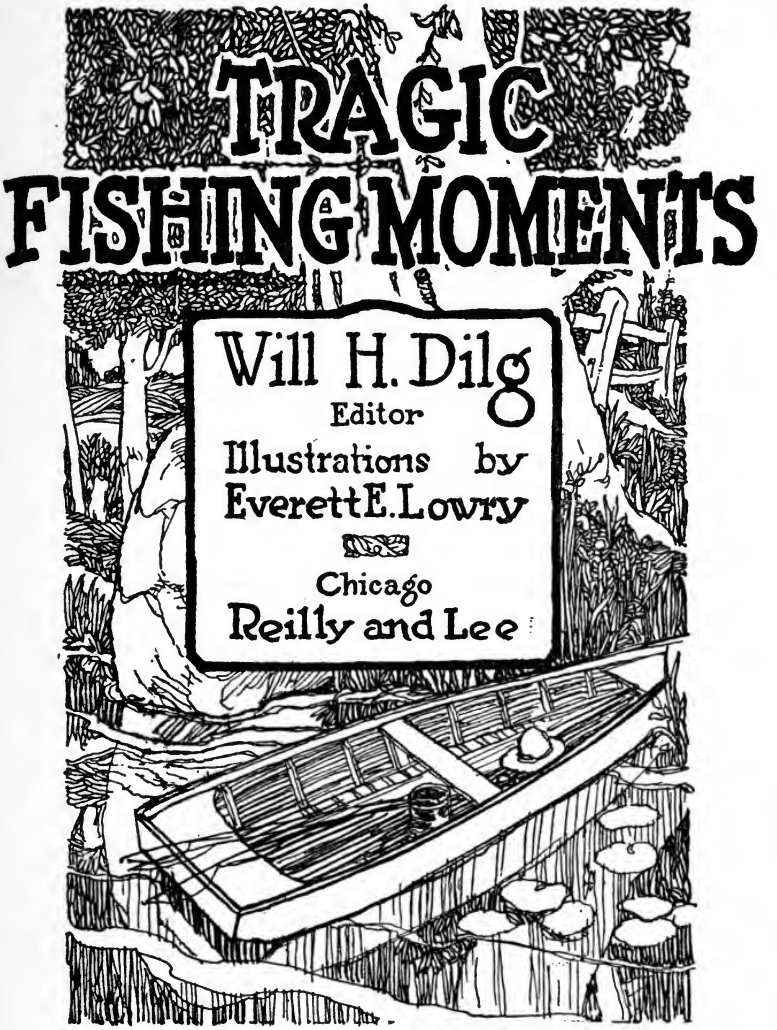
Magic Fishing Moments


TRAGIC
FISHING MOMENTS


TRAGIC
FISHING MOMENTS
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Tragic Fishing Moments

List of Stories

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Foreword

These stories, my friends, are as widely varied as fisherman's luck itself. They are stories told by many different anglers, of many sorts of fish, in many kinds of waters, but they have one trait in common — the sincere love of angling.

For unalloyed human interest I think this book contains the most thrilling collection of fishing stories ever printed in one volume. On my bookshelves there are scores of angling books from editions of Izaak Walton to some great books of the present day. Many of these are real literature and will never perish.

The American angler, I am sorry to say, is not as keen a patron of angling lore as is his English brother. There are many great fishing books written by Americans as well as Englishmen — treasures for those who love running waters and are devotees of "the sport of tempting the unknown with a fishing line."

Angling literature is a vast expanse of unfished water to the average American. If he would but more often cast thereon a random fly its depths would yield many a rise and strike of interest, beauty and thrill and a full creel of pure pleasure. I find the collecting

of angling books as fascinating and as necessary to the content of my fisherman's soul as the collection of lures and rods is essential to my equipment.

The stories contained in this book are from the pens of the rank and file of American fishermen. They represent the one vivid tragic moment in the life of the angler. We lovers of "the blameless sport," as Wordsworth called it, have all had our tragic moments, but usually there is just one desolating experience which stands out from all the rest.

It has always been my contention that every fisherman has at least one good fishing story in him. When I was associate editor of Outers' Recreation, I decided to prove this, and planned a series of fishing stories to be written by the readers of the magazine, under the title of "My Most Tragic Fishing Moment." Literally, hundreds of stories resulted, and this book contains the cream of those received the first six months. Few, if any, of the authors had ever dreamed of appearing in print, yet the stories they wrote became the most nationally famed feature series ever known in the history of outdoor magazines.

To the veteran of rod and reel these fish tales will recall many of his own experiences. All of us will confess to having often stopped our friends to tell of this or that experience, and doubtless, too, have been interrupted by one of theirs. The age old urge shared by every man of us to tell about our one great

fishing day must have had its effect on the writers of these tales and given fluency and brilliancy to their pens and made their stories throb with interest.

Angling is an inspiration in itself, and to quote from F. E. Pond, "the genuine angler is invariably a poet." These stories are mostly written by genuine anglers; I am convinced that they are true experiences and perhaps this has something to do with their being so well told and with their immense appeal. I feel it safe to venture here that the real fisherman will like this book, and as it is intended only for such, it will have the good fortune to bring only happiness and no disappointments — a lot to say for any book.

There will be found a sprinkling of boyhood memories, and to me these are the best of all. There is also throughout the pages abundant evidence that the true angler is more a lover of nature than a fish getter. Nearly every story contains a lesson which will make for better practices, and here and there will be found a touch of the angling-preacher, advocating better and fairer methods. There is, too, a sincerity in these stories, and a good cheer shining through them which proves that the average fisherman is possessed of a gentleness of spirit, a pure serenity of mind and a contented heart.

Francis Francis, in his great work, "A Book On Angling," declares: "I thank God for the good gift of flyfishing." Surely we fishermen can join "the

master" in this thanksgiving, but might we not add a postcript of praise and gratitude for the grace of fishing memories?

Those of us who have reached the half century mark or more, and whose trail gently leads toward the setting sun, more and more value the yesterdays, and especially the angling yesterdays. For doubtless "we fishermen dream far more often of our favorite sport than other men of theirs."

The thoughtful and principled angler holding in his heart such priceless memories must in conscience greatly desire that all who love the streams and trails shall have like memories. Those of us who have known the golden age of angling in this country realize that our game fishes are rapidly disappearing, and that the American boy, who represents the future of the United States, is in danger of losing his heritage of sport afield and astream. And those who have kept informed as to our fish and wild life conditions welcome the dawn of the nation-wide anglers' movement — the Izaak Walton League of America, and to such this crusade is veritably a "call to arms."

WILL H. DILG.

Just Wait, Mr. Bass

I wish there were more fishermen like the fisherwoman whose story follows. There is no doubt that Mrs. M. M. Green, of Shelternook Farm, Albany, Missouri, has a true love of God's outdoors; neither is there any doubt of her love of the gentle art of angling. It is a privilege to print her story and I know every fisherman who reads it will be charmed by it, too. Hats off, fishermen, to Mrs. Green, a "Queen of the Waters" after your own heart.

I know it really isn't necessary to apologize, in a story like this, for my love of rod and reel. But you see I have gotten in the habit of it. The wife of a Middle-West farmer is not supposed to prefer slipping along the stream and casting the rocky riffles to the meetings of the neighborhood Fancy Work Club. There is something very peculiar about her if she finds the snelling of hooks and winding of rods more interesting than her tatting. And so I have fallen in the way of telling my amused, matter-of-fact friends that the hatchery demands my almost constant attention from February to June, and that an occasional complete change of thought and scenery is a necessity. Nerves they can understand. It would

be a waste of words to tell them that the fishing (and even the hatching of the little brown leghorns) is due to an intense love of everything out-of-doors, from birds and flowers to rocks and thunderstorms; that the things so commonplace, so familiar and ordinary to them, are to me unfailing, unfathomable sources of pure delight. Therefore I welcome the opportunity of telling to someone who I know will be neither amused nor coldly unsympathetic, the story of my most tragic fishing moment, the vivid impressions of which will remain clear and sharp in my memory as long as life lasts.

First, let me frankly admit that I am just passing through the "chrysaloid" stage of bass fishing, and that this was my first bass. However, I have fought a losing fight often enough that I should have acquired a philosophic spirit by now, if ever I am to do so.

For several years a dear old uncle in the East had been sending me magazines filled with wonderful stories of the black bass. Over and over I had read them, hoping and dreaming that sometime I should have an opportunity to see one of these splendid beautiful fighters. But bass waters are not quickly reached from our part of the country, and farmers are busy folks who can rarely be away from home many days at a time. At last after two years of planning the way seemed clear for us to take the last of June for the dreamed-of trip. June 14th found us, tired and

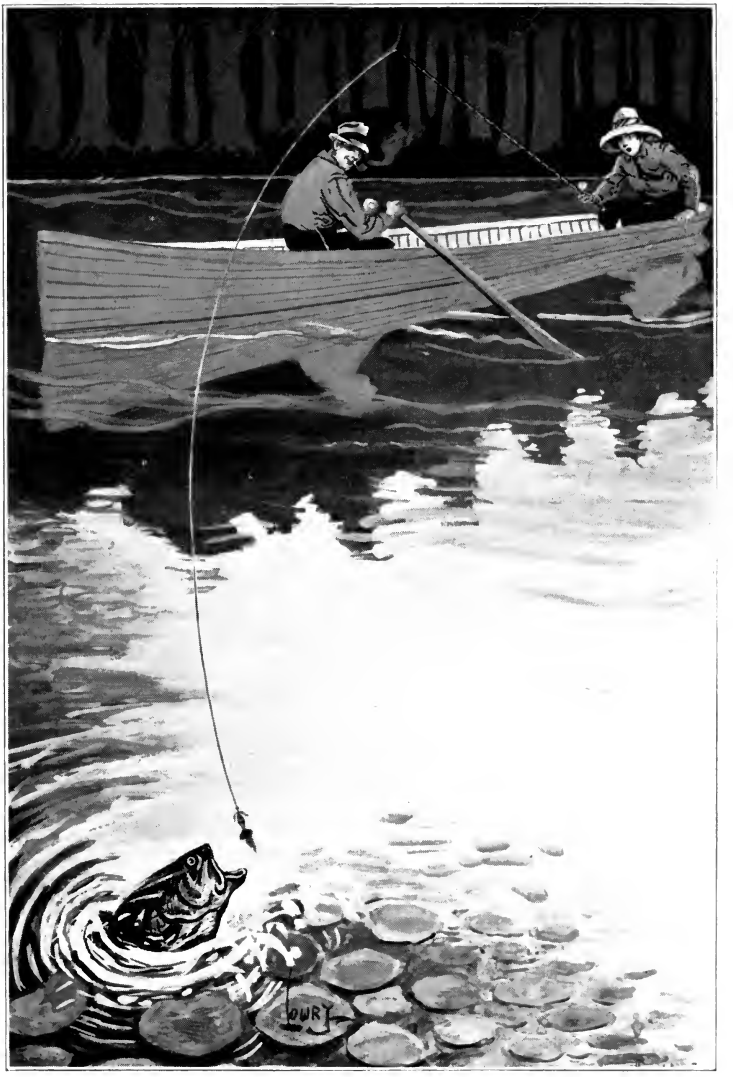
dusty, a day's drive north of Minneapolis, and inquiring for a good bass lake. Everyone told us the same story: "Yes, a week ago they were biting fine, but not now. It's too hot now. No, they won't take anything but frogs or minnows, if they bite at all."

Discouraging, but still we did not give up all hope; although my dream of the Truly Great Bass that was to take my lure faded in the face of these assurances. It *was* hot, no doubt about it. Night found us in a forest of pines and birches, by the side of a little lake evidently not heavily fished. It was a very irregular lake, so many little bays, and such a lot of lilies and rushes; about three miles across, clear and very deep. Darkness was upon us, and camp was quickly made. We had not realized how very tired we were, and of course we wanted to be ready to fish at the first suggestion of day. But there was neither sleep nor rest. You see we knew no more about mosquitoes than we did about bass. I will not attempt to describe this part of our adventure. It will not be necessary to tell some of you about it. The rest would not understand. However, we were glad to be up before the day was breaking, and in the smoke of the camp fire ate our breakfast and looked the tackle over. We were certainly dubious about those plugs. They did not appeal to us as did the daintier bugs and flies, but as we had not yet learned to handle the fly rod, our choice was limited. So

we had chosen the smallest we could get, one-half ounce ones, with the *fewest possible hooks.* Ignorant as we were of the baits to use, and having yet to see our first bass or pike, we really could cast very well, as our streams, choked as they are with drifts and overhanging trees, make accurate casting a necessity.

Rowing out to the first stretch of rushes, we commenced casting. My husband had the first strike — a good sized fish that grabbed his underwater plug and argued much as do the catfish at home. At last he was landed and the wrecked plug removed. He had us puzzled, as we had never seen a picture of anything like this. About five pounds, a long even ruffle of a fin, and such odd eyes. Later we learned this was a dog fish. My first strike was a beautiful walleye, caught on a porkrind. From then on the strikes came often enough to keep us alert and excited, and they were putting up good fights; still we could not see that a walleyed pike, or a pickerel, was a bit harder to handle than a channel cat of the same size. There were no bass as yet. Both of us were using underwater lures. It seemed so foolish to try to fish on the surface. Yet we had come several hundred miles to try out those freakish little plugs, so reluctantly I laid my underwater aside and put on a little dark brown surface lure.

Carefully I cast, trying to remember just how the directions read. Some place I had read that the plug



"Then the most paralyzing thing happened. A yawning mouth, a curved black back appeared from nowhere amid a pool of boiling water."

should start on its return trip the instant it touched the water. Fascinated, I watched it wiggle its way back. This was fun. But I believed I could make the next cast just a little neater. We were just rounding the curve of a tiny bay and approaching the mouth of a small stream. Aiming at a break in the lily pads a nice distance from the boat, all absorbed in the perfection of my cast, I watched the flight of my lure. Then the most paralyzing thing happened. A yawning mouth, a curved black back, appeared from nowhere amid a pool of boiling water. I can only tell this as I remember it. That huge fish seemed to remain half out of the water, poised, mouth agape, for an age. I couldn't move.

As long as I live I know I can see that picture. Every lily pad, the slender rushes, the great fish poised, a background of birches and pines, the mist over the lake. Suddenly it dawned on me that the fish was gone. Frantically I started to reel in. I was so astounded at this fairy tale come true that it never occurred to me to strike. For an instant only I felt his weight, then it was all over, and my heart sank like lead. Why, oh, why, couldn't I have had a *little* bass or two at first, just to practice on? Why this blinding vision, the instant of exultation when I thought I still had the bass of which I had dreamed for two years — then — all over.

There were other bass that morning, but not like

him. I think there never will be such another. But I know the very lily pad from which he thrust his great curved back. And the little dark minnow has had its hooks oiled and has been tenderly laid away until next June rolls around. Nestling in the same box is a moth, an exquisite study in browns — squirrel tail and daintily stippled rich brown feathers, tied especially to please this particular black bass. He will never know the sacrilege that has been committed to please his fastidious taste, but something tells me he will be powerless to resist.

Little Bob's First Bass

Mr. H. C. Mahin, of Lafayette, Indiana, sent in a little masterpiece. A sweeter story has never been told by a fond Daddy than he tells about his four-year-old son "Bob." Little boy, little boy Bob, you have had your first lesson in game fish preservation, and you have given us older boys something to emulate. It makes one shudder, Bob, to think that there are big men in this world who would have kept that little bass.

The profession of being Daddy to a small boy is a more or less serious calling, for, to use a contemporary idiom, we have to watch our step pretty carefully. As the tree is bent, so is the twig inclined; and our kids are inclined to follow in our footsteps pretty closely, sometimes.

Last year I became enthused over bass fishing in the Wabash, Tippecanoe, and tributary waters near Lafayette, and of course Bob, at four, absorbed the spirit purely by emulation. His favorite bed-time story was one concerning "Billy Bass," which had a close second a little later in the year in the tale of "Daddy Duck, Mummer Duck and Tommy Duck!" His one absorbing ambition was to get a little bigger and a

little bigger, until he would be big enough to really catch a bass for himself. His mother knew not whether to second this ambition very strongly, and mustered as Exhibit A all the villlage ne'er-do-wells as a dire illustration of the fate that overtakes those who spend any portion at all of their time in hunting and fishing. The defense had to name all the illustrious Teddies and Grovers to prove that in rare instances the sportsman is not preordained to ignominy, and womanlike, she was still unconvinced. But Bob's bent was not thereby reduced to the extent of a single little kink. He still dreamed of catching a bass.

Since the opening of the Tragic Moments series the tubers in the Murphy barrel ran low, and Dad was called upon to replenish the supply. Far be it from me to pursue the lowly garden hackle in his hidden ways, but when pursuing potatoes one comes across him in considerable numbers, may it not be that the powers intend for him to make use thereof? Be that as it may, I was tempted, and forthwith gathered several of him into one old tomato can with intent.

The next day being Sunday, to make good matters bad, I gathered up the family, Mother and all, and we betook ourselves into our canoe and up the river to a quiet little cove, seeking sunfish. Mother sat in the bow of the canoe, reading a magazine, while Bob and I performed the ceremony of wetting the line. Bob's tackle consisted of a stout linen carpet

thread, small hook, and a float made of a large cork suspended from his dad's lancewood pole.

All was quiet along the Wabash for the space of half an hour, the Biblical limit for a woman to keep quiet, when we suddenly discovered that Bob was busy, very busy in fact. For before we could get to him he had raised a bass, a real *bass,* out of the water and had him dangling in the air. Now all of you hardened sinners must not believe that the fish has to get away to make a tragedy of the affair — not in the least. In another moment Bob had swung the pole in my direction and the fish was safely in the boat.

But some unregenerate legislators in Indiana had made and provided a statute to the purpose and effect that a fish of this particular breed must attain a length of ten inches in order to be considered legitimate treasure trove, and this "little whale," to use Bob's expression for it, could only muster a paltry seven. *Tragedy?* You who have seen your five to seven-pounder vanish in the swirling water, taking with him your best fly, have no common measure of despair and grief with the youngster who, by reason of a law, recognizing no difference in attendant circumstances, must see his first bass, caught with his own hands, disappear over the side of the canoe.

That Soul-Harrerrin' Happenin'

Now, boys, light up your pipes and settle down for a great black bass story. Mr. Frank Whitman, of Tampa, Florida, has here spun a yarn that will get into your blooming vitals. He has entitled it "That Soul-Harrerrin' Happenin'" and it's every bit of that and more. Don't expect too much in the beginning but hang on and keep a tight line every minute, for here is some sure 'nuff fishing tale.

Folks, I have bin so close to that eternal fame that once in a million years flits like a fleetin' shadder over the places where men go to ketch fish — that there everlastin' reppitation that makes talk when men congergate 'round the evenin's campfire was so durn nigh mine that I'm never goin' to look the same in this here wide, wide worl.' What d'ye think of a happenin' that causes four strong men in boats to take off their hats an' sit kinda friz up, like they was listenin' to the clods fallin' on a box containin' some dear departed friend? What d'ye think of a nerve-numbin' thing that causes the party o' the first part t' git out of a boat on wobbly laigs an' stagger up a hill with the sweet refrain, "It mighta bin," soundin' like a dirge by Sowsie's band? What d'ye think — but I must be ca'm, ef I'm goin'

to git this to ye so it won't sound like a jaybird's song or look like a dish of foam from last year's beer.

I tell ye jest square out that I had to wait two months before tellin' of this here turrible an' calamitus happenin,' an' right now, when the mem'ry should be sorter softened, as 'twere, I'm in sech a twitter that the ole corn-cob won't stay fired up, seems like. Now, don't enny of ye git nervous — I'm a comin' to it, as the flivver sez when it was ketchin' up to a Packard. She comes hard, though, I tell ye, fellers, fer this here's somethin' that ought to be kep' wrapped up in insense an' mirr—or in a holey of holeys — whatever them things is. I bin through a experience in which men live a lifetime in a few seconds — where fame undyin' flapped her wings so durn close that I felt the breeze. But let us on, as the little boys said when they was beggin' a ride.

'Twas thus — an' it was so — an' I hope I keep ca'm enuff to tell her so you'll git it without a interpiter. It all happened down in Highlands County, Florida, an' if I was to tell you the name o' this lake it would sound jest like the nom de plum of a lots of others ye've heerd, I betche, times without number. Well, it was Grass Lake, if ye're so durned anxious to know. But I tell ye it won't do ye a bit o' good, as the horrible an' soul-harrerrin' sekal will show. Mebbe you fellers that is fishermen'll understand after readin' the rest o' the lines, so I'll begin to start. They's a

feller named DeVane, who lives in Lakeland, an' has a job as pres'dent of a couple o' banks there, as is allus invitin' me down to fish in some lakes in said county.

Ennyhow I went, too late to git a holt of DeVane, but he was a good scout an' had some fellers come over to Sebring an' tote me down to Lake Stearns in a ottymobeel, The road down from Sebring is hard, turrible hard, I should say. They do say that two fingers o' moonshine taken afore startin' will keep ye tuned up all the way atween the two places, 'count o' the shakin'. Nobody warned me, but I bet I wouldn't take a glass o' milk an' make the trip fer ennything in this worl'. They're a fixin' of these roads an' mebbe somebody else'll soon be able to git down there an' fish like I did. Most folks go by the train now — but you betche ye have to walk to my lake now, fer it lies kinda sequestered like. The trip by otto is purty, though, fer it takes you through a lot of fuzzy woods an' some wild, wild country.

I'm goin' to tell ye now who was in the party, an' they is the same bunch what was with me fishin', ceptin' one feller that didn't go the second day. Albert DeVane, a feller that's been in the navy, was one of 'em. Albert is tearin' up trees an' plantin' oranges at Lake Childs. T. U. Jackson, "Jack" fer short, was another, an' he is doin' ditto work at Lake Stearns. Also an' likewise was with us, a feller named Jones. He is a auditor fer the Lake Childs development. Last one

was a big fat feller, named 'Doc,' an' right here he leaves the narrytive, fer he don't fish on days they is church, even if he does have to go over to a place called "Hen Scratch" to worship.

Now we all bin interduced we purceed, as the feller sez when a new man set in the game. First day we fished Lake Stearns, an' didn't git more'n enuff to feed the crowd fer dinner, which was considdably augmented long 'bout noon. Had a good time, howsomever, with a dandy lot of eats. Met a feller named Knight, from Tampa, here. He's a good feller but I don't ker fer his style o' fishin', which is "skitterin'." Feller named Brown caught up to us about dinner time. He spent a lot o' time tryin' to ketch perch — outside that I can't say much ag'in Brown. Lake Stearns is crescent-shaped an' is big an' purty, 'speshally when ye look at it from the hundreds of acres of young groves on the hills that surround it.

That night I stayed at the Jones home, an' Mrs. Jones is my idee of a reg'lar woman. Also fren' "Jack" loomed up big in the way o' hospitality. Albert had some sort of a durn mixtry made outa aigs an' somethin' else that near paralyzed my tongue as well as my castin' arm. I'll say this drink enables you to make roads where they aint, so mebbe it has its virtues. When I first set down to the Jones table I near made a turrible mistake. Ye see, Mr. Jones allus says grace afore startin' in on the vittles. Course I

didn't know this, an' was about to grab somethin' to eat, it all looked so durn good. Jest as I was debatin' on whether I would eat fish, chicken or beef first, I hes'tated long enough to give Mr. Jones the floor, as 'twere. Some good angel saved me from making a heathen out o' myself, ' s'pose.

Next day it happened, an' golly, I approach the sorrerful happenin's with fear an' treppidation. We got a early mornin' start in Jones' machine, which was to carry us as far as possible, an' dove into the deep woods an' other wild places on the way to Lake Childs — which was as fur as we could go to'ard Grassy in a macheen. Soon after gittin' in sight o' Childs we stopped on the top of a high hill an' looked over some country as beautiful as enny I ever see afore. Childs is a sheet of water that starts here an' goes yonder, I'd say. The company is settin' out fruit trees here an' they seem to stretch away out fer miles. They is a commissary an' boardin' house fer the hands, little office — an' that's all. After gittin' our traps together we started over the top of another hill and then slanted down to'ards Grass Lake.

Now that we're here I feel like hidin' behin' a tree, or crawlin' down to the water's aidge. I must say that I went onto that there lake like a lam to the slaughter. We got two skiffs from a feller named Kelsey, who has a grove an' farm right near the water. Albert an' me gits in one boat an' Jack an' Kelsey gits in t'other one.

Our boat was durn small an' Albert, bein' a ex-navy feller, jest naturally pulled the bow up so durn high when rowin' that the water poured over the stern where I was settin' at times. So you see I started out with the first part o' "fisherman's luck." We was aimin' fer the other side o' the lake, 'bout a half mile away. They was a lot o' coves over there an' fish was reputed to hang out thereabouts. They did, fer my first durn cast got a vicious strike from one that weighed mebbe five pounds. The thing startled me so that I fergot to hook him an' he got away. He made one wild leap in the air' an' went away from there. I wasn't ready, an' was jest feelin' out my castin' arm.

Well, me an' Albert got ten of 'em 'fore it begin to git purty windy fer comfortable fishin'. Then Jack an' t'other feller j'ined us an' we found a nice camp-site among some trees. We cooked enough fish fer a sailor's boardin' house and eat like a passel o' half-starved hyeenys. Kelsey, while he was smokin' an' restin' a little, told me a story 'bout a feller that caught one right here that weighed more'n fourteen pounds. When he said the feller caught the fish on a live minnie I lost all intrust in the tale. Albert mixed some more o' them things an' we started out ag'in in good spirits. I got altogether about twenty-five bass an' kept about ten, an' was jest about of the opinion that this was enuff when Jack hung onto an' landed in the boat a bass that went a good nine pounds. I

had the most, but this 'un was the biggest, an' that didn't seem right to me, so begin to start to commence ag'in.

We went aroun' the lake the other way this time, an' if I was a poet I would say the shades of evenin' approached. Ennyway they was a pictur' bein' painted on the sky out to'ards the west that almost made me lose intrust in fishin'. The big ole pines an' palmettoes over on the west side loomed up into a glory of which they seemed a part. "Silhoowetted," I think they call it. The wind had fell until the water seemed almost like glass in places, 'cept where they was little puffs o' wind hittin' it. The other boat was jest behin' us an' I noticed they wasn't much talkin' goin' on. After awhile I sez to Albert, sez I: "Kid, aint they enny fish in this lake? I wanta ketch somethin' besides minnies."

I noticed Albert had been lookin' ahead fer some time to'ards where a p'int o' grass projeckted out beyond a narrer lane that led up into some bonnets. Albert sez, sezzee: "You jest wait 'till we get to that cove there, an' I'll betcha somethin'll happen that'll make you think you aint half so smart as you think you is."

"Haw! Haw!" sez I. "Here's another place where a big 'n has 'stablished hisself a reppitation. Broke everybody's lines, 'neverything. Well, where is he?"

"There he is," sez Albert, p'intin' up the cove.

"*Well, here he comes,*" sez I, an' made a purty cast up the cove, jest nickin' the bonnets at the fur end. I was usin' a floatin' bait with my own patent "jazz" on it. Nothin' happened, 'cept a little thing made a swirl behin' the bait when I had it 'bout half way back to the boat. The fellers behin' us had stopped, an' was watchin' me with kinda funny looks on their faces. Albert was watchin' my incomin' bait with his jaws clamped kinda tight, too. I admit I was feelin' kinda funny myself over all this, when bang! Not over fifteen feet from the boat they was a earthquake! The biggest bass in all the world had come up from that thirty feet deep place, getherin' speed all the way an' smashed at my bait, almost in my face. He come almost clear o' the water in his rush. The bait flew right up in the air. He had missed it! Ye know how quick thought is, I reckon? Well, I jest started to say somethin' that would come nigh fittin' the occasion, when "Plop! Smash!" He threw water all over me, an' he had it! Ye see, when he missed he made a lightnin' turn an' caught the bait.

What happened after this is kinda misty, fer I swung my rod to my right han', thumb on the reel an' let him go to'ards the center o' the lake, where he was headin'. He was down as deep as he could go, too. In three separate distinct rushes he took a

full hundred feet o' line off'n my reel. They didn't seem no holdin' of him. I hollered to Albert to paddle after him. I was in a bad position fer the handlin' of sech a goshawful fish, me settin' not over two inches above the water in sech a dinky boat. Then he started fer the surface so durn fast I never noticed the line raisin' 'till he come out a hundred feet away. Never in my life have I seen sech a bass! In no other place on this rotatin' hemisphere IS they sech a bass! He made a reg'lar shimmy in the air like only a bass seems able to make, an'—an'—draw the curtain, folks, *men is dyin'!*

My bait flew back a good fifty feet to'ards the boat, an' lay there rockin' ca'm an' placid as if hearts wasn't breakin' an' the hull blame worl' had come to an end. Fer a solid minute they wasn't a word said in either boat, until I swallered whatever was in my throat an' sez in a harsh whisper: "Gents, we'll have a silent minute!"

Then I took off my hat an' bowed in pure wonder at the works o' the little god o' luck an' the cussedness o' things in general. I looked at my han's — my feet — nothin' seemed to belong to me no more. I was seemin'ly in a new worl' squeezed dry of everythin' worth while. The ole pedestal o' self-esteem on which I useta perch was not only knocked from under me — it was a vanished thing! I was right on the groun' with the rest o' the worms where I belonged —

an' put there by a bass! *But what a geewallopin', goshawful thing he was!*

We went up the hill on feet o' lead. I was carryin' in one hand ten bass, but sech was my pertibation of feelin's I never noticed the load. In the other hand I had some o' that there "killcare," which I was rapidly transferrin' to my innerds, an' would have finished her if somebody hadn't said: "Have a heart!" Mournfully I ansered: "Kid, I ain't got no heart no more. If I ever had one I don't know it. They's nothin' but a cavity where it useta be, an' that's full o' chips."

Will hope ever revive? Mebbe so, as the feller sez after he bet all he had on a hoss by the name o' Hope.

EPPYLOG OR SEKAL:

Five weeks to the day I went through all them hardships ag'in gittin' to ole Grassy. I found ole boy Kelsey a settin' on the bow o' one of his boats with a good two-thirds of a bass layin' in the sand at his feet. He had noticed a commotion in the famous cove and rowin' over there he found this piece of a fish jest expirin'. They was a six foot 'gator jest leavin' the spot. We weighed this piece up at the commissary an' it weighed twelve pounds and a half!

Now what d'ye think? That's jest the same as me! *This fish jest wasn't to be took by the han' o' man, that's all!*

A Real Sportsman

Mr. Don P. Cowles, of Council Bluffs, Iowa, sends me a story which indeed "points a moral and adorns a tale." Those of us who preach and practice ideals in fishing will welcome Brother Cowles into the fold with open arms.

Mr. Cowles prefaces his story thus,—

"Dear friend Dilg: Pardon me for addressing you thus, but it seems perfectly natural for me after having read so many interesting articles from your pen on the one subject of which we have so much in common, the black bass. I want to tell you that you are in a large measure responsible for My Most Tragic Fishing Moment and while this story may not be eligible to this discussion, it nevertheless was my most tragic moment while fishing."

I was just nearing the end of a two weeks' fishing trip on one of those picturesque Wisconsin lakes, where I had enjoyed some royal sport with the gamy bronze backs. They were the hardest and most wonderful fighters I had ever been introduced to. I was fishing alone this particular evening and was casting along the edge of a sunken island where I had taken four fine bass, the last of which had given me the greatest display of the fighting instinct they possess that I ever

witnessed. I had just taken him into the boat and was looking at him in admiration in the failing light of a very pretty sunset. The sun had dropped behind the pine fringed shores of beautiful Balsam Lake whose waters had now changed from the blue green hues of a few minutes before, to purple, red and gold. The last tiny riffle had died away and the lake lay placid and stilled. A big blue heron sailed lazily overhead and the plaintive call of a distant loon was the only sound that broke the quietude of this entrancing scene. I again held up the fish and started to remove the hooks.

The lure I was using was a plug with three gangs of hooks appended. One gang was firmly set in his great mouth, one hook of the second gang had pierced his big glistening eye and two hooks of the third gang were sunken deeply into his body. As I removed with difficulty the last mentioned hooks the blood trickled slowly down his beautiful green side. I looked at the wounds these hooks had made and thought of the great and unequal struggle this fish had so nobly waged for his life, against such overwhelming odds. I thought of the articles I had read on the use of gangs of hooks. I thought of the many pleasant hours that I had spent with these fish. I thought of the great infinite law which bestows unto man the power over all creatures of the earth — and of the advantage I had taken over this glorious fighter.

No pangs at loss of pet tackle or escape of great

fish could touch me so deep and tragically as my remorse. I could not return this fish to his waters and expect him to survive these battle scars or I surely would have. This was my most tragic fishing moment and my conversion, and as I paddled my way back to Paradise Isle I resolved to remove from my plugs all but two single hooks and in the future play the game fair. This I have done.

Poisoned Waters

Here is one of the most remarkable fishing stories I have ever read. I would be proud of it if it were mine. It will not only touch your heart, but it will awaken your righteous wrath and bring home to you the need of the Izaak Walton League of America. This little masterpiece should be printed by the millions. Mr. Henry D. Swengel, of San Francisco, by writing this truly "Tragic Moment," has earned the gratitude of the fishermen of this generation.

Like many of the clan I am accepting the challenge of our friend Dilg to tell about my most tragic fishing moment. His happy thought in printing those boyhood yarns in OUTERS'-RECREATION helped me in my decision and gave me courage.

Many of you who will read this story have grown, as I have, from a linen thread and bent pin fisherman to an exponent of the wet or dry fly. I do not mean that we have become purists of either type; I confess that I have not. The conditions on the stream often determine my method. It seems to me that when the underwater larvæ become most active before crawling out on rocks or snags to dry, the wet fly is most effective, and that afterward when the bug is flying

the dry fly method may be the better way. However that may be, it seems true to me that in the process of our development as fishermen, whether we are conscious of the fact or not, there comes a crystallization of sentiment and opinion in matters of sportsmanship. There are few of us who for selfish reasons will destroy another's pleasure and few who are not good fellows among men wherever we meet.

As a boy of from twelve to eighteen years of age I used to fish for trout in a beautiful stream in Pennsylvania. Boyish sentiment placed a halo around my recollections of days of pleasure spent along its course. I was a bait fisherman then. Worms gathered while I spaded the garden kept in moist dirt in the cellar until they curled into a knot and turned bright red were my particular lure.

When about eighteen years of age I moved some hundreds of miles away and became so engrossed in work that I did not have opportunity to return to my old home and friends during the open season for nearly ten years. During this time I became converted to fly-fishing. Finally business made it imperative that I return in the Spring of one year, and I took my tackle along, determined that I would take time to enjoy at least part of a day on that old stream so entwined in my boyhood memories. I wanted to try some of those old favorite holes and rapids with a fly.

Poisoned Waters

Business that ordinarily would have required two days was crowded into one. My most intimate boyhood friends had moved away, and so I finally determined upon going alone. Early morning found me on my way. The horse I drove made record time over the ten miles to the old camp ground. It did not take long to unhitch and tie him in the barn.

The breath of Spring was in the air; the birds were singing and that unforgettable woodsy fragrance from flowers and half-grown leaves and ferns brought back equally unforgettable recollections of days of happiness and pleasure. I rigged my tackle as I hurried down the old wood road. A light wind was blowing and the sky was slightly overcast. Conditions were right, and I was about to turn anticipation into realization. I turned from the road, and passing for a short distance through the brush came out of the woods upon a high bank overlooking a deep swirling pool.

At a glance I realized that all the old beauties of the spot remained as of years before, but looking down I saw that the water was black and flecked here and there with discolored foam. Some one had built a chemical plant at the forks a few miles above and was running the waste into the stream.

My disappointment paled into insignificance as the realization came to me that one more fine old stream had been ruined and that other boys were denied the

sport I had been privileged to enjoy. The moment of realization stands clearly in my mind as the most tragic in all my fishing experience. As I walked back along the old wood road it seemed that the songs of the birds were a little less glad. I hitched the horse and headed him back toward town.

A Furcoated Fish

This story is from the brilliant pen of B. F. Wilder, of New York. As you read it, if you are a reserved sort of chap, you will smile often; if not so reserved, you'll laugh outright. And if you are a woman, you will giggle, I think. At any rate, you'll all be mightily amused. You will be reading, in my opinion, a little story that might have been written by O. Henry or Mark Twain.

I declined with thanks when Mr. Dilg first asked me to write on this subject. You see, the word "Tragic" pertains to tragedy — a mournful or fatal event, and I have had no tragic moments, not while fishing, anyway. Moreover, though of an industrious, diligent nature, always anxious to be up and doing, lest I overtax myself I have to fight constantly against an impulse to work. But this struggle with my innate self has been, I regret to say, sometimes mistaken for laziness; and unquestionably Mr. Dilg fell into this error, for in a terse phrase he rebuked me for the sin of sloth. Smarting under the injustice, but convinced of the futility of argument, I sat down at my typewriter. This is the result:

As we left the dock the guide took two healthy minnows from the bait pail and placed one on the

Madame's hook and one on mine, hooking them lightly through the lips. We committed their bodies to the deep, the guide got the boat under way, and the Madame and I began trolling for bass.

I had watched closely the operation of baiting, but had been unable to determine from the minnow's faces whether they had experienced pain, for their expression had not changed at all. While meditating on this subject I had a strike, and an instant later a bass broke beautifully. The Madame was wildly excited — it was her first fishing trip — and broke into a sort of anthem. "Don't lose him!" she chanted, with appropriate gestures. "Don't lose him. Whatever you do, don't lose him!" Her chant was soothing, the fish was hooked hard, and a few minutes later we netted it.

Presently the Madame had a strike, and up shot a mighty bass with her hook fast in its jaw. I proffered advice and admonition, and even offered to take the rod if she felt herself unequal to the task before her, but my attentions were misinterpreted. The heretofore gentle Madame turned on me and announced that this was her first bass, that she proposed to catch it herself, and that any interference would be construed as an unfriendly act. Well, we hadn't been married very long, and I didn't volunteer more advice; though when the big fish lay gasping in the boat, I did venture to say that I would rather die than catch a bass by such unscientific methods. But this remark I would

have willingly withdrawn a few minutes later, when by a series of unfortunate accidents I lost a fine pickerel.

Trolling became a flat failure. For an hour or more we worked up and down the lake. Then the guide suggested that we try bait-casting on a near-by reef. Now I was not a good bait-caster. Of course, I knew how the trick was done, for I had read a number of good works on the subject. But whenever I had attempted to put my acquired precepts into practice, it had been my misfortune to fall into the hands of boatmen of the baser sort, whose censorious comments made it impossible for me to devote my entire attention to the mastering of the art.

To this day I remember one man, impatient and profane, who bitterly reviled me even while I attempted to relieve him of my hooks. He said that my technique was faulty and demanded the attention of a surgeon — purged of lamentation and impure expletive, that is what his wicked speech summed up — and this, mark you, though the location of his wound made it impossible for him to see what I was doing for his comfort. This experience, coupled with some others, had made me diffident, and I accepted the guide's suggestion with reluctance.

Things worked well, at first. Neither the Madame nor I tried for distance, and as for accuracy, all we had to do was to keep our lines reasonably well

apart. The guide, seated in the bow, watched our first casts closely. Then he heaved a deep sigh and devoted his attention to the pages of a newspaper.

Our take was meager. Yellow perch and a small blue-eyed fish, which the guide called rock bass, were all that came to our hooks, and after black bass these left something to be desired. I thought that with a longer line I might attract the attention of some wandering small-mouth, so I attempted an underhand cast and put some power in it. But the minnow burst on the guide's jaw, which was where it shouldn't have been.

For a moment the guide rocked on his seat, as if about to dive overboard. Then, half rising, he demanded to know why I had done that. I apologized for the accident, explaining that if he had not raised his head at the critical instant the minnow would have cleared him, and advised him to think no more of it and continue his reading. During my explanation he watched me closely, appearing at times about to interrupt, but the logic must have appealed to him, for after a slight hesitation he said that he guessed he had finished his paper. He added that we had better go back to the hotel now for we were about out of bait. So we trolled again, quite close to shore.

Presently we saw a long, lithe creature, black in color, which the guide declared to be a mink, busy with a turtle at the water's edge, and we stayed our

course to watch. Whenever the turtle would put forth its head or flippers, the mink would snap; but so long as the turtle remained within his shell, the mink was powerless to harm. The contest seemed to be a stand-off, for though the turtle could not regain the water, neither could the mink bite through the shell. When the mink saw us, it suspended operations upon the turtle and regarded us fearlessly, arching its back and darting its head in and out with a curious snaky motion.

I threw one of our few remaining minnows on the shore, and the mink left the turtle and ran toward the minnow. The beast was almost incredibly swift, and its snaky movements were accentuated by the obstacles in its path. It seemed to glide over these instead of climbing them. For a moment it sniffed here and there, seeming to use its nose instead of its eyes. Then it located the minnow and pounced on it. In an instant that minnow was inside the mink.

A brilliant thought came to me, and I reeled in my line and made a cast to shore. The mink picked up my bait and I struck and hooked the beast. Instantly it darted into a near-by brush pile, and for a few moments I "played" it there; then I pulled it out and into the water.

For excitement bass fishing is nothing to mink fishing; but I prefer it. A bass is limited, so to speak. It won't leave the water to run about on land, neither

will it dart up the handle of a landing net to bite viciously at one's fingers, but the mink did both of these things. And after some minutes of spectacular battling it remained at the end of the leader, snapping its wicked looking teeth, seeming to regret that the length of the rod kept it out of the boat, apparently as fresh as when it began to fight.

"How are you going to take it off the hook?" I asked the guide.

"I'm not going to," responded that worthy, briefly.

Clearly there was no profit in pursuing that course further. Willingly would I have cut the line, had I been sure the mink would escape, but there was an air about the beast which made me believe it would employ its liberty improperly. We seemed to have aroused its evil impulses, and if it should join our party — No, we couldn't risk it. Though the mink wasn't large, our boat was too small for four.

"Can't you think of something?" I asked, turning again to the guide.

"I didn't know you wanted me to," he answered. "Most folks like to play their catch as long as it'll fight. They say they like a good battle."

"So do I," I rejoined, with dignity, "but this struggle appears to lack a successful termination, the only thing that makes fighting pleasurable. Employ your native cunning. You should be more than a match for a mere mink!"

"I could hit him with an oar," the guide said, doubtfully.

"Certainly you could," I replied. "I am surprised that you have not already done so."

We were mistaken. Even though its movements were hampered by the line, that mink could swim like a seal; it was impossible to hit it. After some futile attempts we sat and listened to our captive's clicking teeth. It seemed to be whetting them. Uneasily I wondered how long the hook's snell would last.

Raising my eyes from contemplation of this spectacle, I became aware of a woman, far up the terraced hillside, watching us through field-glasses. And suddenly a thought came to me, a thought which, by comparison, made my previous uneasiness a mere nothing.

"Do people ever tame minks?" I asked.

"I've been worrying about that for the last five minutes," the guide answered nervously. "That mink was too darned tame! I've seen a lot of mink, and usually you don't see 'em at all. Just a sort of a black flash," he added illuminatively.

"Gosh! I hope not. There's only one party lives anywhere near here, but if I'm mixed up with catching anything of hers, I'll never hear the last of it!"

"Is that her?" I asked ungrammatically, pointing to the female watching us.

"My soul and body, yes!" gasped the guide. "And

she's a-coming," he continued wildly, as the woman broke into a loping run toward us. "We're in for it!"

His terror was contagious, and seated on thorns I watched her rapid approach. To think that I had made the long trip from New York only to be bawled out by a wild woman for catching a tame mink! Slipping and sliding on the steep places, loping on the levels, nearer and nearer she came, and I sat silent, dismally apprehensive. At length she stood panting on the lake's brink.

For a moment she could not speak. Then: "What you got down there?" she demanded hoarsely, one long, gaunt hand pointing at the mink, the other shading her snapping eyes from the noonday sun.

There was no immediate reply. No one seemed willing to take up the burden of conversation. The guide, with the air of one guilty of a crime involving moral turpitude, stared fixedly at his feet. The Madame's frightened glance turned wildly between the tall female and me. Though I dreaded the termagant's tongue, I rose to my feet, took off my hat and began:

"Madame," I said, "I would not like to say what I believe it to be." ("I'll bet you wouldn't!" whispered the guide hoarsely.) "It is evidently a savage beast," I continued, with a wicked look at the guide, "for it seized our bait and then attacked us. We

all have been placed in great bodily fear, and my wife has suffered extreme mental perturbation. If it is possible to establish the beast's ownership, it is my intention to bring suit for damages."

"Well, I can tell you what it is," replied the woman vehemently; "and if that lazy lummox you've got for a guide was any good, he'd have told you! It's —"

"If you can guarantee us protection," I interrupted, bent upon making all possible defense before the storm should break, "we will liberate that beast by cutting the line."

"If you do, I'll have the law on you!" shouted the woman, shaking her fist at me. "You've got a mink that's been catching my chickens — that's what you've got! And if you let him go, I — I — I don't know what I'll do to you!"

"W-w-what did you say?" I stammered feebly, unable to comprehend instantly the great change in our fortunes.

"You heard me!" answered the remarkable woman. "You wait right here till I come back. I'll get a meal sack. Then you reel the nasty mink up short. I'll hold the sack open, and we'll put him in and drown him. Wait right here."

As she departed, the Madame and I drew long breaths of relief and smiled happily at each other. The guide took off his hat and wiped his forehead.

"Do you mind if I smoke my pipe, Marm?" he

asked. "It seems as if it might kinder clear my mind," he added pathetically.

"Go ahead," the Madame answered cheerfully; and the guide, after filling his pipe with the worst tobacco money could buy, poisoned the atmosphere with great gouts of smoke.

For a time he smoked in silence; then he turned to me. "If I'd stopped to think," he said heavily, "I could have told that that there mink warn't no tame mink. But that woman kinder terrifies me — always did. I wouldn't a-missed it, though — now that it's over. Gosh, you're a wonderful liar!" And the glow of honest admiration upon his features indicated that his latter remark was intended as a compliment.

"I couldn't see any reason for your fear," I said loftily, choosing to ignore fulsome praise of a disreputable, but useful, accomplishment.

"That's all right. If you weren't scared, you hid your feelings well," he rejoined dryly. "Anyway, if it had been her mink, you'd have just gone back to the city. I'd have to leave home. Ssssssh! She's coming back."

She came, and she brought a sack with her. Aided and abetted by her, also admonished, directed and supervised, we drowned the mink. And as it perished, she engaged us in conversation, a conversation to which the Madame and I contributed little and the guide nothing at all. As we withdrew the mink's

dripping corpse from the lake, I asked the guide where I could have the skin mounted. But he was not fated to reply, not while that tall, thin female was present, anyway.

"You take it to the fish undertaker in the village," she commanded. "Good-bye."

That's all. As you see, the story contains nothing tragic, but I warned you of this at its beginning, so don't blame me. The mink? Oh, it occupies the post of honor among our fishing trophies.

A Reel Story

Plenty of laughs in this Great Northern pike story by Mr. J. W. Oatout, of Watervliet, New York. He writes me: "I never dreamed of attempting to write a story, and this is no literary gem by a long shot, but you have so particularly said the story is the thing and not the style, that I have ventured to wade in." This story will make all honest anglers laugh.

Between hard work and a few other little things like that, my time is taken up about eleven months in the year, the other month being devoted to fishing, mostly at near-by lakes which must surely contain a lot of fish because it is a rare thing to see one taken out. But I make it a point to spend at least one week at a certain lake where there is very good sport, even though the fish do not attain record size.

Three of us usually go together — Art, Herm, and I. Art and Herm are both fish bugs. We go to the same place every year, driving the distance in what Art calls his "tinsmith's dream." Starting early in the morning we can make it in about five hours, providing "Lizzie is willin'." At such time when she gets balky and out of sorts, Art just fools around her a little, pats her on the back and whispers, "Lizzie,

this is Henry," and everything is all right. It's great the way he can jolly her along.

Well, on the day of which I write, due to Art's cajolery and Lizzie's good nature, we arrived about ten o'clock at a farmhouse on the lake shore. There being three of us, we take turns going alone.

We started out, each one declaring in no uncertain terms that *he* was going to land the largest fish that week, until Art says: "Now look here, suppose we make this 'biggest fish' question an object. Let's give a prize for the one landing the largest fish."

"Just the thing," says Herm. "What will it be?"

"Why, something good," says I. "Something worth while, because I am going to win it, and I am not going to put forth all my superior fishing skill unless the prize is worth the effort."

"Well," says Art, "suppose we make it a reel. How does that hit you?"

"Fine, great," says I. "Just what I want."

Then Art came forth with the information that he had always wanted a high-class reel but could hardly afford it and had suggested it in order to get one for nothing. Herm just grinned and looked as though he was sorry for both of us, and muttered something about "not saying anything — but just wait and see."

Well, the days passed and we put in full time on the lake. Honors remained about even until Friday

noon. Art came in with a seven-pound Northern pike and he was all swelled up — Art, not the pike — and confided to us that he could have caught it sooner if he had wanted to, but had put it off until the last day so as not to spoil our pleasure, which, of course, was very considerate of him. Things looked bad for Herm and me with Art two pounds in the lead and only half a day to go, as we intended starting home in the morning.

After dinner we started out again, and as far as I was concerned it looked like a forlorn hope, as conditions were all against me. It was my day to go alone. A strong wind had come up, which made it extremely difficult for me to fish and handle the boat at the same time. I tried to cast, but the wind would carry the boat in the weeds and I could do nothing that way. I tried trolling, but the water was so rough I could not see and was continually getting snagged, so I gave that up in disgust. At last in desperation I anchored the boat in the extreme end of a bay where I could cast with the wind into a narrow pass formed by the weeds, a good hundred yards from the shore, where the water was quite deep.

After a number of casts I hooked a small pickerel, but I was pretty well discouraged. After what seemed a long time I got another a little larger.

"If this keeps up at this rate," I thought, "I'll have one about eight pounds by sometime to-morrow."

I made several more casts without result, laid down my rod, filled my pipe and sat down to have a smoke.

"Now then," says I, "there is going to be something doing; I've fooled around here long enough." I had been using a small double spinner. I took it off and put on a No. 5 copper "Pflueger," spoon. On the third cast the spoon had no more than struck the water when there was a swirl and a vicious tug on the line. I struck quick and hard and he was hooked. He seemed to give several tugs backward, which I let him take on the spring of the rod, just giving him a few inches of line each time.

Suddenly he made a dash for the weeds across the cove. I held him taut, just giving enough line to ease the strain, and succeeded in turning him before he reached the grass. Then he swam along parallel with the weeds, while I kept a stiff line. He wanted to get in that grass very badly, and I was just as determined that he would not. Suddenly he gave it up and allowed himself to be led toward the boat. When about fifteen feet from the boat he suddenly changed his mind — perhaps I hurried him too much — but he gave a leap half out of the water and shook his head savagely. However, I had a taut line and he failed to throw the hook. Then back he raced toward the grass, but I thumbed the reel hard and made him earn every foot of it. Soon he made an-

other leap and it seemed as if he would shake his head off, but still the hook held.

"Well, old boy," says I, "I guess you are hooked good, and in that case you are mine. You weigh more than seven pounds, and you represent one first-class reel. So just be good now and you and I will be real good friends."

Again he gave up and came quietly toward the boat, swimming close to the surface. As he neared the boat I looked around to locate the landing net, as I did so, I heard a splash and felt a sudden slacking of the line. Turning quickly I saw the line disappearing under the boat. He had caught me napping. And then it was that a horrible thought struck me: *"The anchor rope!"*

Reeling in as fast as I could, I leaped to the stern, and plunging my tip I carried the line around the boat and reeled in the slack, but there was no response. The awful thing had happened — he was snagged on the rope.

The tragic moment had arrived. Dropping the rod, I fairly threw myself to the bow of the boat. Kneeling on the bow seat I grabbed the anchor rope. I could feel him — he was still there; but that reel was fading out of my tackle box.

I pulled frantically at the rope and nearly succeeded in sinking the boat. I call it a boat by courtesy only — it was one of those narrow, straight-sided affairs,

so common on our lakes, which they give to fishermen to suffer in, and which possess every feature which does not go to make a real boat. Using a little more care, I pulled in the anchor line until I could see my fish. He had wound himself right up close to the rope and was jerking and snapping on that line for all he was worth. It was a brand new twelve-pound test, but I knew the power of a fish in the water. Up he came toward the surface, until he was right on top.

Forgetting everything but the fact that I simply must have that fish and that he was in imminent danger of getting away, I let go of the anchor rope with one hand and grabbed him around the neck. As I did so, my knee slipped off of the seat and I fell headlong across the bow, my face and both arms going into the water, nearly punching a hole in my stomach with the bow, and the weight of the anchor nearly pulling me into the lake.

But did I let go of that fish? No, sir. Not so you could notice it. I simply had to have that fish. I had a hold of him and I was going to keep a hold of him.

Well, there I was — the anchor rope in one hand, the fish in the other, and the bow boring into my wishbone and fairly crowding the breath out of me. I was unable to wriggle back in the boat without the use of at least one hand. If I dropped the anchor,

it would pull the fish out of my hand or break the line and I was afraid I could not hold him if he were free. If I let go of the fish, ten to one he would snap the line before I could get him again. But I had no intention of letting go of that fish. So there I lay, that bow boring deeper and deeper, a fifteen pound anchor in one hand and a squirming, wiggling, slimy eight pound Northern pike in the other, the boat rocking up and down, and the waves slapping me in the face. I felt foolish, I knew I looked foolish, and I knew I was foolish; but I didn't give a hang — that pike was mine by all the laws of conquest and I wasn't going to drop him until he was in the boat.

Just then I heard the sound of oars. Twisting my neck around, I saw a boat approaching and I gave a yell: "Hey there, help! Hurry up!"

The fellow rowed up to about twenty feet from me, and dropping his oars he sat there calmly surveying me.

"What in thunderation ails you," says he. "What ye layin' there for and what ye hollerin' for?"

"Oh," I replied, "I always lie like this when I am fishing, and I was just yelling for practice in case I ever really did need help I would know just how to do it. Now look here, old pal, just row over here as quick as you can and give me a hand."

"Why sure!" he replied and then started toward me. "What do you want me to do?"

"Just get hold of that anchor rope and pull it up slowly," said I. "And for the love of Mike, don't let it slip back because if you do there will be a Gates Ajar in your front parlor to-morrow!"

"I don't know what you are talkin' about," says he, "but we'll see what we can do." So taking the rope he pulled it up slowly. One hand then being free, I got hold of the bow and wriggled back so I could raise myself up. Together we pulled up anchor and fish. When he saw the fish his eyes stuck out.

"Well, I'll be gol durned! That's the gol durndest thing I ever saw. Say, how long you been layin' thar hangin' on to thet pickerel?"

"Well," I replied, "by the clock maybe ten minutes, but by the way it seemed to me it was about ten hours."

"It's a nice fish," said he, "but I guess you earned it."

"My friend," I replied gravely, "that isn't a fish — it simply looks like a fish. It's an order on two poor unfortunate ginks for a first-class reel."

He looked at me puzzled and a bit suspiciously, and started to back his boat away. "So long," he said "I got to be gitten' back and 'tend to the cows."

"So long," I answered, "much obliged to you for your help."

Well, I did not have any cows to tend, but for once I had enough of fishing and I was going home.

I had what I believed was the largest fish; also I had what I believed to be the sorest stomach in the state.

I got back to the house and weighed my fish. Hurrah! Eight pounds and two ounces. I would show those guys who was *the* fisherman in that bunch. And, sure enough, they came in reporting very poor luck.

"Well," says Art, when he saw my fish, "you win. Where did you get him?"

"By the neck," I replied. And then I told them my experience, which caused a hearty laugh. But I felt pretty good. I had the honor of catching the largest fish, besides winning a good casting reel, so I was content even if I did have a sore stomach.

Bass or Business?

Every mother's son of you will consider it a rare pleasure to read Mr. Albert Chapell's story. Mr. Chapell hails from Los Angeles, and it is plain that the love of fishing is deeply planted in his heart. I should like to have known Marse Bill Taylor, of Mosby's Partisan Rangers, and to have fished with him would have been a very great pleasure, indeed. I have always loved to read of Colonel Mosby and his knightly riders. In my judgment their valorous deeds and dashing forays form the military classic of the war between the North and Dixie.

Tragic moments — they come, indeed, they do, to all who angle, either with pliant, daintily fabricated fly-rods, hastily cut withe, or twine and bended pin of hopeful, radiant childhood.

Yes, seh, this I'll stipulate, or contend, in or out of school, or by the deep pool in the upper windings of beautiful Sespe, where I took my last "big one."

D'ye know the Sespe? No? Then you have missed much of interest and of beauty. And if skilled in the gentle art, peradventure, you have missed the taking of one of the big ones yet lurking in the angles of the rugged canyon walls, where the waters are shadowed in the quiet morning and evening hours,

and have the mysterious color of depth — you know what I mean.

If you go to the Sespe, golden dreams will attend you, and tragic moments may also be experienced. The joy of living, and love of all God's creatures will surely come to you, for this is the quality of all waters wherein trout live and breathe and by Nature's law bring forth the fingerlings. And yes, the bass, we must not forget the gamy bass. In the ultimate this is why we follow in the footsteps of gentle Izaak Walton. Peace be unto his kindly shade. May our children and our children's children revere his name forever and ever and a day. This, my masters—brothers of the gentle art—comes from my heart.

Once upon a time I had a tragic moment — come to think, more than once. At this time I'll tell but one. Marse Bill Taylor kept the hotel at Williamsport, in bonnie Maryland, situated just there where you ford the Potomac to the Old Dominion. That's the place. There Robert E. Lee crossed the Potomac when he came out of Dixie to invade Pennsylvania — and marched back again with decimated legions, after disastrous Gettysburg.

Bill did keep the hotel in Williamsport by the Potomac in days long past, for as I write, it dawns upon me that I am harking back to the days of my carefully trained young pompadour and my first mustache.

That was long, long ago, yet how vivid the picture! I hope Bill's still there.

Bill was a veteran of the Civil War — full of reminiscence of march and bivouac and hot conflict under the lead of Mosby. Me, why, my hair's as gray today as Bill's was when it happened — I mean, of course, my tragic moment. That you'll hear about, if you but bear with me for a bit — you understand. And, pards, listen, the click of the reel as it swiftly twirls under the impetus of the outrunning silk and the tug of the fighting fish, of course — these are still sweet music to me.

I knew I had to go to Hagerstown. Not that I wanted to, but business is business. Still I loitered with Bill at the hotel, one early springtime, at peace with all the world and friendly with the genial frequenters of Bill's homely and delightfully comfortable old conversation parlor, with sanded floor. Bill kept some find old hooch — them was the happy days! And after the third drink time, he modestly told me rare tales of the irregular warfare waged by the daring little band of partisans he rode and fought with under the Stars and Bars. Maybe he was a hero for a' that.

But the tragic, or the semitragic, moment came on apace. We were comfortably seated — that is, Bill and I — there at the end of the broad old porch, just where, as I listened to Bill's tale, I could glimpse the

placid, slow-moving waters of the Potomac, blue in the distance, but with an intervening vista of shining wavelets, silver and gold tipped by the setting sun.

I wish you could get Bill's tale as he told it to me in that long ago time, of desperate strife and dare-devil charge of cavaliers in dingy butternut — a mere handful 'gainst a host in blue. 'Twas a thrilling tale — of a gory field, a miniature battle unsung in poem and overlooked in history, waged by heroes, who, like Cambronne's braves at storied Waterloo, feared death less than surrender. Bill's tale was bravely told, yet never finished. Just at the climax, just when Bill's Southern hero swayed in the saddle, just when his bullet-riddled body seemed about to sink to the ensanguined, sacred soil of Virginia, there to be trampled by plunging, battle-mad steeds, Bill's flow of eloquence was checked.

"Marse Bill, Marse Bill, Unc' Enos done tole me, he done tole me, t' tell you-uns th' bass was arisin' down ter the big bend."

The front legs of Bill's rush-bottomed chair in quick descent bumped loudly on the porch floor. In the tenseness of the moment, or perhaps, I should say, in the intensity of joy at glad tidings suddenly received — well, anyhow, Bill dropped his pipe, the burning dottle making the little barefooted pickaninny, breathless bearer of the good word from Uncle Enos, hastily dance back beyond the spread of it.

Said Bill, "Yank," said he, "give the nigger two bits an' he'll go git yer er fishing pole. We-all'l go fishin' in the mawnin'. It's one er them there new fangled kind. Here, you, Jubal, now you-all run ter Kunnel Carstairs 'n tell him to let ther stranger feller from Chicago hev thet thar fishin' pole er his'n with ther j'ints inter it. Hol' still, Jubal. You tell ther' Kunnel ther bass is risin' an' we'll send him er mess in th' mawnin."

Bill quieted my half-uttered remonstrance by informing me that the good Colonel Carstairs "had the gout in both legs, an' couldn't go fishin' nohow."

The "fishin' pole, with ther j'ints inter it" came, with the compliments of the Colonel and his good wishes. Before the sun had hid behind the darkening hills at the "big bend" our preparations were complete. Bill's final word to dusky Chloe to "put all that chicken, and plenty of pone in the basket," listened good to me.

Soon we resumed our porch chairs that the interrupted narrative might be resumed. But "the best laid plans o' mice and men gang aft aglee." In this vale of tears danger ever lurks. The "unexpected" is but another name for fate — unkind fate at that. Pardon the digression — I don't mean to be prolix; I merely desire that a few pertinent facts be known.

Our chairs were tilted at the right angle, our heels fixed against the rail, just there at the end of the

porch overlooking the placid waters of the Potomac. The wavelets, stirred to life by the gentle evening breeze, twinkling like the stars of heaven, flashed back the glancing light of the crescent moon, just above the crest of the now shadowy hill at "the big bend," where, according to Uncle Enos, the bass were rising.

Bill's face wore a thoughtful look. He filled his pipe — from my pouch. I chose a cigar. I remembered Bill's last word had left the heroic leader of the little Southern force in an extremely serious predicament. Nothing short of a miracle could save him from sudden death, or quick surrender. Surrounded by the enemy in blue, as Bill left him, a getaway was impossible. I don't know what happened to him! It isn't faulty memory on my part that shrouds the hero's fate in mystery. No, no, nothing like that. Bill didn't finish the tale of carnage, that's the reason.

Came a telegram to me—from Hagerstown, imperatively calling me to that ancient, quiet, and, to me, at that time unattractive city, "in the mawnin,' by the first train—and the only train, morning, noon or night—just when "the bass were rising down by the big bend."

Talk about tragic moments! If it were only possible to express one's real emotions in printable words at such times. Again Bill's chair legs thudded down upon the porch. When he had partially recovered, I gently, without undue emphasis, told him I must go to Hagerstown in the "mawnin'."

Bill looked at me. As I contemplated his attitude and studied his features in the pale light of the new moon, I could not definitely determine whether he was registering consuming sorrow or dangerous wrath. Anyhow, Bill was looking me right in the eye, just as if he meant something, or otherwise. A profound, oppressive, thick, suggestive, ominous silence ensued. At length Bill gasped out in thick, unnatural tones: "What in h—l do you want to go to Hagerstown for when the bass are rising?"

In the light of so complete a summing up of the whole issue of the case in one terse and singularly comprehensive question, I remained discreetly silent. In awed contemplation of this tragic moment I was obliged to admit to myself that heretofore I had failed to do full justice to Bill's reasoning powers. It was my mistake; but it was an error of the head, not of the heart.

I was a sound sleeper in those days — I really mean nights. As I recall my mental condition and moral attitude in that long gone period of my life, my conscience was then clear and untroubled. I can't recall that I ever, with wrongful intent at least, exaggerated, even to my trusting wife, the weight or length of the fish I caught or the one that got away.

Ah me! I am more than a decade past the half-century mark now, and my conscience — well, well, let me change the current of my thoughts. Bill's ques-

tion presented the dilemma even better than I could present it myself. I was 'twixt love and duty, and compelled to choose.

Aye, 'twas a problem. Bass or Business? It seems like yestere'en. How time flies! With a quiet, yet withal a kindly, "Good-night," I left Bill to his gloomy thoughts and sought the porter, a colored brother whom I had tipped liberally for trifling services rendered, who stole my cigars, but who, notwithstanding my knowledge thereof, I deemed trustworthy in the premises, if tipped.

"Wash, here's four bits," I whispered. I didn't want Bill to hear. "I've got to go to Hagerstown in the morning. Call me in time for that train and you get a whole dollar."

"Yessir, yessir, thank you, Marsa, I'se gwine to call you in plenty time fo' de train. Yessir, yessir."

With that warm glow of conscious virtue that comes to all who are really dutiful, I lay me down to the healthy sleep of youth — and virtue.

I had cast the die. It was Business, not Bass.

A persistent knocking at my door, sleepily heard at first, eventually roused me to the fact that the glad morning time had come.

"Yes! Yes! Wash, all right," I said.

Came the chuckling answer through the door: "Get up, Marse Chapple, de train am gone, an' Marse Bill am er waiting fo' yo'-all."

A Dive for a Big Fellow

Gentle reader, here is a black bass story from the pen of Edward C. Kemper, of Washington, D. C. Brother Kemper and I have formed a warm friendship through the mails, and I know when I meet my Virginia friend I am going to love him. There is a fellowship among the angling fraternity that is past understanding to those outside the sacred circle, and my friend Kemper belongs to the elect. His story deals with a stream which ran through his grandfather's plantation in the Shenandoah Valley. This self-same grandfather, by the way, commanded one of the brigades that General Pickett led in his immortal charge at Gettysburg. I have named one of the feather minnows "Kemper's Charge," and advise "E. C." to try it on that old ancient that got away. Who knows, he may be lingering about in that self-same stream, even though this Tragic Moment deals with a long ago.

It is not possible to write concerning one's own most tragic fishing moment without the frequent use of the personal pronoun. With this apology allow me to begin at the beginning: I am sure that I was a born fisherman. Mind you, I do not say "angler," the refined product, but "fisherman," a human being descended from an ancestor common to Ike Walton,

Will Dilg, Sam Spicer, VanCampen Heilner, and some others we all know more or less; or ascended by the process of evolution from some ancestral persecutor of the finny tribe common to the fish hawk, the kingfisher and some others of like stripe whom we have all admired and envied on occasions.

By the time I had reached the glorious age of seventeen I was equipped with a nine-foot jointed rod, reel, linen line and Cincinnati bass hooks. These deadly weapons were supplemented on all occasions by lots of creek minnows, which thrived well but not numerously in the big spring branch on my grandfather's plantation in the Shenandoah Valley, in Virginia, where I was raised. The south branch of the Shenandoah River is formed by the confluence of three smaller streams, known as North, Middle and South rivers. It was in the last-named stream, which works its arduous way along the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, that most of my fishing was done, for there the conditions were ideal. The water was clear and cold. There were many riffles and swift chutes, and between them deep pools or stretches of quiet water.

My brother Bill and I fished together. Most of the time we waded, floating the live minnows down with the current to the ledges and pockets ahead of us. At other times, when the days were hot, we fished from the bank, in deeper water, and if the

bass neglected us, we fell back on the basket of fried chicken always provided. Unfortunately we could not go fishing as often as we wished. We were permitted to go but every other day—the off days being spent in catching creek minnows for the following day's sport.

By some chance there came a day when Bill went elsewhere than bass fishing, so I went alone, loaded with a fine bucket of creek minnows, a fried chicken and the customary hopes for a big day. In this last I was not disappointed. It proved to be the biggest and the saddest in what are now many days of angling experiences. To that time the biggest bass we had caught was a four-pounder, landed by Bill, and used by him as an irrefutable argument that he was a better fisherman than I. To catch one bigger was my burning ambition.

Upon reaching the river bank I decided to try out some favorite places by using brook trout methods—stalking the quarry, one might say. Imagine a big sycamore tree standing out from the banks into a wide mountain stream, its far-flung roots washed by a steady current of clear water slipping along five feet deep over a bottom of solid rock. By crawling out on the bank-fastened roots I was able to gain a place beside the trunk of the old sycamore and to cast a juicy minnow under its spreading branches toward the center of the stream.

For a moment nothing happened. The minnow worked downstream with the current some twenty feet out from the base of the old sycamore, and I was about to draw him in for another cast. It was never made. The line tightened and moved upstream quickly and steadily. There was going to be plenty of action. The boy at the end of the rod clung tensely to his perch and bided his time, hoping for the conventional pause and second run with its obvious import. But the bass had other intentions. He continued his steady course upstream until the line grew thinner and thinner on the spool, and there was nothing for me to do but strike.

Holding the reel handle and tightening the line until I could feel the pull of the fish, I yanked the hook and held on. And then the biggest, blackest, most formidable looking small-mouth I have ever seen (then or since) came to the top of the water. He didn't jump — he just looked around, rolled over, and started for the other side of the river. Had he come into the shore and gone under the roots of the big tree the tragedy would have happened sooner than it did. What to do was a problem. To land such a bass from that perch was impossible. To follow him, and try to land him on the other side of the river was a possible course; to tire him out, kill him on the rod, and lead him around the roots of the tree and back to the bank was another. It was the one I

selected. Much now depended on the line and the rod. Both held in spite of a terrific strain, and the bass concluded to come back a bit and go upstream again. He did, not only once but several times.

By luck he was held out of the tree roots, and into the current, which had some advantages for him, and more for me. Finally he began to tire, to come to the top, and I could see him plainly in the dark, clear water. His red eyes glistened and his great fins worked back and forth. My heart beat like a trip-hammer, and I was frightened. I had hooked a bass so big and so strong that I didn't know what to do next, nor what the end was going to be. Then there came a change in the battle. The red-eyed warrior was visibly tiring and his efforts were becoming weaker. Slowly I worked back on the big roots, on which I had crawled out, holding the fish out from the tree, and now apparently exhausted on the top of the water.

At last I reached the bank below the tree. It was rocky, but not so steep, and I was soon at the water's edge, the great bass almost within my grasp. I thought he was done for, that he was beaten, that I had him. I bent and reached for his lower jaw, and at that cursed moment the gut on the hook, frayed to a shred, snapped in two and the big bass was free. He floated for an instant and then convulsively started for the bottom. Like a flash I threw the rod

aside and sprang at him, into the water, with both hands gripping at him and on him, desperately striving to hold him against my chest for but a second, to sink some grip into his big body that would not slip. He was too quick. In a trice he was gone, and there I stood empty handed, up to my arms in cold water, exhausted for lack of breath. It was a bitter defeat administered by a worthy foe.

What did I do then? I went ashore blazing with anger. I didn't feel the wet clothes. I swore that I would some day catch that bass and be revenged. But I never did.

Only a year ago, after fifteen years' absence, I went back and fished from the roots of that sycamore tree for perhaps the hundredth time since the great victory of the biggest small-mouth I ever saw. All I got of him was experience, and a strange idea which formulated itself in later years, that any boy of seventeen who would so instantly spring into the water after escaping quarry must be a born fisherman, like an osprey or a kingfisher.

The King of Half-Moon Bay

Here is a charming little tale by Carl C. Cowles, of Council Bluffs, Iowa, and when I call it charming, I mean it. The fisherman who can read it without its reaching his angling blood is little to be envied. It is a pleasure to print this story, and I know that the reader will thank brother Cowles for having written it, just as I do.

I disclose no secret to those who know me when I confess that my possessing and all-consuming hobby is fish — it has been as far back as my memory goes, and that runs back to the time when as a barefooted boy of less than ten I plodded three miles over the dust-laden country road to a lazy little country stream to send the lowly bullhead flying from his muddy home in a high and mighty arc over my head to safety on the meadow grass a dozen yards behind. Since those days I have had the good fortune, and I am still in the twenties, to fish in your own beautiful and legendary waters of the North, Mr. Dilg, and yet again in the shadow of the rugged hills of your Zane Grey's beloved Clemente.

Now as I turn back the pages of memory to each of those golden days and one by one fight over again

the many losing battles scattered through those years, I find the one that to me spelled greatest tragedy at the moment is the one which I am about to relate.

The prolonged zero weather of the winter of 1919-1920 as usual failed to reduce even by one-tenth of one degree my " fever," and as actual fishing was of course out of the question, I had to find what contentment I could in the winding of rods, repairing of tackle and the materializing of a few of my own conceptions in the line of lures. Time crept by at a snail's pace — but at last July and vacation came, finding me near the breaking point of repression.

It was during that winter of planning and dreaming that there awoke in me a desire to take in a fair fight a Northern pike or musky of twenty pounds or better. The desire consistently grew and flourished and strengthened with each of my many fireside siestas until it became a veritable obsession.

My reason for mentioning this is to give you a glimpse of my state of mind on that never-to-be-forgotten summer morn when the tragic incident occurred, for the degree of tragedy, indeed the very element of tragedy itself, that any particular incident holds for us is determined by the state of mind.

That year I spent my vacation in Wisconsin in the hope that fortune would favor me with the gratification of my ambition. Through those weeks I enjoyed many fine days of sport, but only once were

the smouldering fires of my ambition swept by the kindling breezes of chance.

I arose in the gray dawn of that summer morning. Dashing the sleep from heavy eyes with the chilled waters of the lake, I was soon in the boat, sans breakfast, pulling for the "stumps," a large, well-protected bay rank with moss, pickerel grass and waterweeds and fringed with falling and half-submerged dead pines.

Fairy mist arose from the tranquil bosom of the lake and was wafted away by the slightest suggestion of a breeze that the first peep of the coming dawn had awakened. I swung the boat thirty feet from the moss line and paralleled the shore, picked up the light bamboo and tossed the Number 3 spoon Ibis and pork rind into the weedy pockets.

What a morning it was with the cool air, pure and sweet and ladened with the dewy fragrance of the verdant shores, the east all gray and mauve and pierced with the pink shafts of the coming sun, the blue dome of the summer sky still set with the one morning star now visible but fastly waning, and the gray blue of the crystal lake. What joy and exultation were mine! I was a king, but shorn of his cares, turned loose in the land of heart's desire. Again and again the bait shot out in graceful curves, and with entranced eyes I followed it back.

Look! What was that? A slight ripple where the

weeds grew thin. Then the gray depths of the waters was haunted with a long, still grayer, swiftly moving form. I snapped into action with heart beating hard against my breast. Seconds seemed hours as that long gray form raced for the bait. He reached it. Swirl. The water bulged in a glassy, tub-sized mound, and with trembling hands I struck back. The line went taut; the light rod whipped over into a bow and I felt the hook sink into something live and solid. Then came the irresistible weight of his rush as he frantically realized the cheat. The line was fairly torn from the reel and swept away from me, and I found myself at last at grips with the savage King of Half-Moon Bay.

Five, fifteen, twenty-five feet he sped away. Then the point where the line met the water also raced from me and the waters were split with a great golden spotted form as he ploughed the surface of the water into a stream of foam. Down he went in a zigzag course, then to the surface in another frenzied run and down again. He slacked, and the line almost lay still. With shaking hands I recovered the first few feet of line.

Docilely now he came under the strain of the rod in strange contrast to the savage acrobatics of a moment before. I could make out the great vague shadowy form and could see him plainly as he suffered himself to be dragged along inert save for the

rise and fall of his great gills, and I fancied I could see the water tinged with red around his great, savage yellow eyes. Then like a flash he snapped from the lethargy and was gone again with the reel singing in my ears and the line mercilessly burning my thumb.

Not so easily was this King to be hauled unceremoniously into the boat. I could feel the springy give of the slender line that connected me with my prize as I strained it even past the point of prudence to swing him toward the boat as he again sulked. That fish was mine and I was determined to end it all as soon as possible, for I had premonitions of the hook working loose. Again I had him where he was plainly visible, not a dozen feet from the boat, motionless, dogged, but with defiance in his eyes — aye, even contempt:

Still closer I led him. I transferred the rod to my left hand, and with thumb clamped on the reel spool swung him toward the side of the boat. One clutch of thumb and forefinger in his bony eye sockets and my ambition would be realized. I reached toward him. Smash. In a fury of foam he was gone, and this time with dismay I saw that it was for the weeds. The spool fairly seared my thumb as I vainly maneuvered to avoid the inevitable. Plainly I felt the line cutting into the moss bed, then stick. Something snapped. The rod straightened and the

line floated limply to the surface minus its first six feet. Stunned and with trembling hands I slowly wound in the useless line. My prize was gone. I had been beaten, and that old Monarch of the stumps was free.

Last year I returned to those waters still carrying that same ambition and yet again departed with that ambition. I intend to go back again this year.

To the fisherman, however, "Sweet are the uses of (such) adversity," for my ambition still lives to furnish the gossamer thread from which my many day dreams may be spun and to rest and freshen and charm and inspire me with the bliss of its purusit.

One Chance in a Million

The following story will make you hold your breath. The writer, Ray Ernest Smith, M. D., of Rutland, Vermont, tells thrillingly the story of a great adventure, narrow escape and some Tragic Moments. The doctor spent two years in France in the "zone of advance."

I have been reading with great interest the various contributions to the "Tragic Moments" and, quite naturally, my own memory has revisioned the various occasions that stand out from my own experiences along the streams and ponds. There are so many of these high spots that come to mind that it is difficult, indeed, to pick out the one about which I shall tell you.

I remember, for example, that particular day in late June when I was busy with live bait after wall-eye. The sport had been poor, and almost at quitting time I hooked into a five and one-half pound black bass — and had to return him to the water, the season not opening for three short days to come. That was, with me, a tragedy!

Then there was that other time when I was but a "kid" fishing for shiners at the top of a mill-dam.

A hunger-mad pike glutted the shiner I was just landing and in the ensuing struggle I slipped and went head over heels down the spillway to land in some ten feet of water at the foot of the dam, half-drowned, badly frightened, the newly purchased rod a broken memory.

The most tragic time of all my fishing days, however, happened in July, 1918, and it is of that occasion that I shall here write. It's a far cry from the green fields, rippling brooks, and spruce shaded lakes of my beloved Vermont to the distant battlegrounds of France, and from the speckled trout of my mountain streams to the sluggish fish of the muddy (and sometimes bloody) *ruisseau* of that far off land — but a sportsman's wanderings ofttimes take him far afield, and that you may understand the tragedy of my story I must ask you to fix in mind two things. First, to the average Frenchman "Pigs is Pigs" — or, rather, to paraphrase, Fish is *Fish*. Nothing that wears fins is too small to be considered legitimate game, and minnows we would consider as too small for use as bait are with him a delicacy. Whatever the game laws may be in the Piping Days of Peace, in the Popping Days of War they were a thing unheard of and unobserved.

The most common method over there of obtaining fish was by the use of a one man dip net, and it was a common sight to see, anywhere back of the lines,

each little brook or larger stream lined with bearded men industriously netting these diminutive minnows, which, when caught, were cooked and eaten "Bones, guts, hide and all."

A more favored method of getting fish in the larger streams, and the method universally employed by the poilu, was through the use of the regulation hand grenade, and it is this fact that I ask you to remember as the second essential to the understanding of my experience.

The regulation grenade was an affair the size of a large pear containing within its half-inch shell of iron a large amount of explosive actuated by a percussion cap. The nose of the grenade, containing the cap, was struck sharply against a stone, a second grenade, or against the steel dome of the wearer's helmet, and then, according to regularly ordained movements, was thrown at the count of "three" — the miniature shell exploding exactly five seconds from the time the cap was exploded.

These hand grenades were of terrific force. They were capable of killing a dozen men or, as I myself saw when working with the engineers, of blowing out the entire end of a stone house when the grenade was properly placed at its base.

Now I am ready for the story itself — and it is short. It was a beautiful day in mid-July. The sun was very warm and bright even in France. I was

just from the trenches on three days' furlough at the rear of the lines and enjoying every single minute of the brief time allotted me to spend as I pleased. At this particular moment I was not fishing, but was rather just at the close of a most successful hunting expedition, as I sat there, cross-legged, on the soft grass on the banks of the Marne, the soft breeze gently caressing my nude body, eyes intent upon my outspread shirt across my knees, fingers busy with the last rites of "shirt reading."

Tiring at length of my labors, and once again yielding to the whispered invitation of the wanton, soft-bosomed river, I slipped from the bank into its welcoming embrace. Completely giving myself up to the sensuous enjoyment of its gentle enfoldment, I floated, swam and sprawled in the shallows, blissful and at peace with all the world. Oh, the luxury of sun-kissed water to the parched and irritated skin deprived for week on end of aught but the poorest makeshifts of common cleanliness!

At last, realizing that the hour was late and that I must soon wend my way back to the little cantonment where I was billeted, I let my body slip with the current out from the little sheltered cove where I had been so content, until I rounded the point into the deeper, cooler waters of the pool below.

I had but entered the quiet waters of this second pool when a splash just at my face brought me up-

standing, treading water, to discern its cause — and in an instant my contentment was shattered. My blood stood frozen in my veins! My hair stood on end as I saw on the near bank of the stream a half dozen white faced, madly gesticulating poilus shouting and waving their arms at me in horror. Instantly the splash was explained — hand grenade!

"Five seconds!" — and I galvanized into fierce and frantic action, regardless of the self-evident fact that action was useless!

Five seconds! — it would be an utter impossibility to reach the safety of the shore, even had I all of those short seconds in which to accomplish the journey.

Five seconds! — and now there could be but a scant remainder of even that scant time yet left me! Better it were to cease all struggling and meet the inevitable with courage and with calm, yet I continued the frantic thrust of arm and leg against the resisting water, useless though I knew the effort to be. Five seconds! — and those gone! — yet no explosion — and I was yet alive! Then my knees struck bottom, and I madly charged up the bank to throw myself exhausted beneath the nearest tree and to lie there panting with great intakings of air while the trees and earth and sky swam around me in dizzy circles like a universe gone mad.

As I gradually once again took hold upon the reali-

ties of life, it was to find the white faced poilus gathered about me with offerings of Pinard in their hands whilst each tried by very force of voice and of gesture to make me understand the depth of their abasement and sincerity of their apologies.

Just why that particular grenade failed to explode I shall never know. I have no very great interest as to the reason — whether it was due to German contamination or to the forgetful fingers of some tired girl back in the ammunition factory. Suffice it for me that it failed! And while, in that particular "moment" which I have described I was not the fisherman, yet I feel that the "tragic" part of the heading may well be claimed by me.

Jamesie's Catch

Here is a charming story by my dear friend Olin H. Smith of Sycamore, Illinois. It has the right ring. Mr. Smith says in his letter "Sometime I might tell you where the good fishing has gone and how in a measure it can be restored." That's the stuff, brother Smith. We want your boys and all of the boys which are to follow to have sport. Read Mr. Smith's story carefully and don't forget the moral he preaches.

For more than thirty years I have taken my vacations in the woods and lake region of Northern Wisconsin. My favorite fishing grounds included the Eagle waters, Lac Vieux Desert, Big and Little Twin, Buckatabon, St. Germain, Big Sand, Long Lake and Gogebic. The Brule River, Prairie River and the streams around Watersmeet. To those who know these waters this list will give evidence that my fishing education has been varied, as it comprised large and small mouth bass, muskellunge, Great Northern pike, wall-eyed pike and brook trout.

Just to make the younger generation of fishermen sit up and take notice I will cite a trip one of my earlier partners and I took from Big Twin to Big Sand Lake. This was in the days when Andy Morrissey ran the

place on Big Sand. My friend, Edgar Johnson — (long since dead but of blessed memory) — and I caught small mouth bass and muskies and, on the side, made a trip to Alvoy creek for trout, and to Smokey Lake for large bass.

The rod I used on that occasion was an eight and one-half ounce, eight foot split bamboo "Chubb." The trip was planned for muskies, so the only hooks we carried were No. 8 and No. 9 Skinner spoons. Tiring of the muskies — (for it was a poor day when we could not hook half a dozen of them at least) — we wanted a try at some of the big bass we could see in the deep holes in Smokey Lake. I took the three-hook gang off one of the spoons and broke off two of the hooks, which, baited with part of a muskie's gullet, was the lure with which we still-fished for bass.

I happened to have along one-half dozen small flies which we used for the trout. I believe a hook fastened to a chip or a piece of bark would have been lure enough for the bass — they were that plentiful and ravenous. My friend and I brought back two sixteen pound muskies, twenty-four brook trout and three small mouth bass that weighed seventeen pounds three days after being caught. Some fishing! Say, boys, if twenty-five years ago Wisconsin had had in force the game and fish laws that now exist, her lake region would have ben a fisherman's *perpetual* paradise.

I have never knowingly taken an unfair advantage

of bird, beast or fish and, recalling my many delightful days in the wilderness and the "good luck" I have always had, I am inclined to think — in fact I know — that my observance of the common decencies of a sportsman found its full reward in the incident I here relate. Many a tragedy has begun or ended with a smile and I hope the reader will smile with me as he takes in this "tragic" tale

After many years of camping out and staying at various resorts, I finally settled down and built a cabin on the shore of a lake that contained only black bass. Of all the fish that swim and take the hook, they suit me best and my reasons may be condensed in the answer of the old guide who being asked by a tenderfoot how he would know when he had hooked a bass, replied thus: "Son, hooking a black bass is like getting married or being bitten by a rattlesnake — you know something has happened."

I have had all kinds of partners, all good fellows and willing to do their share of the work but some of them lacking the nerve to go through with the strenuous things I occasionally enjoy. My old cabin burned four years ago and my partners have all died, retired from the game, or have married an automobile, so I was in luck when three years ago I found a new partner — one who has the courage, good nature and enthusiasm to tackle anything I may care to do. With all my varied assortment of fishing places, fishing part-

ners and fishes, it will readily be seen that I must have had some thrills.

It happily fell to the lot of my new partner to furnish me with the biggest and best thrill of them all. Here he is: Folks, meet my grandson, James Lowell Smith, now eleven years old. He started in at eight years going alone with me into the woods and has now made three trips. The first year he carried a pack nine miles from our home camp to go trout fishing. We stayed three days and came home in a driving rain with nary a grouch and him whistling all the way. Of course, a good sport like that should have the best of tackle, so I made him a real rod.

My years of use of fishing rods had taught me that the best jointed rod was one without any joints. I, therefore, had previously secured from a near-by swamp a straight tamarack sapling seven and one-half feet long, which I peeled, dried, stained and varnished and mounted with guides, tip and reel in regular fashion. It's some rod. This is all preliminary to the main show — just the setting for the " tragic moment " which, in my case, was a period.

Envision, if you will, a bright, sunny morning in late July, 1918. The boy and I in a boat on one of the sweet water lakes of Northern Wisconsin — Butternut Lake to be exact. A gentle fishing breeze was blowing from the southwest and the water, sky and party looked like fish. The lad had the rod and I the

"As I slipped the landing net under the tired but still scrappy fish, the hook dropped out of its mouth."

oars — both with high hopes. Mine the highest, perhaps, because I knew what was liable to happen.

Within half an hour he had hooked, landed and put back three or four bass of less than two pounds weight. We do not keep bass of less than two pounds unless badly hurt. Our live minnows did not seem to appeal to the big fish, so I slipped on a small frog and instantly we got action. From the way the fish took hold and started away, I knew my partner would be busy. He snubbed Mr. Bass at the proper moment and he started for the weeds by going directly under the boat. I saw the top of the rod on the wrong side of the boat with the fish going strong. He broke water about sixty feet away, coming out full length but fortunately failing to hit the line as he fell back into the water. Of course I had immediately moved the boat from over the line, took a good long breath and settled back — to enjoy the fun? Nix, *to try and keep my mouth shut and my hands off?*

Slowly and with much effort the lad reeled him in only to have again and again to give out more line. Twice the reel handle was jerked out of his hand but all the time the tamarack rod was on the job and the fish seemed safe — and ours. Eventually, the fates being kind, we took him in out of the wet. During those ten or twelve minutes of mingled hopes and fears I probably did more subdued, innocent cussin' and earnest praying than were ever before combined.

Ye old fishermen knowing the sensations we experience when playing a good fish may well wonder what part I took during those tragic moments. Did I take the rod part of the time just to show the boy how? I did not. Did I want to? I surly did, but wouldn't have touched it for a thousand dollars. As I slipped the landing net under the tired but still scrappy fish, the hook dropped out of his mouth! And then I did something. I yelled so you could have heard me a mile and I leaned over and hugged that boy. Now, wouldn't you like to?

And how about the boy? For the first time since the scrap started he spoke. "Gee! what a lunker!" was all he could say. And he looked pale around the gills and did not care to fish any more that day.

The boat we christened "Kingfisher" and the new cabin we built last summer, on the site of the old one, is named "Kingfisher's Roost." You'll find us there this summer and many more, I hope, and I can take you out and show you the hole the bass came out of — and the picture of the lad who took him out — and of the rod — and of the fish, which weighed four pounds.

And now we come to the real tragic part of it all. Did you ever notice how few boys you see fishing with their dads? Oh! ye fathers and grandfathers, have a heart and give the boys a chance; give them a start towards good health; give them a broader, better

view of life; give them self-reliance and independence! Teach them to listen to the birds and trees, to look on the sun and stars with open heart, and while they are doing it, give you a better time than you ever had in all your life.

Try it, men, and keep young.

A Wise Old Bass

Mr. Gus E. Munch has here spun for us a great fishing tale. It's "a pippin, a daisy, a ducky, a lamb." What's more, it comes to me written "on the spot." This very tragic thing happened on Balsam Lake, Polk County, Wisconsin, and it's "hot off the bat," as the story was written June thirteenth, the day of the tragedy, about two weeks before the opening of the bass season in Wisconsin. Could anything be more harrowing? And what do you think of the angling spirit of Munch and Lee?

The chances are that the seven and three-quarter pound bass was teaching the newly spawned babies how to paddle their own canoes and how to survive. Some day your boy or my boy may hook one of them and have the time of his young life. More power to you, "Gus" Munch and Albert Lee. "Long may you live and prosper." Here is the story:

For thirty years I have fished and fished, hoping that some day I would hook a bass better than seven pounds. I have searched in many unknown lakes throughout Wisconsin and Minnesota, always in quest of the one prize I still needed to complete the collection of trophies in my fisherman's den. Countless thousands of big bass were netted and turned loose again — none qualified.

But today! Ah yes, today, fateful, cruel thirteenth day of June, the search for one brief moment was ended — the monster bass had finally arrived at last!

I was fishing for great northern pike (which the Wisconsin law allows before June fifteenth) and the big bull bass struck savagely at the spoon hook and hung himself (which the Wisconsin law strictly forbids before June fifteenth). Having glimpsed the monster as he struck, all else was forgotten — fishing laws included. Carefully, very carefully, the fight waged madly on, now to the advantage of the fish, then again to mine. But the hook held tight, and after seeming hours of dread suspense the prize was finally landed.

"Eureka!" I cried, as the scales pulled down to seven and three-quarter pounds; "the long search is ended! The prize is mine at last!"

"Not so fast, my friend," said Albert Lee, the game warden, who was in the boat with me. And then the delirious dream came to a sudden, abrupt end. The cruel truth flashed through my brain. The monster bass would have to be turned loose again. The stern laws of the State of Wisconsin demanded it; so also did Albert Lee. Drat the game laws! Double drat Albert Lee! Could anything be more tragic?

And even so, the long search is again resumed.

The King Bass of the Delaware

Lionell Phillips sent me a charming bass story written while at his bungalow on the banks of the Delaware. Zane Grey has a place there too, and he and his brother have told me some mighty tales of the bass they have taken from that historic river. Mr. Phillips writes: "My main occupation at present is catching small-mouth bass (sometimes with your pattern bass bug), so I scribbled off my story of My Tragic Moment." Some story, I'll say, old man, and so will all the rest when they read it.

Ever since I have been "knee high to a grasshopper" I have fished the upper reaches of one of the best bass streams in the east — the Delaware River. On it I have gone through the stages of sapling, steel rod, casting-rod and bamboo fly-rod, through live bait, bait-casting, fly-rod and spinner, and finally wet flies and bass bugs. This river is my home grounds for fishing even after experiences in several widely separated states.

Not fifty yards away from my bungalow, nestling under the mountain that forms one bank of the river, is a particularly deep pool or pocket into which the fast waters of a quarter mile long rift empty. Years ago, while still in the exclusively live-bait stage of

development, I stood on the rocky shore of this pool. Impaling a large green frog on my hook, I cast him into the middle of the stream. As the frog lay kicking on the surface of the pool, the largest small-mouth bass I ever saw alive rolled silently to the surface. A mouth that seemed a foot across and the baleful glare of a pair of red eyes actually frightened me as I stood there paralyzed at the sudden appearance. Perhaps those eyes in that wonderfully clear water actually did see me standing there mouth open; perhaps the bait I offered was not to his liking, but at any rate he disappeared as silently and rapidly as he had appeared, and no amount of casting or still-fishing ever brought him up again.

Many hours were spent every summer in a try for "my" bass, but he refused in turn everything from flies to mice, though occasionally on a dark night we could hear him from the bungalow porch smashing through schools of minnows or jumping at the surface. Daylight, moonlight, darkest night were all useless so far as hooking him was concerned. Local enthusiasts, with memories of broken "poles" and lost snelled hooks and cod lines, estimated him at from seven to eight pounds. Discounting this by a pound or two made him even then a regular whale of a bass for this river of many rapids, little feed and few deep pools for honest small-mouths to loaf in and grow stout.

The "late unpleasantness" kept me exceedingly busy over two fishing seasons, though once in a while, probably by contrast, memories of the bass I had grown to consider "my" bass would haunt me. However, the last days of July, 1919, saw me speeding two thousand miles to the little bungalow under the mountain for what I considered a well-earned rest from commanding and being commanded.

A nine-foot bamboo, especially built for river work and "my" bass, accompanied me. Correspondence with the local oracle of fishing had assured me that the monster bass was still lord of the pool, though probably bristling like a catfish with hooks and snells from all accounts. The fastest train the government could produce seemed to crawl along to my beloved fishing waters. All that summer I fished for that bass, only temporarily distracted by such duties as eating, sleeping, and catching little two- and three-pounders for the pan. All the baits I could buy, borrow or dig were tried and all without effect.

One day, grown desperate at the poor results of man-made lures, I collected a bait-can full of stone catfish or "hammerheads," as they are locally known, among them being a regular monster of a stone catfish fully six inches long. The old saw, "Set a thief to catch a thief" made me wonder if "Set a King (of stone catfish) to catch a King" (of small-mouth bass) wouldn't be effective.

Paddling the canoe to the far side of the river, I anchored in the rapids, looked over my outfit and selected a new hand-forged, long shank bass hook mounted on a double gut. Securing this hook to my heavy fly line, I carefully ran it through the lips of my king of stone catfish and allowed him to drift gently into the pocket. Nothing happened as usual. Just as I had grown tired of the tame sport of still-fishing and had already drawn up anchor, the big single action began to click as something started to move off with the bait. Hastily I reached for the rod, and after six feet or so of line had run out and whatever it was had turned the bait ready for swallowing, I struck hard. *Bang, splash,* and from the aerial acrobatics I knew I was hooked to "my" bass at last. Hold him? Not if I had used the sash cord anchor line. Away he went downstream, the bamboo creaking under the strain as I vainly tried to save some of the line. Happily the combination of current and fish carried the light canoe along and I didn't quite reach the end of the line.

Suddenly he dove for the bottom and sulked, while the canoe drifted almost over him and I congratulated myself on the easy method of taking in line. Then off he went upstream, and the canoe started upstream as I desperately clung to the rod and watched the line disappear. He sure was a FISH!

It is hardly necessary among the fraternity to de-

scribe the thrills of that combat. Suffice to say that after possibly ten minutes that seemed a whole day, I had him where he began to swim near the surface in wide circles around the canoe, which by this time had drifted some distance downstream. Nearer and nearer the canoe the circles were made and slower and slower they became. What a fish he was — over two feet of dark green and lighter yellow as he lay on his side near the boat. At the time he looked to me all of eight pounds. Now as I mentally compare him with my six-pound small-mouth I have since caught, I know he was about six and a half, possibly a little heavier.

At any rate, I slid my long handled landing net deep in the water and this brought a dying flurry from the big fellow. Slowly I drew him in; nearer and nearer he came to the net. I had him almost over the net; I had him over the net and was about to net him when — the snell parted at the hook, right at the end of the silk wrapping, and "my" bass half-floated, half-wiggled downstream. That moment has never been equalled in twenty years of all kinds of fishing experience as my most tragic fishing moment.

The Bank That Failed

Boys, oh, boys, here is a real one. It is from Captain C. F. Wheeler, R. I. R., of Winnipeg, Canada, who has served his country for forty-two years, and in that time has been all over the world. The Captain says: "I could write you some splendid stories of Africa, but they are so farfetched and above all so absolutely true that I doubt they would be believed. I know more about fishing and shooting than I know about writing." Captain, your story proves to me that you know a great deal about all three.

Well, here is my most tragic fishing moment. "Have it or leave it," I give it you just as it happened to me, and although it is now many years ago, yet it is as fresh in my memory as the day, aye, the hour, it happened.

I was at the time a member of the famous Bechuanaland Border Police (South Central Africa) and was fishing in one of the very deep holes along the north shore of the Limpopo River for manseer (Giant Barbel). These fish are at this particular place very large; fifty, sixty, and even eighty pound fish having been caught in the deep holes.

At certain times of the year this giant river of

Africa is a raging volume of water, but at the time of which I am writing it was very shallow, as it was the middle of the dry season. But in certain places — and they were many — there were very deep holes — and into these holes the crocodile were wont to hide in the day time, coming out at night to feed. The place was called Port's Drift and is about ninety-five miles dead south of Bulawayo and twenty-five from Fort Tuli. This drift as well as Rhodes Drift is well over five hundred yards across, the north shore being in Rhodesia, the south, in the Transvaal.

The country round about simply teems with dangerous game; lion, leopard, elephant, rhino, hippo, and a dozen different kind of buck, including those two rare species, the giraffe (a camelopard) and that very beautiful brindled bull, the greater koodoo. Snakes of all kinds are abundant. Puff adder, cobra, momba, night adder, and the monster python are common; in fact, the country round about at certain seasons fairly abounds with big game life. I was standing on an overhanging bank looking down into a deep dark pool in which could be seen scores of the fish (the manseers); and there were many of those lurking, skulking 'crocks' either just under water or lying half in and half out of a weed bed.

My line was a home-made one of seamen twine that had been twisted on a jenny, and my hook was also home-made by our farrier sergeant out of the

tang of an old file. There were no rod nor tackle stores there — all virgin forest — some forest, too, I can assure you.

My bait was a piece of the liver of a buck, shot the day before, and there was a very fine aroma to that liver, believe me, there in tropical Africa!

I had pulled some ten decent size fish out of this same hole a week previous, and as fish was a change of diet to ordinary rations, we never missed a chance for a change.

I had two of my niggers with me, and after a lot of chaff from them as to my ability as an angler, I managed to land several fair-sized fish — one about twenty pounds. But I was not satisfied, as I could see down on one side several giants and was determined to have a go for one of them.

My rod was a pole cut in the forest, as straight as a ramrod, and about twelve feet long. It had a ring at the top like a picture ring and fastened on by tying with string twisted around the pole at the butt end.

And so approached My Most Tragic Fishing Moment. I carefully adjusted my stinking bait, fastening it on with some string from the line I was using. When all was ready I lowered the bait into the water and waited results. I could see all that happened, as the water in this particular pool was clear, except at times when stirred up by the crocodiles moving

from one place to another. For a long time there were no results. I began to think I was going to have no luck, when all at once a very large fish made a rush at the bait and I had him on and well hooked. I commenced to play him around, but was hardly able to hold him. I was very excited, when without warning, crash went the bank on which I was standing, and I, one nigger, rod, line and all, went headlong into the pool among the fish and crocodiles.

I well remember the hell of a splash that was made, because I am no lightweight — two hundred and forty pounds (I am two hundred and seventy pounds now). I know I must have frightened the whole contents of that pool most to death, as nothing attempted to touch me or the boy who went in with me. I need not tell you it did not take me a minute to scramble out, wet to the skin and all my tackle gone.

I made my way back to camp as quickly as possible to change and clean up, but I was the laughing-stock of the whole troop, and I was jeered at and called "the fisherman" for many a long day.

I never recovered my tackle from the pool, but for years afterwards, I caught many a giant fish in that place when visiting thereabout on duty and could spend a few days for sport.

But I never again was fool enough to stand upon an overhanging bank that was undermined. Once bit, twice shy.

Fool Luck, Trout, Bear and Tragedy

Heaps of thrills in this one by Howard B. Gray, of Cedar Falls, Washington. Our friend, after a long rest from fishing, opened up the season with enough adventure to last for a lifetime, and all in one fishin' day, too.

Now you urge us all to come in on this, but I have been hanging back on mine because it sounds too far out of the ordinary. However, truth is stranger than fiction, you know, so here it is.

Did you ever mix fool luck, trout, black bear, and tragedy together on a nice bright August morning and watch the result? Take my advice and don't do it if you are close to the scene of action, for it is too hard on the nerves. It all happened this way:

After getting my "Full and Complete" from the army in the late spring of 1919, I secured employment with one of the transcontinental railroads, and was located in a little town in the foothills of the Cascades. The rest of the boys in the office were enthusiastic fishermen and their continual chatter revived my interest in the game. So a few weeks later my little bamboo pole and the rest of my tackle arrived from

home and I began to dream of the big ones about which the rest of the bunch talked.

Now it was about four years since I had laid my rod away, and misgivings began to come concerning my adeptness with the old outfit, so I wanted to find some secluded spot to practice the gentle art of casting where there would be no one to see the awkward efforts. About four miles through the virgin forest there nestled in a hidden valley a little mountain lake reputed to be well stocked with big lake trout. This seemed to be the ideal place for a backslider to get into trim.

My shift ended at midnight, and promptly on that hour I banged my desk shut and tore for home to get a few winks before the alarm scheduled to go off at three a. m. should rout me out in the cold. It seemed as though my head had barely touched the pillow when the sharp jangling of the little watchman sent me across the cold floor and into my clothes.

Hastily pocketing my cold breakfast put up the night previous, and strapping on the old creel full of lines, flies and bait, I sallied forth into the cold and darkness of the hour before dawn and started the tramp to the little spring-fed lake. As I wound up the trail through the hills, a bunch of coyotes cut loose and made the hills echo with their howling. I thought: "Surely, 'tis a good omen, for they are acclaiming the victor." It did not occur to me that they might be

laughing at the vanquished. Isn't it fortunate that we cannot see future events, for how our pleasurable anticipations might be changed!

The early gray light was just revealing the half-submerged logs and trees that projected from the shore when I came to the lake. After selecting a nice, big steady looking tree trunk to fish from, I put on a fly and started the day. Oh, what a rotten cast! Right smack dab into the projecting limbs of that same tree sailed my fly, and a good ten minutes were lost. The next trial was better, and it was not very long before a little of the old art returned and the flies were going fairly close to the marks selected. However, no variety seemed to get even a rise. Next came eggs, worms, spoons, and then hooking a piece of red flannel onto a single hooked spoon, I prepared for the final effort, but with no better results. Discouraged I let my line hang slack in the water and started picking up my junk preparatory to moving on, when "Wham! Scree-e-e!" something hit that bait like a ton of brick, and line went tearing off the reel at a forty-mile gait.

Then followed a fight that eclipsed all others in my trouting experience. There seemed to be no tiring of the big boy, and not once did he break water. After what seemed to be the best half of the forenoon his style got weaker, and weaker, and finally he came up within sight of my stand. What a beauty! All of

twenty inches if an inch. What encouragement for a returned angler!

Gradually he came up and up through the crystal waters, and then came the explanation of his peculiar fight. Evidently he had struck the glittering spoon, and the six-inch gut leader between the spoon and the hook had snapped around with the impetus of his rush, and the hook had caught in his front fin, for just as he was about to slide into the net, the hook pulled free, and a stunned and stupefied fisherman watched the best trout in the whole woods sink slowly and grandly out of sight into the cold depths.

From the peak of the glory of achievement to the bottom of the pit of gloom! That was too much for me, and picking up my accoutrements I took the trail that would bring me to the pool at the foot of the Twin Falls in the South Fork of the Snoqualmie River.

Here the snow white water came plunging over a cliff into a big deep blue pool full of submerged ledges and rocks that prove the ideal lurking place for cut-throats, and here again I tried my luck, with varying success, around the foot of the pool.

A shaft of early morning sunlight filtering down through the overhanging branches of the big fir trees fell on the head of the pool and revealed a ledge of rock about a foot below the surface of the pool but just out of my reach unless I perched about six feet above the water on the rocky banks. Carefully edging

my way up to the desired vantage point, I cautiously placed a fly just above the edge of the sunken ledge, when I was startled by a squeal that seemed to come from the edge of the forest directly back of me.

Forgetting for a moment the fly drifting over the water, I turned my head and — ye gods, about twenty feet distant stood a black bear cub — bawling at the top of his voice: "Maw, come chase this thing away!" And an angry "Woof" said as plain as day: "I'm coming." Just then I was reminded of the forgotten fly by a terrific jerk of my rod, and I turned in time to catch a glimpse of an almost black back as a whopper of a fish returned to his lair with my lure. A sharp jerk set the hook.

Back and forth he raged, sometimes deep among the sunken rocks, sometimes breaking through the water in a shower of diamond spray as he leaped into the air in his mad efforts to dislodge that stinging, biting hook. In the midst of this magnificent battle came a hoarse growl from my forgotten companions, and a hasty glance in their direction showed little John Bear still yelling for blood and Mother Bear coming tearing through the underbrush into the clearing close by the cub, every expression showing fight. On she came like an avalanche and looking just as dangerous. The closer she came the bigger she looked, and when she appeared to me to be about the size of a young house, I cast aside all thoughts of the trout and plunged, creel, pole and

all into the depths of the pool. Down, down, I went through that icy water, feet first, till my feet hit a slippery rock with a jolting jar, and then the current took me. Things were moving pretty fast, and about the next thing I was conscious of was a pain in every inch of my six-foot body, as I brought up against a half-submerged log in three feet of water at the foot of the pool.

In my right hand was the butt of my beloved rod, the reel and line still intact, but the remainder of the rod hung on the line in three pieces broken probably as that playful little stream rolled me over the rocks in its rush to take me away from that particular scenery.

A sharp tug on the line brought me back to reality. What a lovely mess! Standing in three feet of icy water, my rod hanging from the line in three pieces, a mother bruin in the immediate vicinity, and perhaps becoming more immediate, and miracle of miracles, a fish still on the line! This was no time for thoughts of art in playing and landing fish.

Churning the blue water to foam, I rushed over the slippery rocks for the shore and there pulled in, hand over hand, an eighteen-inch cutthroat trout. Quickly stuffing him into the creel with the one lonely little fellow that remained still in the bottom, I scrambled for the trail, throwing my long legs into high gear, and went leaping down that trail for anywhere but there.

On arriving at the shores of the lake I peered

through my dust cloud, but could neither hear nor see anything of the bear family, so built a fire and dried out before returning to the house.

Now if anyone wants to try this mixture of fool luck, trout, bear and tragedy, let someone else do the mixing while you stand off and watch; also, it's too strenuous to try very often.

Won and Lost

Mr. E. W. Scott, of Topeka, Kansas, has written the charming story which follows. Mr. Scott is on the staff of the "Arthur Capper publications," and if he can write as well about agricultural matters as he certainly can about the sport of fishing, may I venture the thought that he is a valuable asset to the great Senator from the State of Kansas.

It is not the easiest thing in the world to drag from its pigeon hole in the subconscious mind the really "most tragic fishing moment" — for every fishing moment has an element of tragedy in it; if not for the fish, then for the fisher. And as I write there come trooping such incidents as the inadvertent handling of a frog box, allowing the escape of some three dozen beautiful frogs in an apparently frogless country which we had just come to fish, and a subsequent fishless trip as a result; the lightning-like rush of the river boat through the swelter and swirl of the rapids just above the confluence of the Turtle and Flambeau Rivers, where our guide was swept into the river by an overhanging tree and our boat all but wrecked on the ledge of rocks at the foot of the quick water; then there are the fish that got away —

the new line which carried a flaw in it and lost us a prize beauty. Countless tragedies (near and real) may be recalled, but the tragic aspect of most of them has been mellowed by the passage of time until the wounds inflicted have healed and the incident takes on the aspect of the commonplace.

Yet there is one tragical moment which persists in its vividness and which is regularly recounted with never-ceasing enthusiasm. Probably its consistent freshness is because it occurred at that age when ambition's flame is clean and new and when rebuffs and failures carry their greatest sting—the fifteenth year of my life.

It was my first real fishing trip for muskies. We had gone into those waters adjoining the Lac du Flambeau Reservation on the southwest, and on the day in question were fishing Squaw Lake near its outlet.

I had no tackle of my own, but was using a steel rod and a reel furnished by a gentleman in the party whose hope it was to make an enthusiastic angler of me. As an additional incentive to such an end he had promised me the present of the rod and reel I was using if I should land a musky of twelve pounds or over. It is needless to say that I worked early and late, even spending my time ashore in walking along the edge casting into the pads and weed beds.

The day was an ideal one for muskellunge. A

warm, moist south wind was lining the lake with strings of foam. Overhead a blanket of never-ending clouds scudded swiftly before the wind and the boat danced and wallowed as we pulled quartering into the waves toward the deep bay that marks the beginning of Squaw Creek.

My outfit, as I have said, was a steel rod, a quadruple multiplying reel, No. 4 Kingfisher line, and a 4¾ Skinner spoon with the gang removed and a single Maloney weedless hook in its place. Frogs were being used as bait.

The first few casts brought nothing, but in perhaps ten minutes' time we had hooked and landed three fair-sized large-mouth bass. But bass were not that which I sought that day, and the impatience of youth was beginning to play havoc with my casting. Sloppy work was right. Backlash followed backlash and I finally threatened to quit altogether.

The guide was onto his job, however, and he promptly turned shoreward, volunteering the information that we'll "Stretch our legs a bit afore we fishes agin."

Back in the boat, a long cast along the shore and about twenty-five feet out brought my musky. As his tail disappeared following his strike the guide cautioned me:

"Keerful, now. That there's yore rod and reel fish. He'll go fifteen pound, shore."

Deep down he sounded, and the line hummed as it cut the water. Now right, now left, he rushed and as suddenly darted surfaceward. A flash of white and olive, a shower of drops, a resounding whack, and the fish was back in the water again, still hooked.

But as all good things must end, so with the battle. In time he lay alongside the boat, perhaps four inches under water, his eyes glaring upward at the things that had dared to interfere with his liberty. The guide leaned forward and a .32 bullet crashed into the musky's head. He sped outward in a last rush and then — and then —

I don't know whatever made me do it, but I slammed my thumb onto the barrel of the reel and tried to stop that rush. The steel rod bent almost double and then whipped back. And there, dangling in the air, was spoon and shank, but the weedless hook was gone. It had kinked upon the shank and the strain on the eye had broken it. And as I gazed stupidly at the broken tackle, the musky died, turned belly up and began to sink.

"The landing net, quick," I yelled. But that fish's guardian angel had set the frog box in the middle of the net, and before it could be disentangled it had disappeared in the depths.

Gone — all gone — were hopes of earning rod and reel. And what was worse — gone was the glory of

a good fish successfully hooked and taken, for it was my last day in the North woods.

I sighed, looked sheepishly at the guide, and tried to smile.

Indignation, disdain and disgust were registered in his look. Then he spat viciously a copious supply of the juice of Adam's Standard on the gunwale and remarked: "Aw, Hell!"

By Hook? No, Crook

Here is one from Mr. Peter J. Schwab — a really great fisherman, whose fishing tales are prose poems. Read Pete's tragic moment and thrill through and through as I did, and do not fail to honor both him and his pal for putting that evil gill net out of commission. Besides, take to heart the lesson of how fish hogs ruined "the most beautiful lake in South Jersey."

It's not an easy thing for an angler of many years to recall a fishing moment of such tragic aspect that it attains the superlative "most."

As a little shaver I took along my bit of store string and made a "choker" by trying a big fat worm through the middle. This was considered better than a bent pin. A burnt match was the favored float. When it disappeared from sight, we waited slyly for the sunnie to gorge the worm and "choke" himself sure enough, when with a sudden jerk he would be yanked to shore.

My first tragedy was caused by a sunnie who had, one by one, gobbled down half my worms. In the meantime Ginger had caught a big bullhead and was taunting me with my lack of success. I would settle

that score if I could only choke that big sunnie. Such a capture would silence Ginger forever.

Either the sunnie was too wily or my worms were too small or tender. In desperation I started digging, and at last captured a "slimy" as thick as a lead pencil. I tied my string tightly about his middle and threw him into the hole. Mr. Sunnie made a dash, and I waited long enough for him to gorge the worm and choke "hisse'f," when I jerked him bodily out of the pond. But alas! he wasn't well choked, for he dropped too near the edge, flopping back into the pond before I could grab him. The splash he made was my earliest tragic fishing moment. My next was probably with an eel, although I remember them with goggle-eyes, bullheads, silver chubs, suckers and perch. Once I lost a "stink-pot" and another time a big "snapper" turtle.

One fine day my Dad put a fly-rod into my hands. From that time to the present my tragic moments had to do with game fish. Those with trout had more to do with mere size than gameness. The land-locked salmon and the fresh water black bass tell another story. It's hard to pick and choose between their merits. The salmon broke water oftener and was a bit faster, but the less spectacular bass seemed stronger in his rushes. They are rarely met together under the same conditions. "How then shall we come to a knowledge of it?" saith the examiner.

By Hook? No, Crook

Once there lived in Diamond Pond a great, monstrous bass. He had been hooked and lost by Bill Dare, Archie Cochran, Charlie Bradford and others of equal skill but less fame.

When rowing across the Stump Cove, just below the Island, one cold, blustery March day, I heard a violent commotion. A terrific *something* was agitating the pond into a whirlpool. The sound of the crashing was appalling. I knew not whether to flee or stay and be swallowed up. Then I saw the tail of a monstrous bass and all thoughts of *dinosauri* or sea serpents fled. A moment later there came out of the water the largest bass and the largest pickerel I have ever seen. The bass had the pickerel locked by the upper jaw, and the pickerel was just as firmly fastened to the bass by the lower jaw. In this manner they were lashing the surface of the pond in mortal combat. The bass seemed to be getting the better of the pickerel when they dived below the surface and I saw them no more.

I could hardly wait for the season to open. When at last the fifteenth of June came around, no time was lost in getting out to the cove. As soon as I reached the lily pads below the cove I began casting my favorite whip of a bustard wing Montreal stretcher and a Silver Doctor dropper. In a short time I had all the bass I cared to keep, but two hours casting over the submerged stumps in the cove brought no trace of

the monster. Along about sunset I was there again. This time *he* smashed at one of my flies in a fury. I struck back hard. He made a long, strong rush, pulling my tip to the water and tearing himself loose before I recovered from my astonishment.

On every following week end until the middle of August I fished for that bass. No less than three times had I hooked him — and each time he had served me in precisely the same way — a single, long, strong rush in which he tore himself loose without so much as hesitating in his career. He had become an obsession with me. I thought of him by day and dreamed of him by night.

I confided in Billie Rhinehart, a great believer in bass flies, especially during the summer months, when the large bass will be found at night among the lily pads along shore, searching or lying in wait for frogs. Now I had located the range of this bass. He never traveled north of the island or south of the lily pads opposite Buzzard's Glory, the entire stretch being famous fishing grounds. For about a fortnight he had taken possession of the lily pads.

It had been one of those overcast days and the night was black as pitch, but we knew every foot of the water. Bill was casting from the bow of the boat, while I cast from the stern. I heard a crashing among the lily pads, followed by a splash which could only have been made by the bass. "Ah-h-h," groaned

Bill. The first rush had once more done the business, and the swashbuckler was still at liberty.

The next night as we came along, Bill took the oars insisting that I try for *him*. A floater of my own design had been selected for the cast — regulation cork body, luminous paint, white wings and red hackle feathers for tail, after the fashion of a Rooster's Regret.

We heard his familiar crashing among the lily pads and allowed plenty of time to pass before we judged his ogreship ready for another frog. There being starlight enough to outline the nearer lily pads, I began searching the pockets between them with the floater.

The smash came quickly enough and, my blood being up, I struck solidly from the line hand as well as using the full power of the rod against him. The monster heaved his bulk out of the water defiantly, then made his rush in a straight line toward the boat which obstructed the path to open water. As he reached the deeper water near the boat there was a strong downward pull. I felt the line straining along the keel and reduced my tension. The line, which was vibrating like a fiddle string, began slipping toward the bow. An ill-omened rasping was telegraphed along the line and in the same instant no more was taken from the reel. I thought the bass had escaped me again, then felt the rasping repeated.

At once the truth flashed upon me. The line was

caught in the bottom of the boat. I reached down quickly, found the crack which pinched the line and drew it out backward by main strength. The bass was surging at the other end: I believe I was trying to pull him in hand over hand. Billie began to shout advice — a dire rending and my heart sank within me — the bass was gone! He had again torn loose upon his first long, strong, determined rush.

No, my most tragic fishing moment has not been related. One fine September evening, Hughan and I were on our way down the lake to the village when the outboard motor began to labor.

"Something caught in the propeller," said Hughan as he shut down the gas. A shot rang out from the woods and a bullet skipped over the water behind us. Then we heard someone running through the brush.

Hughan reached down and untangled a gill net from the blades of the propeller. The net was hauled in, but we found no captives until near the end, when something heavy was felt. Hughan drew the weight aboard and there was *my* monster bass — *dead!*

That was my most tragic fishing moment. My hero had bled to death in the gill net. He had escaped from a score of honest sportsmen, only to fall a victim to the lawless instruments of vicious scoundrels.

We destroyed the net and reported the case to the local game warden. No one was apprehended and the gill netters — native sons — have since ruined the fishing of the most beautiful lake in South Jersey.

A Wise Ol' Cat

Judge George V. Triplett of Owensboro, Kentucky, is a Green River fisherman, and for all around fishing excellence a Green River fisherman can't be beat. Old time Kentuckians in the early days of our country did more to elevate fishing as an art than did any other Americans. They were the first to develop the modern reel and the first to cast direct from the reel. They pioneered the way for modern bait-casting.

I doubt whether any one of us can recall a more genuinely tragic moment than when his first little two-inch shiner wriggled off the hook and dropped back into the bosom of the old horse-pond. But that was in our chrysaloid stage before we had acquired the philosophic spirit in this greatest of all games of chance. Later we discovered that all angling has in it the blessed element of chance. If it were otherwise — quoting Dr. Van Dyke — it would "rob life of one of its principal charms and make fishing too easy to be interesting." Nevertheless, I have always somehow wished . . . .

It was a long time ago and the retrospect brings up many things a bit alien to our modern sporting annals. For instance, in those days jugging was a

gentleman's sport. This is not a "gone-are-the-days" lamentation — old anglers will know what I mean. Jugging was a form of fishing popular with our forefathers, like the netting of quails and the baiting of bears. It was a river sport and required plenty of room and patience and muscle. Almost any serene summer afternoon, when the old Ohio was drowsing along as clear and unruffled as the surface of a mirror, the juggers could be seen pulling their boats up towards the bend above town. To their jugs or buoys they would attach short lengths of strong cord, with big hooks, baited with liver or chunks of fat pork. The jugs would be cast overboard, about one hundred feet or more apart, the boats leisurely following them down the channel. Now and then a jug would disappear or go zigzagging across the river, and then there would be an exciting chase and the possible capture of a big channel cat that might tip the beam at fifty or a hundred, or even two hundred pounds.

One day when I was watching one of these strenuous exhibitions I got an idea. Why not go after one of those big fellows with rod and reel? That was before the big-game sea-anglers had begun to win buttons by conquering giant tunas and tarpons, but I must have had the budding faith of the Order, for that little idea grew and grew until it reached maturity. I became too obsessed by it to wait for a

peaceful afternoon, and so an early midsummer morning found me pulling my boat up towards a long, low-water ledge of rocks that jutted out into the river almost to midchannel.

I doubt whether I have ever been able to make much improvement in my outfit — an old-time, one-piece, hand-made cane casting rod, light, strong, resilient and balanced to a hair, a valorous old smooth-running reel and a coil of sea-grass line, boiled to the fraction of a second in linseed oil and polished until it was almost transparent. That was the outfit with which I went forth to conquer a 200-pound channel cat.

I landed at the outer point of the ledge where the channel ran close in and deep. Baiting my hook with a generous slab of pork, I cast out. The big cork drifted down with the current for about a hundred feet and I awaited results. It was a long wait and the July sun was mounting higher and growing hotter. With another rig I skittered about for smaller fishes. Then suddenly the big cork disappeared and the reel began to buzz. When the cork bobbed up some fifty feet further away and started to perform queer antics I began to have expectations. Later on they assumed much acuter form. At last I had hooked a big channel cat. I had never caught anything heftier than a bass on that fine sea-grass line, but I had the broad Ohio all around me and the day

was still young. It is true my hopes hung by a slender thread, but it was oiled sea-grass and my faith was that of all old-timers. With such a line they would have gone forth cheerfully to battle with a whale.

I have written elsewhere of the strength, tenacity and resourcefulness of a channel cat. This one was too busy ploughing the sandy bottom of the river or doubling and diving out in the deep water for me to learn whether he was just an ordinary rampageous cat or one of those dynamic veterans that I had seen tow a two-gallon jug at torpedo-boat speed. But at last I saw him. I had worked him around the inner side of the point and as he swung close in I could take his full measure. There is a term in the sportsman's lexicon called buck ague. If I did not contract a fully developed case of it just then I certainly had violent premonitory symptoms. But I held on to the rod and the sea-grass line held on to the fish.

Again and again he rushed off to deep water and as often I succeeded in bringing him in. I could see him plainly in these closer rushes and while doubtless he has grown some in my memory since that eventful morning, he seemed to be just about as big as I was, and I realized, then and there, that there was either the making of an angler or a champion channel cat out on the end of that lonesome ledge. I have never seen a big channel cat that knew when

to quit. When they lie quiescent and appear to have given up, you had better corral your wits. You'll need them. It was so in this case. Off again, on again, gone again . . .

But of course that sort of thing could not go on all day. In fact probably it didn't last as long as I now think it did.

Finally I managed to coax my fish into a shallow cove where I could give him the *coup de grace*. That is a very good way to put it now. I am willing to extend to this particular cat such assurance of my most distinguished consideration, though I wasn't thinking in such polite terms then. I had waded out into the water up to my knees and the time seemed to have come for eventualities. The big cat evidently had reached the same conclusion. When I started to maneuver him into a narrow gravelly pocket, once more he broke for deep water. As he rounded a little saw-toothed sliver of Carboniferous sandstone that had lurked out there in the swift currents for a hundred or a thousand years — waiting for that supermoment — the reel suddenly ceased its humming, the sea-grass line sagged in the guides and I saw a short quivering length of it go trailing out towards the channel and then disappear forever!

A Little Miss and a Big Fish

Brother fishermen, may I present to you Miss Ruth Mae Lawrence, of Salem, Oregon, and a Pacific salmon story with thrills and a heart-breaking finish. It's a great privilege to print it.

Gentlemen, allow me to introduce you to the Royal Chinook. To shake his hand, you must have strength, courage, endurance, and adaptability, for no two of these gallant fish fight the same. I have seen one leap eight times out of the water, each leap higher than a man's head, and again have never seen them until they were dragged dead to the boat, and lifted gently in with the gaff, while the perspiring victor received his congratulations with beaming face.

When the waters of the mighty Columbia are in flood, they back up into the Willamette through the city of Portland, making dock owners hastily move their shipping goods to higher levels and fishermen resignedly remove the miscellaneous floatage of two great rivers from their hooks and lines or not so resignedly lose their tackle on some hidden snag. At a bend of the Willamette in the Rose City lies Swan Island, with graceful trees on its high banks in the drowsy summer time, but covered with water in many places when the

freshets sweep down the river in the Spring. It is the Mecca of the still-water trollers who court the lordly Royal Chinook during his invasion of these waters during the months of April, May and June.

One Decoration Day, five years ago, my father, my sister, and I sallied forth in our rowboat, the *Raft,* fully determined to bring home with us all the salmon which would deign to strike our hooks. I was then fourteen years old, small and slight for my age, and with no great strength. Despite my stature, I was born with the love of solemn forests, inaccessible mountains, rushing brooks, and wide rivers. There was something about the ride on the river, the cool breezes, and the swift excitement of the fight with one of those kings of the deep that filled me with an ecstatic happiness I have never found duplicated in any other way.

As befitted my strength, I was given a trout rod, with a three-ounce tip, a small trout reel, a twenty-pound test line, and a light lead to hold the No. 3 or 4 salmon spinner to the bottom of the river. Even the slow strain of trolling in a gentle current with this light tackle made my arms and shoulders tired. My father and sister both had sturdier tackle, of course.

We were trolling as near the island as we could and yet not snag our hooks, when there came a swift jerk at my sister's line. The reel sang its deliriously happy song, and the rod bent lower and lower.

" Hang on to him, Laura," yelled Daddy, as he and I feverishly drew in our lines and laid the rods and tackle in the bottom of the boat. He picked up the gaff and an oar to guide the boat, while I made myself as small and out-of-the-way as I could in a dinky rowboat. Laura reeled in madly. Then the fish turned around and raced across the river. Down she pressed on the line, making the fish fight for every inch he took. Finally he turned back slowly, and then it was her turn to fight for every inch of line she could get.

Slower and slower he came, with little jerks to the line, until we could see the top of the leader through the water. What luck to bring him so close with the first breaking of water! Then we saw the finny monster, his eyes gleaming, his sides the color of the rainbow, opalescent blue shading into green, with glitterings here of silver, there of gold, his graceful proportion swayed by his dorsal fin. Oh, but he was fighting! Laura could not hold him long while there was so much life in him. Now he jerked his head back again. Why didn't she give him some line?

Daddy leaned over the side with his gaff, and then I saw him shake his head just a little. I turned to look at Laura impatiently, for the fish was jerking fiercely at the line, and I was afraid he would break it. She had frozen on the reel. Her eyes were staring fixedly at the fish, as though she were hypnotized by those glittering eyes, and her knuckles were white with the cords

"Daddy leaned over the side with his gaff.—Her eyes were staring fixedly at the fish."

of her hands standing out as though they would come through the flesh. Her thumb was locked around the reel-handle so that the only force able to move it would be a charge of dynamite. There was a great splash. The rod bent and bent, and bent, and then came back with a snap, while the line hung limp. Laura looked at her line dazedly, as though she had just awakened from a deep sleep, and blinked her eyes. Daddy's face was a picture of disappointment and wrath. He put down the gaff, and picked up his oars. Let us pass over what was said.

We now knew there were fish running that day, so we kept pulling our lines anxiously and holding the rods instead of putting them in their holders as they had been previously. Daddy swept back and forth, time and time again, over the spot where we had come across Laura's fish. The forenoon was rapidly passing away, and my brother, who would be home for the afternoon, would take our place in the boat with Daddy.

Finally Daddy said it was time to go home. I think my face must have mirrored my dejection, for he stopped and looked at me, and then kindly said we would go up to the head of the island and down its side once more. I brightened immediately and started to sing my war song to the tune of "Floating Down the Old Green River" and had just reached the last two lines, "and I had to drink the whole Willamette dry

to bring a salmon home to you," when we came around the head of the island.

Just at that moment my trout rod began to bend, oh, so slowly, quietly, with never a jerk or tremor. It was a fish—a big fish! I, who had so successfully caught a nine-pounder, knew that while this one felt like a block of granite, it was yet a fish, for there was a gentle vibration to the line that only a whirling propeller at the end of some huge fish could give.

Daddy was busy with his oars, but he came to his feet with a jump when I said very calmly and solemnly: "I've got a fish." He looked a little bit disgusted as he saw the bent rod without a single thrill of life in it, and said, "Oh, no, it's just a snag," and came forward to rid the line of it. He gave the line a test jerk. Then a shock of electricity ran down his whole frame, and his face looked like the sun coming from behind a rain cloud, as he shouted to Laura to get her line in as fast as she could, and not to mind about the speed records. He said many words in the next half minute, which translated very elegantly would run something like this: "Great heavens above and earth below! Ye sun, and stars, and moon! Yes, my darling daughter, you have a fish, but he is as big as the whole bottom of the river, and as strong as ten elephants. Now you follow your father's instructions implicitly and you will land this Goliath even as a David." I hope you admire my translation, for it is hard to find words

dramatic enough to supplant: "Goshamighty! Yep, you have a fish! He's a whale, the granddaddy of all rod-busters that ever swam with fins. He's a gewholicker! We'll get him if you keep a stiff upper lip, and a good bend to that toothpick of yours."

In the meantime the fish, not at all abashed by the commotion he was creating above him, was returning to his native haunts via Astoria, as that was the only way he could reach the ocean. He needed company, so he was taking us along, too. We were halfway down the island. Don't blame it on the current, for whatever current there was was upstream, due to the backing up of the floods. My rod was bending nicely; the line was departing from the reel with little staccato yelps; and I was nursing my strength for the fray which would soon be more exciting. I could feel the mighty throb of the fish as he swam smoothly on, with scarcely a twinge to make me believe he was at all bothered about towing a rowboat with three people around.

Now the boat was trimmed for action. The rods and lines were neatly placed in the bottom, Laura was crouched in the stern. The gaff hook was by Daddy's side, and he sat down in his seat with the oars in his hands.

"Ready," he commanded, and he pulled the oars back with all his strength, while I pressed heavily on the reel with both thumbs. Then the curtain rose.

That fish was deeply insulted. His Royal Highness to be bothered in this manner? As though he had been in clear view, I could see him proudly shake his head, and say, "I'll make quick work of this."

"Zz-zz," came the soprano of the reel, and the fish was playing a small, bewildered girl through the medium of a light line and a trout rod. Such a thought must have come to me, for I laughed out loud, then set my thumbs hard on the line once more, and my teeth on my lower lip. That fish wasn't going to sit down there in those cool, deep waters and hold his shaking sides, laughing at me. The fish, with respect for my new mood, came around slowly, and oh, was this possible, or was I dreaming? No, it's true! The line was actually coming into my reel. I thought of grinding hard, dry chunks of bread in the family meatchopper as I fought for that line while the fish, with a "You first, my dear Gaston" air, retraced his steps. Now he was directly under the boat, then slowly, on and on, while Daddy turned the boat around and upstream. Who can tell the workings of the piscatorial mind? The King might have thought that he could carry us to the Willamette falls, fifteen miles away, and leaping them, rid himself of this cumbersome object. So I brought my teeth down on my lip harder, and took hold of the reel handle more firmly. The rod was bending dangerously, but I gave a slow steady pull backwards which strained my whole

body, and oh, joy! the fish was turning. Daddy rowed slowly to keep up with him, while I kept a steady bend to the rod. Laura looked at her watch and told the time. Who cared about time, except to know how long that fish would play me?

Boats had begun to collect at a respectful distance, and fishermen were trolling the ground where we had hooked our monster. The fish now turned toward this audience and started his splendid bulk straight along the boat. I could see the hooked mouth wide open, the line reaching straight into it. And then a finny tail, forked in the middle, where it joined the body as large as a five-inch stovepipe, hit the boat a mighty blow and then all was gone. My sister, sitting in the stern, just where the tail hit the boat, went dead white, and her eyes grew as big as saucers. She didn't seem to notice the spray with which she was drenched, nor that the boat rocked and tossed and cavorted over the waves created by the break of the big fish. She drew in a deep breath, and then shakily to Daddy, "How big is he?"

I could see Daddy's eyes shine as he said, "I have caught many a fish, but glory! there was never a fish like that. He weighs about seventy pounds." Both Laura and I, who had caught fish under his tutelage, and had had them weighed for us while we were still battling them, with only a few ounces variance when

Daddy turned to me and said, "Now Ruth, you've had him up three times, and no matter if he knocks the boat over the next time he comes up, if you bring him as close as you did this last time, I'll gaff him."

I nodded my head, but I was so tired the words irritated me. Why couldn't that miserable fish behave and be caught this last time? Oh, I was so tired! Who said this was sport? As this last thought struck me, I drew a deep breath of fatigue, and loosened the bend of my pole for a second.

Daddy called, "Look out, Ruth! Hold up your pole and keep a tight line!" The fish was coming up again, slower and slower. Then came the leader! I reeled in as fast as I could, but my instant of slack line came to punish me. As slowly as the fish had struck I felt him leave. One second of slack line had loosened the hook enough so that he had shaken it out. I drew the leader up. It came so easily. There was something heart-breaking in its very easiness, and the reel sobbed over the wet line. The leader came closer, with the line dangling limply. I picked it up, laid the rod and tackle in the boat, felt for a seat, and gazed at those inscrutable waters that harbored my desire. Daddy picked up the oars. There was a huge lump in my throat, so I turned from the river to look at my hands lying inertly in my lap. My fingers were covered with blood where I had knocked my knuckles on the reel. I had never noticed it until this second.

Daddy said with a forced cheerfulness, " Well, girls, it is time to go home." He looked at the clock, and then we discovered that I had played that fish, or that fish had played me, whichever you think more suitable, more than forty-five minutes.

Farewell, Jinx

Here is a delightful trout story dealing with the period when game fish were plentiful and it *seemed* that the Izaak Walton League of America was not needed. The writer, Mr. George C. Franklin, of Denver, when a boy was some fishing kid and his "Dad" was undoubtedly the right kind of a Dad for a real boy. I know you will enjoy every word of it just as I have and I hope the philosophy of the first part of the story will sink in deep to the fathers of "Young America."

It was not until today that I began to think of tragic fishing moments, and I guess, perhaps, it was this little paragraph you once wrote of counsel to fathers that made me think. *I am sorry for the father who fails to avail himself of the best pals he can ever have, i. e., his own children,* and if he fails to teach them to motor, to swim, fish and shoot, camp and kodak he is the loser in more ways than one, *for some one else will; and* the father who has a right to the absolute confidence of his child will find that child chumming with some one else and he can never be quite the same after some one else has aroused his *first interest in the sports afield.*

Farewell, Jinx

I came to Colorado from Kansas in 1877, a lad of five, and so saw the passing of the great game herds, buffalo, elk and mountain sheep, and in our streams the native trout give place to the Rainbow and Eastern Brook, but the event which stands out above all others to me this afternoon occurred when I was sixteen years old.

My father kept a fishing resort and hotel at Wagon Wheel Gap, on the Rio Grande, and in those days many a celebrated angler spent a month with us. Senator Edward O. Wolcott, James S. Kirk, General Palmer and many other fishermen well known in the sporting world came for a quiet week or two along what was then the finest trout stream in the West. A meal without trout on the table at our house was almost unknown, and I think I can truthfully say that I caught my proportion of them, but the strange part was that I caught no large fish. No one knew the stream better than I and no one was better equipped. Seldom did a fisherman return the second or third summer without remembering to bring something for me. I had as expensive and as well-made rods and reels as the wealthy sports, and I did not have to stand the chill of icy waters when I fished, for I had no less than three pairs of waders made expressly for me and brought by some generous hearted pal of the previous summer. I was able to repay in a way, for I had a splendid team at my disposal and

a two-seated spring wagon that was always busy during the fishing season.

If there was a cloud in my life those days it was that I caught no big fish, and it was not because they were not there, nor because they did not rise, for almost daily I saw three and four pound natives taken, sometimes off the same riffle where I faithfully and carefully fished from June 1st to October 30th, and was one day humiliated by seeing an Eastern boy of about my own age, who had never fished for trout before, land a seven and one half pound trout. Why was it? And what was wrong? The answer lies in the mysterious happenings of the god of chance.

Up to the afternoon of which I intend to tell I had never in my life caught a two pound trout. Bear this in mind, for unless you do most of the "Tragedy" will fail to appear to you.

Most of the guests had gone. The early September frosts had turned the aspen leaves, though not the willows or cottonwoods, along the streams; the beaver were busily cutting their winter's supply of wood for food; grouse were working in the service berry patches; and on the hills deer and elk were bunching up, preparatory to their trip to the foothills. There remained at the hotel one man, a lawyer by the name of Hall, and his son Bobbie, a boy of about ten. The evening before his departure he came to me and asked me to take them where the best fishing

was, as he wanted to take some nice trout home with him. I hitched up a little mare to a single buggy, and taking the man and his boy with me, I drove down the stream about three miles to a place where I had often filled my basket. The stream separated here around an island and where the two branches came together again made a long deep hole.

I was using an eight ounce spliced green heart rod with horn loops that had been given to me by a friend from Texas, a very fine silk inlaid line and a seven foot leader which I had tied myself. My lead fly was a Royal Coachman on a large hook (probably a 5, as that was the usual size in those days). The second I do not remember, but at the last was a Jungle Cock, a gaudy fly that often proved a killer during the middle of the day.

Whipping out a few feet of line I began casting toward the current to wet up my leader preparatory to going into the main pool and as I did so saw a large trout rise slowly, almost to the fly. I struck quickly, as I knew he would make short work of a dry leader, stood still for a minute and then quietly went ashore. I told Mr. Hall what I had seen and suggested that we fish downstream a while and have a try for the big fellow about sundown. Never did I have better fishing than that evening. Nearly every cast brought a rise, and even little Bobbie was taking one half and three-quarter pound trout about as fast

as he could haul them in. Just as the last rays of the sun were reflecting from the little waves below the island I stepped out to the spot where I had seen the big fish, stood rigid for a full three minutes, then with a wrist motion placed the Coachman as near the spot where I had seen him as I could.

There was no delay, up he came and took the fly. I set it firmly in the upper jaw and the fight was on. He was the largest fish I had ever hooked and I hoped, oh, how I hoped! that my Jinx was broken. Mr. Hall sent Bobbie back to the buggy for his landing net and stood ready to aid me in any way that he could. Carefully I watched the trout's maneuvers and forestalled them. Not once did I move in my tracks nor take my eyes from the line until, nearly drowned, he began to give way. Carefully I drew the line with my left hand and led him back across the pool toward the excited pair with the landing net. Then just as he came into the smooth waters between me and the current, just as leisurely, just as certainly, another giant rose and *swallowed* the Jungle Cock. I wouldn't attempt to describe the rest of that fight nor my emotions. Only the man who has fished for native trout could appreciate it, and he doesn't want to be told. At last, just before dark, Mr. Hall slipped a net under the trout that had hooked himself, and Bobbie got his fingers into the gills of the one on the end, and we all backed up on the bank to a safe place to put

them down. Then, while I lay on the grass, Mr. Hall got out his scales and weighed them. The one hooked first weighed four and a quarter, the other a trifle under four pounds. My Jinx was smashed to powder.

The Tables Turned

Mr. Arthur W. Gibbs hails from Syracuse, New York. A great fisherman of early days, Mr. Reuben Wood, came from Syracuse, and the fly bearing his name will always be one of the favorites. Mr. Gibbs' story is very well done; go to it.

Tragic—pertaining to tragedy, death or sorrow—the tragic part of my tale is indelibly recorded in my memory. Whether or not I deserved death I will leave to the unprejudiced judgment of my readers; the sorrow I must leave to my pal to bear alone. Years have passed, and my sense of humor has deadened my conscience. I am still unforgiven, but I still grin at the dangerous light in his eyes at the memory. He was a true sportsman. Like myself, his means were limited, yet I've known him to pay thirty dollars for a four-ounce fly-rod to gratify his vanity as an angler, and anything from a pumpkin-seed to an old he-bass had a fighting chance when he held its butt end. Even an angel has been known to fall. I won't be too hard on my pal, for the hand of retribution was swift and sure. The penalty exacted was almost too severe for a lone heart to bear.

I was a lean, lanky, out-of-doors kid with ambition

enough to wash dishes or row a boat whatever distance the occasion demanded without murmur. Whether I had one dollar or six, I was always invited to go along; I say "six" because that was the largest amount I ever remember having. My folks were sort of set against camping, so about the only notice I ever gave them was a postal notifying them that I had arrived safely. Well, a thrill is a thrill, as some might argue. In my life I sort of classify them as low, medium, and the high voltage variation of the same. To get the latter you've got to do more than just capture a whopper out of a place where there aren't any.

On a hot afternoon in the latter part of a hotter August we sat in our boat, just fishing. We had been angling without results, so were content just to trust pickle luck. *Brrrr,* without even a preliminary bite, went my friend's reel. With a jump he grabbed his rod and set the hook. Eyes alight with interest, he stood up for the struggle. Out spun the line for perhaps thirty feet. *Swish!* Out of the water there arose what seemed to me like a thousand pounds of terror-stricken fury, fighting desperately to free himself from the cruel, mysterious enemy that only sank its teeth deeper in his tortured mouth. He hit the water with a splash that was trebly accentuated by the calm of the lake.

If there are any dried drops of water on this narrative, know they are honest tears shed for a tried and

tested pal who fell from grace, who sold his fisherman's soul for a mere fish. With an incoherent yell he threw his beautiful rod across the seats of the boat. It was then and there, boys, I learned to appreciate the value of prayer. Hand over hand, by sheer superior brutal strength, he hauled that fighting patrician of the waters nearer and nearer the boat, while I breathed a prayer. With a heave he brought him over the side of the boat. With a thud I landed on him, winding body and legs over his struggling body like a vise. His wildly flopping tail incessantly splashed dirty water intermingled with various kinds of dead bait into my mouth, which mixture had a very nauseating flavor. My friend sat on top of me as sort of reinforcement to make sure I couldn't or wouldn't let go. We got him on the stringer before the full realization of my friend's downfall rushed into my excited brain. I don't like to go on further, but in justice to myself, I must.

Two hours elapsed, the last hour of which my pal had been dozing. Think of it, think of the perverted conscience! Slowly an idea had been evolving and revolving in my consciousness. That bass was going to get a fighting chance, and I was going to appease my vanity and dream of years by giving it to him. I pulled in my line. Slowly I drew up the stringer. The bass slapped the water with his tail. I let go and looked off innocently into space when my pal

opened his eyes sleepily and then closed them again. In the next attempt I succeeded in inserting my hook in his mouth, where I thought it would hold and not hurt too much. My pal again opened his eyes a second after I closed mine. Through slitted lids I saw him close them again, without any premonition of disaster. With trembling hands I cut the stringer, and stood up in the boat. With hardly a wriggle the bass slowly sank.

My pal awoke. "What the devil's the matter?"

"I've got a bite," I exclaimed, "probably a little pumpkin-seed."

"Give him line," roared my friend, as the bass started at least one-hundred miles per hour under the boat. After ten seconds it was a toss-up whether I was playing the bass or the bass me.

Dimly, like a man who has underestimated the speed and distance of a speeding train, and crossed in front of it, I realized with a frozen brain that I'd make a mistake. So did my pal but not the exact nature of it. He grabbed my pole. For a second I resisted. That second probably saved my life. It at least gave me a thread of hope later to build on and argue vindication. It also gave the bass a chance to discover the anchor rope. The next recollection is of my pal and myself hanging onto a rod with just three feet of line minus hook.

For a minute the air vibrated with language that

must have even penetrated to the happy realm where Izaak Walton abides. At times I heard ten pounds and bass mentioned. A boy can hardly be expected to appreciate oratory or to be interested in the subject of bass with thoughts of annihilation staring him in the face. For the first time since our loss he suddenly realized my presence.

"You ——," but this is a fishing story and not a lesson in improper English. I was too scared to feel any resentment. After calm reflection I forgave him, for I made allowances for his terrible mental distress.

"Why, that bass was as big as mine," he hurled at me. Pause here, boys, while you get out your pocket dictionaries. While you are looking up the word "Tragic," picture a boy estimating the distance from a row-boat to a shore lined with friendly woods. I surely did thank the Lord for a dad who taught me how to swim when young. I thanked the Lord for the senator who first put the ban on side arms; however that's the only time I ever agreed with his views.

With a dive I went over the side of the boat. When I came to the surface my pal was lifting his right ear from the bottom of the boat. This last detail is very clear to me because he was headed south, facing the east, while I was swimming west. Just as I reached shore he stood up. He afterward confided to me he thought I had gone crazy. It did not take long to

convince him that the instinct of self-preservation alone was responsible for my act.

"What the blankety blank did you do that for?" said he.

"Jim, I can outswim you and outrun you, you're so fat," said I.

"What of it," replied he. "Nothing," said I, "only that bass *we* lost" — I emphasized the *we* purposely because I expected to return again — "nothing, only that bass *we* lost was yours. I'm headed for home."

He made a scramble for the stringer. When he pulled it up the foolish expression on his face was too much for me to bear. He made a threatening move in my direction. It was then I made a wiser one for the friendly road that led back home just over the other side of those woods.

Vain Glory

Mr. J. S. Hardaway, of Newman, Georgia, here tells a dramatic and tragic tale of his boyhood. Brother Hardaway half apologizes for his story and says: "If it's not good enough, I will not be either surprised or dismayed." The idea, old man, your story is a peach, and I do not envy the fisherman so bankrupt of childhood memories who does not get a thrill from it. He certainly has no business to "sit in" this game.

The first mild April sun was slowly setting behind the pines on the near-by hill, casting its shadows and a bit of chill over the east bank of the creek where I had been for several hours busily engaged in luring various sun perch, warmouths, and an occasional shiner from out of the depths of the west bank and its fringe of willows. One long sprig of willow on which I stood as a Safety First precaution already held captive a string of fish about equal to the depth of the water beneath the bank. There were yet many fat, juicy worms in the tomato can, for the trip had been premeditated. My well-trained ears could all but hear my mother say: "Where on earth is that boy? I'll never consent to his fishing again," as I realized that

a younger brother must have long since retrieved from the pasture the gentlest and out-milk-giving-est cow extant. Anyway, after waiting this long I might as well make one more cast, for surely Mammy Jane had thrown herself into the first line of Home Defense and had gone to do the milking. Besides, wouldn't that fine string of fish be excuse enough and to spare?

Fish ability comes only with experience, and experience is a product only of age. All that April afternoon I had been fishing as hard as I could, and I had carefully husbanded my bait, using never more than half a worm at a time. In baiting for this, the last, final throw of the day, I found myself recklessly stringing worm after worm on the long blue limerick hook until it resembled a serving of spaghetti. Twice it floated slowly the length of the pool without the semblance of a nibble. Just as I was in the very act of pulling in after the third try, the cork went suddenly and violently out of sight and I struck wildly with my then usual over-my-head movement. The cork barely came to view. A dead weight pull on the hook closely alike to a tree root snag was all the answer obtained. Feeling sure in the latter diagnosis, I let the line go slack. It was done in the twinkling of an eye! The tree root idea vanished as quickly as it had come.

Way off there on the creek, with darkness all but at hand, a thousand thoughts ran through my mind.

The green reed pole bent and unbent. The water was threshed into foam. My back hurt; my arms ached; my head swam; the string of small pan fish floated away on the current of the creek unnoticed.

A former experience with some unknown inhabitant of the water had convinced me that a stout line was of prime importance, and fortunately I had as heavy a cotton line as could be found in the local hardware store's supply. How long we battled there is largely a matter of conjecture, for there was some light to see by when, in an unguarded moment, the fish came in close and into shallow water. Like a flash I grabbed the line as close to him as I could and set out up the sand bank, stopping only when he was twenty feet ashore. There was no time to stop and admire the catch, for he hadn't conceded it even then. With the energy of a thousand eels he went into a twisting, squirming action that defied approach. Finally, having dried him well in the white sand by standing on him with both feet, I managed to get a heavy cord through his gills, recover my first loves from the drift below where they had hung in transit downstream, and set out home.

I was *some* hero when I arrived at the little vine-clad cottage. The stern countenance of my father passed swiftly into one of amazement. Not one of us had ever seen such a fish before. I thought it must be some monster bass, changed to some extent

by his size. My father deemed it some sort of carp. The scales in the pantry showed ten pounds, ten of the lightest pounds I am sure they ever registered. The news spread over the neighborhod like wildfire, and shortly the porch was crowded with admiring friends.

Nothing tragic thus far. Rather the End of a Perfect Day, wouldn't you say? But just when the crowd was thickest and admiration the keenest and my joy the most complete, in walked the town's wisest angler. His first glance was filled with rapture too, due largely to the spluttering light the lamp was shedding on my prize. Adjusting his glasses and relieving himself in part of his accumulated tobacco juice, he drew nearer. Such a look of disgust, it has never been my pleasure to see before or since, as he said: "Grindle. Not worth a damn!"

After the gathering had broken up — and they did not linger long — I took the poor, discredited thing into the kitchen where we were wont to prepare our fish for the table and freshened him up a bit in the dish pan. He still had a touch of life in his bones, for he weakly wabbled his tail as the cool water softened the coat of sand that bound him. It was then that I got my first whiff of him, an odor the like of which I have never known — the combined essences of all the *mud* on this planet.

The years that have flown have tempered the shock

of my embarrassment. They have made the odor a very indistinct memory; they have enlarged and beautified the superb fight this worthless mud fish put up. Certain I am they have brought me nothing with the joy of conquest I felt that April evening as I wended my way homeward with that mighty grindle. I know they can never bring me more humiliation in one lump than when that veteran fisherman expressed himself: "Grindle. Not worth a damn!"

A Boatload of Excitement

My friend, Everett E. Lowry, famed cartoonist and writer, has here written one of his characteristically witty stories. Mr. Lowry was the favorite cartoonist of Colonel Roosevelt, and the originals of his work hung in the Colonel's office when he was President. When this great man retired to private life, he wrote Mr. Lowry that the only picture accompanying him to his home was the original of the famous cartoon, "His Favorite Author."

I noticed right at the start that Friend Wife did not enthuse over the prospect of an extended fishing trip among the northern lakes, and I should have grown suspicious had I realized at that time that there really are people, and among them, possibly, one's own wife, who are not exactly wild over the gentle art of angling.

We hadn't been married long, however, and I had yet to learn that when Friend Wife thought of fish it was merely as an article of foodstuff, to be consumed more or less religiously on Fridays, and I now actually believe that until she went with me on this eventful trip she supposed fish came originally from the Booth Packing Company. Such was her artlessness on the subject, and I soon learned if I was to make of her a fisher-

woman, it would be necessary to begin at the very beginning.

For weeks prior to the final hop-off I must have raved considerably about the beauties of the lakes, the smell of the pines, and that wonderful place, The Big Outdoors, but through it all Friend Wife's interest remained singularly tepid. She seemed to have something on her mind and would frequently break in on a rhapsody to inquire about the totally irrelevant matter of hotel accommodations, or something else equally beside the point. She even worried as to what she should wear, and in many other ways convinced me that her mind failed to grasp the main, the big idea — *fish.*

Now as to hotel accommodations (if you want to call them that) I had been careful to pick out a not too wild spot. Just a regular place, about four hundred miles north, where the men go around in Boy Scout uniforms and the women get photographed behind a mess of fish, a boat house where they sell soft drinks and are perpetually out of live bait, and where, just across the lake, nestles a cute little colored-postcard town and a Catholic church. This place did its best to look wild, to hold the men, but not to be wild enough to disturb the ladies. As a matter of fact, the wildest thing about it was a flock of restless, romping rocking chairs on the porch.

It soon developed that Friend Wife was timid of the water, and stood in deadly fear of snakes and sunburn,

and her sister, who had decided at the last moment to come along for the air and to help her rough it on the veranda, shared these violent antipathies.

Well, the apprehensions these two young ladies enjoyed were both dire and numerous, and before I could even inveigle them into a rowboat I had to promise not to catch " one of those terrible fish " I had been talking about. Can you beat that? Imagine having to promise not to catch a fish.

You see, my notion was to first overcome their fear of the water, then to begin on perch and lead gradually, and, in a manner of speaking, imperceptibly up to Mr. Muskey. It was a good enough plan, but then, of course, one never can depend upon fish.

I left my tackle at the cottage as per agreement, and we at last fared forth on the tranquil bosom of the lake. Nothing more eventful than a short boat ride would have been the result, had not some careless bird gone away and left an old cane pole in the very boat I had picked out, and, as I chanced to notice, this pole had a good strong line to it, and a well baited hook. It looked good to me.

I am not crazy about rowing, and besides, it was a warmish sort of day, and in a short time I was pleased to note that my passengers, or " scholars " as Izaak would have naively called them, grew tired of being hauled aimlessly around in the broiling sun, and began piteously to moan for the cool piazza of the hotel.

They seemed to miss the little water lilies among which to trail the naked hand, as per illustration, and I noticed that the forgotten freckles of girlhood had suddenly commenced to hop out in clusters on Friend Wife's erstwhile fair enough nose. Her sister seemed flushed in a polite way and a trifle bored as I heaved anchor in the lea of a small desert isle.

Up to this time they had not noticed the cane pole, but as I casually dropped that baited hook over the side, instinct seemed to tell them I was about to break my word — that I really was going to catch a fish. As a matter of fact — I was merely going through that ancient rite of fishermen — wetting the line. But what a howl of dismay! There was no use to explain how groundless were their fears, or how ridiculous it would be to accuse a self-respecting fish of a willingness to come within half a mile of such wild screeches, let alone take the bait, for my argument was suddenly cut short when six feet of that old cane pole was violently tugged under water.

Oh, boy! For the next three-quarters of an hour it was a battle — every moment of it tragic. And how those two women took on. I don't know whether it was the wild shrieks that emanated from either end of that small boat, or the fact, as I discovered by glancing at the island, that this unseen monster was slowly but surely tugging us out into the lake, but anyway, something seemed to be impairing my morale.

That I wasn't having sport with the fish was clear from the very start. If there was any sport in that miserable sight-unseen struggle, that savage, fightin' son-of-a-gun down there in the water was having it all — absolutely all. Of course I might have cut the line or thrown the pole overboard as suggested by the ladies, but who ever heard of such a thing?

Finally, by weaving the pole slowly back and forth, and by exerting every ounce of strength I possessed, I managed to raise this monster near enough to the surface to throw the ladies into fresh and acute hysteria, and incidentally, to afford me a blurred glimpse of the most villainous looking creature that ever polluted good lake water. I didn't know just what it was at the time, but it has since developed into a sort of nightmare with jazz music accompaniment.

Oh, yes; I finally landed him, as the ladies were trying to leave the boat, and that dogfish and I fought it out right there in the midst of my swooning family. That was my most tragic fishing moment.

Friend Wife and I finally "made up," but that was her first and last lesson in the, to her mind, miscalled "gentle art of angling."

A Slippery Customer

Here is a delightful sea-trout tale with an unexpected tragic finish. The author, Mr. Lewis H. Beer, lives in Montreal, Canada, and I do not doubt that he is as fine an angler as he is a charming writer. Our Canadian brothers are fine fishermen and have a great country in which to fish.

"Tragic Fishing Moments" remind me; and it is not very hard for me to remember either. It was indeed sad and humiliating in the extreme, and although it happened several years ago, I still catch myself musing on it and breathing a fervent d — n under my breath.

There is a certain river in a certain little Province in Canada that for real good sea-trout fishing did not have its equal in all that large domain. Sea-trout, right in from the salt sea with every tide in the months of June and July, working their way up for many miles to the headwaters to become river trout until they returned back to the sea again and got cleaned up.

It was my particular business every summer when these beauties commenced to come in to endeavor to make it impossible for many of them to return to

their vast home outside the bar, and I was usually very successful.

The thing was to get them when they first came into the river. Then it was they were the fisherman's joy — gamy as any salmon and a delight to behold, as when properly struck they flashed out of the water two to three feet in the air, shining like so much molten silver. A dozen of these beauties, from one and one-half to two and one-half pounds each, gave you an evening's fishing that you could think over for many an hour when sitting by your cheerful fire on cold winter nights. Occasionally you would hook a whale, three or four pounds, then indeed your cup of fisherman's joy was about full.

Our Club had a yearly medal going to the fortunate chap who landed the largest fish during the season. This then was the goal we aimed it.

I had started with my Indian in a light boat from some three miles up the river late one afternoon in the latter part of June, working my way slowly down toward tide water. I had picked up quite a number of fresh run trout which gave promise of better to follow when we would get down to the big salmon holes near the mouth of the river.

It was an ideal evening for the sea-trout, somewhat overcast, with a soft southwest wind blowing down the river, making conditions perfect for casting.

My first cast over the deep hole at a place called

Green Bank resulted in one of those rises with a wash-tub effect, and I hooked and landed a one and one-quarter pound beauty. Several more casts, and I hooked a pair. They gave me considerable trouble, but Ben, the Indian, eventually got them both safely in the landing net.

The sun had now dropped behind the low hills, and as the shadows deepened on the river well known spots and trees and bushes along the banks assumed weird shapes. A robin redbreast was whistling his good-night song on the very tip top of a tall spruce. The little feathered tribes were fluttering in the thick foliage settling themselves for sleep, and an owl in a near-by "rampike" hooed his approval of coming darkness.

It was getting difficult to see just where my flies were dropping, so I shortened up my line. The Indian's paddle dipped noiselessly and we floated gently down. On arrival opposite a familiar birch tree that overhung the largest and deepest hole on the river, he backed water and held the boat motionless.

I cast, dragging the flies over the deep spot in little quick jerks. There was no response. Again I cast. A slight swirl in the semidarkness and I struck. "Blast it, I'm on to a log," I said.

"No, big fish," said Ben and then out ran the line.

"Heavens and earth, Ben, it's a brute," I breathed.

"Big fish," Ben again said.

Away we went down the river. I kept a good tight line on him, not wanting to get too far from my strike in the growing darkness, and Ben assisted me by his skillful handling of the boat. Then he sulked in the bottom, and I thought again that I was hooked in to a log. But no, once more he started, this time up river and swimming deep, and as I knew he was hooked on the end fly I prayed most earnestly that the bob fly would not get foul of anything.

He sulked again and I commenced to shorten line and Ben worked the boat along until we were almost over him.

One more death struggle, and I had him almost on the surface and close to the boat, and my thoughts pictured the yearly medal hanging in my sanctum for one winter at least.

"Get the net ready, Ben," I said in a husky voice.

"Huh," was all his reply, and as the bob fly came over the gunwale of the boat the net passed under my arm and with a dexterous flip Ben had him.

Ye gods and shades of the immortal Izaak Walton. A huge *eel* — fully four feet long and almost as thick as my wrist!

"Ben," I said in a weary tone, "let us go home."

"Huh."

— And the Preacher Didn't Swear?

The Reverend E. V. Stivers has honored me bv sending this charming rainbow trout tale. The reading of this story made me think that if I lived in Eugene, Oregon, that on Sundays I would be one of the twelve hundred members of the First Christian Church. I might miss a few Sundays, especially when the sky was overcast, but I know the good clergyman would forgive me and might even take me fishin' with him on week days.

"That's enough to make a preacher swear," is a cry of disappointment that has come from many sources, and in defense of the preacher, being one myself, and with the full knowledge of real tragedies in fishing experiences and yet with the hope of disproving the almost proverbial saying, I will add mine to your collection.

My vocation is preaching, but my avocation is fishing. For the most of my life I have enjoyed this, to me, the greatest of all out-door sports. But never have I had a more interesting or a more profitable time from the standpoint of sport and recreation than that enjoyed last summer on the famed McKinzie River, the beautiful river of Oregon. In this great river, a rushing mountain torrent of large proportions, with water as cold as the snow from which

it comes, are to be found the finest of all game fish, if I am to be the judge — the red sides, or sometimes known as the rainbow trout. The swiftness of the river, its temperature, the nature of the fish and their size, all combine in making it a stream of wonderful possibilities for the one who delights in trout fishing of the very finest type.

But that tragic moment! I had spent several weeks on this stream and had been successful in adding to our possession many fish, all ranging from ten to sixteen inches in length, but I had not been able to "connect" with one that I would be willing to name "the daddy of 'em all."

One day, after fishing upstream for about two miles, I found to my deep sorrow that somewhere in my travels during the day, working in and out through the brush, I had lost my fly book containing five or six dozen of the best dry flies obtainable. So after an early dinner I started on the back trail in search of the book.

About two miles down the stream is a rock known as "Fish Rock" by the fishermen in this vicinity. It rises perpendicular from a deep pool, where many of the finest fish imaginable have been obtained — hence the name. Extending out from below this rock is a drift, known as the "big drift," distinguishing it from another of similar character yet not so large and known as the "little drift."

On the evening referred to I came to this large drift, and there found two men fishing, who were in a great state of excitement, for the water was literally alive with fish, yet these men were having no success. The red sides were jumping clear of the water, feeding on "blue upright" flies, and seemed to be having a real jollification in Fishville that evening.

Knowing that I laid some claim to being able to persuade the most crafty of the finny tribe to try the dry-fly lure, one of the men offered me his outfit for use. But realizing that to be at my best, I must use the tackle with which I am familiar (a Thomas Special 9½ ft., 5¾ oz. rod), I refused, but inwardly I resolved that on the next evening I would be on this drift to try my skill. Thanks to a kind Providence, the next day at about the time mentioned, I was there. I found again that some of the largest trout I had ever seen were playing and feeding, and the scene itself sent a thrill through me that only fishermen have. I used all the skill at my command, tried different flies, cast from different locations, but was only able to land two trout — one twelve and the other fourteen inches in length.

Finally, having located a place in the stream where I was sure a large one lived, and after several efforts to make the fly look as lifelike as the bug itself, *zip!* I was connected with one of the finest fish a man ever saw. He made the usual run, coming clear of

the water several times, apparently with the avowed purpose of demonstrating how wonderfully beautiful he was. I am well aware of the fact that the fish you never really measure are usually longer than the tape shows them, and even as a preacher I am always inclined to excuse the "big ones" told by the fishing fan, for I know the temptation. However, without fear of injuring my ministerial standing in any particular, I am ready to swear that fish was not less than twenty inches in length. The red on his side looked as if it had been painted there. All in all, he was a beauty. I had no landing net, and my old fisherman pal, who was with me, cautioned me not to get excited but use all my skill if I wanted that fish in the basket.

I knew he was right, and several times in the struggle that was taking place I was able to bring the fighting beauty just below me, as I stood on the drift. Then away he would go, and the reel would sing the song that only reels sing.

Finally I said to my companion: "The only way to land that fellow is for me to lead him around this drift and out on the gravel bed on the other side." I started, intent on doing just the thing I had outlined as my only hope. It is not an easy matter to "coon a log" which is devoid of bark, extending out over a roaring, boiling mountain stream where the water is at least twenty feet in depth, but when you add to that difficulty a fish like the one I have named doing

everything within its power to get free from the hook and with the apparent added desire of taking the preacher-fisherman into the stream, you have a feat all but impossible to accomplish.

However, in this venture I was successful, and the fish was led around the end of the log, back to the main drift, and out on another log in the direction of the afore-mentioned gravel bed. Here was where the real battle began. The water ran beneath the log so swiftly that without a handicap it would have been difficult to have landed a fish the size of the one on the end of the line, but it really became tragic when this fish would start downstream like a streak, drawing the line under the log. Twice he did this and twice I was able by care and skill to bring him back and head him upstream. But the third time had to come, and for the fisherman it was by no means the charm, for with renewed zeal this beauty of the water made another run, this time to his freedom.

Did the preacher swear? He did not, but rather he talked to the fish after this fashion: "Well, old top, you met me in a fair battle. We had great fun in those fifteen minutes, but you were too much for me, and you win. I'll try to see you again some day, but in the meantime, good luck to you, and may you live long and happy." All of which proves that even a preacher need not swear when he loses a fine fish. But at that, it sure was tragic.

Reserved for "Honorable Mention"

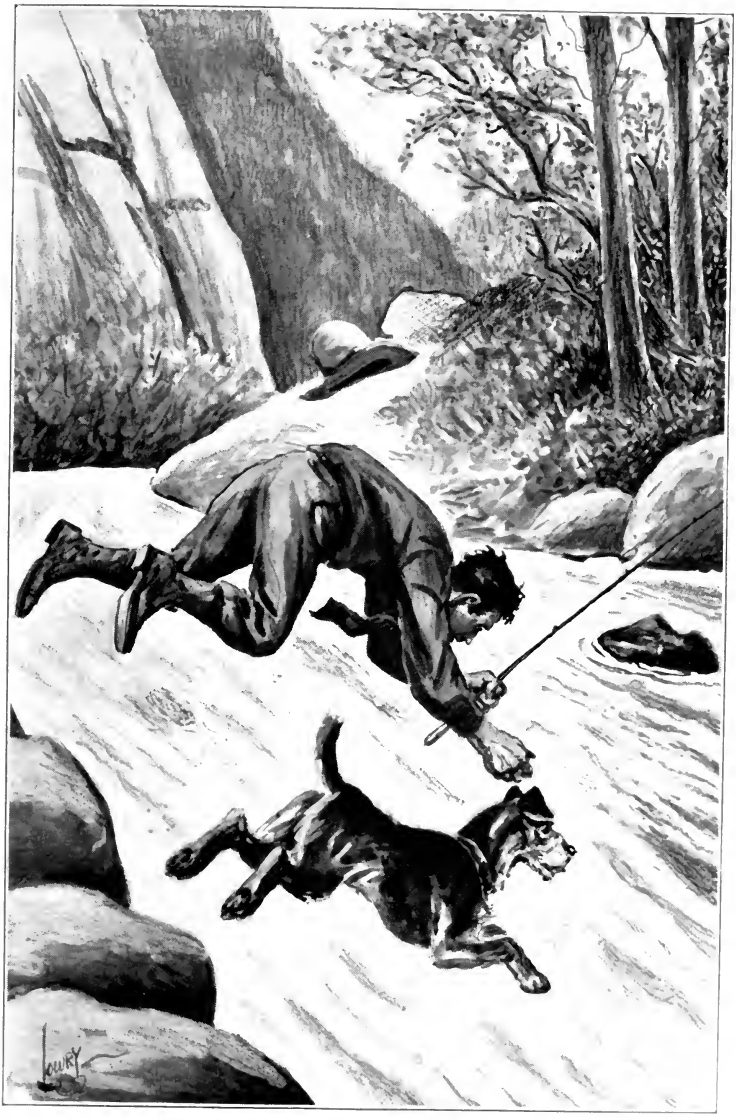
Here is a wonderfully thrilling trout story. It comes from the pen of Mr. Phil. S. Rogers, of Denver, Colorado. He very modestly tells me that he is not a writer but hopes his story may interest some of the boys who love the square-tail as he does. I know that every reader of his story will agree that he is 'most as good a writer as he is a fisher and, I venture to say, that's "going some." "Phil" is also kind enough to write: "You sure get some noble ideas under your old bass hat and don't keep them there either." Thanks, old man.

Tragic moments are by no means rare to the man who takes his recreation on the wonder streams of the Rocky Mountains. The clear cold waters rushing over countless rocks, racing through the rapids, and swinging the bends, form many pools, eddies and swirls where the several varieties of trout, the most beautiful, spectacular, and gamiest (did I step on some one's toes there?) of fresh water fish, find an ideal home.

My most tragic moment was the result of a hunting rather than fishing trip. While away back in the big hills one morning, following a rather strenuous hunt after goats the day before in a rough country, I decided to rest a little and try the flies. I had brought along

an old trunk rod, a little old "Jimmie Green" reel and a line which I had pensioned three years before. A pack-horse trip is hard on good tackle. Getting this outfit rigged up, I hit the stream — not a baby brook but a real man sized trout stream. Whipping the likely looking places with fair results, I worked downstream, finally coming to a place where a great ledge of rock turned the waters of the stream square to the left for twenty yards or so, forming a great swirl at the foot of a long heavy rapid. Into this swirl from the east, slipping down along the base of the ledge, ran an eight or ten foot stream of crystal clear water. Pretty? Man dear, when my gaze took in the possibilities of that place I could just naturally smell trout on the breeze!

Slipping down along the bank to the junction of the streams I dropped a Royal Coachman on the smaller and as it floated out on the swirl, a splendid trout appeared. Not with a spectacular rush, but in rather a slow matter-of-fact manner he came up, opened a face which could have taken a rabbit and gobbled that Royal Coachman. I was too astounded to move of my own volition and whether I struck from force of habit or the trout just closed that big face on the hook and forced home the barb, I have not yet figured out, but at any rate it was but an instant until both the trout and I came to life. I tried to keep him in the swirl, but he had different ideas on the subject and I dare



"My mind neglected to record the happenings of the next few seconds."

not put the required weight on that old line, so out of the swirl he went. Taking a bee line he raced up those rapids like a quarter horse with me on the bank a close second. Deciding it took too much gas to fight that fast water with a tow on, he swung around and changing his tactics, fought back and forth across the current with occasional short runs up stream. We had an exciting trip but finally landed back in the swirl pretty well winded, but by no means conquered.

Just at this time my little pal, Foxie, the Airedale, got back from a scouting expedition and, taking in the situation at a glance, immediately proffered her valuable service by a wild dive for that trout. It took considerable persuasion to convince her that I desired the honor of retrieving that bird alone, but finally she came to the bank, where she continued to extend the benefit and encouragement of her enthusiasm by running up and down the bank barking her doggondest. Just about now the question of landing the fish began to assume large proportions. I had no net, could not get down stream on account of the ledge, and the bank was about four feet above the water on a pretty steep pitch. I had to have that trout plumb tired, so proceeded to bring on that state by working him in close, then throwing rocks at him to drive him out for another run. Game as he was he could not keep that business up forever, and finally rolled over on his side and gave up the battle. I reached out and taking the line in

my hand tried to slide him up the bank. About half way up the line parted and then, well, my mind neglected to record the happenings of the next few seconds, but I have a sort of hazy recollection of a confused jumble of fish, fisherman, and Airedale dog.

When my brain again began to function properly I found myself in water up to my shoulders, and pinned between my breast and the side of the bank, just under water, was the great-granddaddy of all the rainbows. There I held him until I got both hands in his immense gills, thus ending the most thrilling battle of my fishing career. Seven pounds and four ounces of sinew, bone and muscle, but at the very least, twenty-five pounds of courage, nerve, determination and fighting spirit on a little old rod and worn-out line. Yes; tragic moments invariably come to the man or woman who whips the white water with light tackle.

My good little helper, Foxie, has passed on but that Royal Coachman for five years has occupied the first hook on a page of my fly book for flies of honorable mention.

Lost and Found

Here is a dandy cork-bodied bass bug story from Mr. V. A. Bloxham, of Hammond, Indiana. Our friend says that I am the cause of his trying the bass bugs and adds that they have given him a new fishing thrill. "If I do say it as I shouldn't," I certainly did do the fishermen of this country a favor when I put them wise to the bass bug.

I have awaited the time when I could best present to the angling fraternity my tribute to the cork-bodied floating bass bug, which is new and untried to a lot of fishermen. If this gets no farther than the waste basket, you at least will know what I think of your great gift to the fishermen.

I always spend my vacations on the upper Tippecanoe River, where as a boy a certain deep hole yielded a refreshing swim at noon and a fair-sized bass in the evening. Have always been a confirmed plug bait-caster, so before packing the kit I decided that a few more plugs wouldn't hurt anything (excepting fish), and while purchasing these included a "Wilder's Discovery" floating bass bug. I am sure nothing except curiosity caused me to buy it, as I had little thought of fishing with it and much less

of landing anything, for I didn't possess a fly-fishing outfit nor the knowledge of its use.

At any rate, after casting in vain plugs of as many colors as the rainbow, and as time had no value as far as fishing was concerned, thought I'd see how the bug looked in the water. After floating that bug, it sure looked as if any bass in his right mind ought not to let the opportunity slip to put that morsel under his belt, and I was at once seized with the desire to give him the chance. Understand the handicap of casting a cork bug with a heavy casting line and a five and a half foot casting rod. The idea won, however, and after a lot of heartbreaking practice, and to the vociferous disapproval of my companion (after wrapping the line and bug around his neck several times), I managed to handle more or less gracefully twenty to twenty-five feet of line.

The happiest moment of my fishing experience was when I took the first fish with that bug — a two-pound small-mouth, and as far as I was concerned the real and great purpose of my vacation had been fulfilled.

Possessing only one bug, and no way of getting more on short order, rather limited my chance for good fishing every day; and true to Will Dilg's experience, they didn't want a bug with yellow and red wings as a steady diet. Instead of being able to find the bug that fit the day, it was necessary to

wait for the day that fit the bug. But it wasn't long in coming. Here's part of the tragedy — it lasted only half an hour.

We pushed our boat out from camp one very still clear evening at sundown and floated down with the current. The first cast produced a rise, the second a nice bass. From that spot to a thousand feet downstream we took in tow four beautiful bass, and there were not half a dozen casts at any time without a fish rising. Man, oh man, was it exciting? Many of them turned tail, however, after inspecting my white shirt, that friend wife, who visited camp that day, insisted I put on in the name of decency and which I had forgotten to change for a dark one before starting out.

These fish were taken from a stretch of water that as far as history goes had never yielded a respectable bass. The water was fairly boiling around that bug at nearly every presentation. I was so excited that I guess my nervous hand put rather a natural expression into that bug's manners, which, at any rate, got results in fish and the confidence of my skeptical companion — who now swears by floating bugs.

The climax of that evening came when I cast into a nice deep bassy looking hole, which happened to be "the ol' swimmin' hole" of boyhood fame. The bogus insect had hardly touched the water when an old monarch announced with much indignation that

he had taken a mouthful he didn't want. No sooner had he discovered that he had been an old fool and that the bug wasn't really good to eat, he went straight to the bottom, turned tail and made a flying leap two feet out of the water. Oh, he was a lunker!

Already I was thinking of what the boys would say, etc., when he made one grand break high in the air and then to the bottom. Something snapped. My line came easy — too easy. He had departed for some other seaport with my bug and half-tested three-foot double gut leader. Curses! Give me a cigarette! It was bad enough that my biggest fish should get away, but it was real tragedy that he took my fish catching bug along with him. From then on I cast everything from a porkrind to a luminous floater without the least sign of a strike. The answer is that those bass wanted floating bugs and, moreover, wanted "Wilder's Discovery," and nothing else would do.

We came into camp that night happy but mourning the loss of our biggest fish and our only bass bug and our chances for taking any more fish in tow via the bug method. That half hour's experience took away most of the enthusiasm I ever had for wooden plugs and I was from then on a Bass Bug Booster.

Bright and early the next morning I slipped away from camp alone and revisited the scene of the previous evening's conflict. Not seeing any wreckage or spoils of war, I floated on downstream turning that

old bass over in my mind and considering future methods of procedure, when something in the shape of a very familiar bass bug and half of a three-foot double gut leader attracted my attention, not ten feet away, hanging on a dead willow bush two feet above the water. MY BUG. How did it get there? Is any old He-Bass such a good ball player as to pitch it up there himself?

The Tragedy of a Barbless Hook

Dr. Henry Van Dyke would not find it easy to match the trout story which follows, and that's saying about all that can be said. Personally I have never read a story of the "square tail" I liked any better than this one from the talented pen of Mr. Clarke Venable, of St. Paul, Minn.

Mr. Venable writes me: "There is a great day coming for us all when men begin to fish gamely, and then, too, what a day that will leave for the boys who soon will want to go afield and astream." Amen! to that sentiment say we all.

When wiser fishermen than I have discussed the art of angling, I have listened and held my tongue. I have remained calm when others have pitted art against results. I have kept my silence and the peace when self-confessed anglers have written of fishing for bass with a five-foot club and a three or five gang plug. I sat in the listener's seat when the learned discussed "Why Bass Strike an Artificial Lure." Through all of this I have passed, and silently gone my way — afishing. But when you speak of "Tragic Moments"— it is too much.

I am again following old streams; standing in the deep shadows at the foot of some dark pool; wading

streams that lazily run through meadows yellow with early buttercups, or haunting some shore line with my fly rod, bugging for bass. And each place has its tragic moment, memories of the thrill that comes but once in a lifetime. All of the water that I have fished hold pleasant memories for me, regardless of whether fish were taken or not, and many of them hold memories of tragic moments. But out of all these tragic moments, perhaps the memory of that big trout out on the Laramie River — but then, that is the story.

We were three — Dr. M., from Oklahoma; Mr. T., a banker from Colorado; and the writer. We went out to the Laramie in July, on the Colorado-Wyoming line, looking for trout. Now the country of which I write is a fair land, of golden mornings and of pure sunsets; a land where the skies come down to rest on the far blue hills soft as a benediction. And here we found trout. We found them in pairs; we found them in schools; and we found them in droves that literally churned the pools and riffle heads into foam at feeding time.

Both of the other gentlemen had lent themselves to my tutelage in the art of dry-fly fishing, yet each day's close found them nearly as rich in fish as I. There was little use of art here. You had but to hit the water with a fly, and *smash!* you were fast in an old warrior. It seemed that nothing mattered — neither the kind of fly, its size nor the way it was offered. Things that

I had long believed essential in fly-fishing went into the discard here, and I had reason to wish for sturdier tackle, for my two 3¼ ounce rods — one nine feet, the other nine feet six inches — were being put to tests that were equally trying on both rod and mind.

On the afternoon of the third day, Mr. T. and I went off upstream while the Doctor took off downstream, saying that he intended to offer them a bare hook and see if they wouldn't take it. In a short time Mr. T. had brought three beauties to net, while my own basket held six trout as pretty as mortal man ever saw. So we sat down out in the meadow, away from the stream, to rest a bit and fire up the old chimneys. Here we took stock and decided that regardless of the Doctor's luck we had quite enough fish for our present need.

Now I contend stoutly that I am not a fish hog, but I have my weakness — I am a hog for fishing! This trouble has rested upon me for years, and knowing this my fly book has long contained a varied assortment of flies tied on barbless hooks. Sitting there in the meadow I decided that now was a fitting and proper time to take my friend and pupil beyond the vale of common things into the sanctum sanctorum of dry-fly fishing. I prefaced my actions with a short lecture on the sport of fishing gamely for game fish, and when I finally reached the point, the consternation and dismay of my friend knew no bounds. He called heaven to

witness that trout were hard enough to land under the most favorable circumstances, and further declared that he had little or no intention of minimizing his already slender chances in an effort to gain favor in the eyes of one who was a better angler than he was a fisherman and who was seemingly approaching his dotage. Realizing that I was "preaching in the wilderness," I held my peace the while I surreptitiously slipped a barbless number 10 Reuben Wood onto my 00 gut leader.

Having finished our smoke, I pointed out to my friend that by cutting through some dense alders and crossing an old slough we could strike the stream a little farther up, where there was some excellent water. I had fished the intervening water the day before and had found it poor fishing. About three hundred yards out through the alders we came upon the slough. At that time we thought it to be dead water, though we later learned that it connected with the main stream. I crossed first, using a fallen tree for a foot log, and had passed on some distance into the underbrush on the other side when T., who had not yet followed, called out that he had seen a good trout in the slough and that perhaps we had better try it.

I replied that it was dead water — for I then thought it was so — and was no doubt much too warm for trout. I also called his attention to the density of the brush and alders, remarking that the brush was so

thick that no living white man could cast a fly into that water. But to humor him I came back to a place where the bank was about five feet above the water and where the slough grass was about waist high. There I cast out a short line — though I could not see the water from where I stood — just to show him that it could *not* be done. What a sad mistake! Hardly had that fly touched the water when with the noise of a horse wading upstream, the trout that I had long looked for smashed into the barbless Reuben Wood!

While I preach, and believe, that all of fishing is not in catching fish, still I am not unlike other men. We are brothers of a common woe: the big fish that we want to land is the one we never get.

There I stood on a steep bank some five feet above the water, with roots of alders hanging over into the stream, the overhead a perfect layrinth of alder boughs and the bed of the slough filled with moss. Add to this the fact that I was fast into a monster trout, the one that I had been looking for these weary years agone, and my implements of warfare to use in landing him being a three and one-quarter ounce fly-rod, a 00 gut leader and a barbless hook.

Realizing this slowly as I stood there, the day grew very dark. I remembered hearing that in days past the natives of Kansas had at various times prayed for rain, and with seeming success. And so, being well nigh helpless, and willing to try anything, I devoutly

prayed for a barb on the end of that Reuben Wood. All the while, my friend T., who is a better fisherman than an angler — hope he sees this — was jumping up and down shouting, " Lord A'mighty, pull 'im out, pull 'im out." Whether he was shouting directions to me or whether he was also praying, I have never learned, but if he was praying I could have told him that the Lord knew that such a fish as this could not be pulled out!

Somehow I managed to maneuver from the bank onto the fallen log that crossed the slough, and somehow that barbless small hook managed to stay with the old fellow. My hope was that I could wear the trout down, and in some fashion lead him up to the log and to net. Just how this was to be accomplished I did not know, for my ideas of execution were not keeping pace with my hopes and desires. I must have resembled an oriental dancer trying to stay on that log and play that trout. The water was far over my waders, and I had no desire to be anywhere but right on that log. For a long while luck was with me and I managed to keep my line taut and the hook stayed with the old boy despite his acrobatics.

Nearer and nearer I played him to the log. At the end of each wild rush that old boy found himself a little nearer the log. He was tiring rapidly, and at last he rushed in shore near the end of the log, went down and sulked. I can see him now as he lay there

half buried in the green moss — a perfect giant of a trout, with his beautiful coloring greatly augmented by the background of green moss — a jewel against a background of green plush!

I worked across the log, holding my line taut and loosening my net with one hand as I went. Directly over him I leaned far out, determined to make one quick thrust with the net and land him. Just as I struck he rushed toward the log; I made a wild effort to change the direction of my net thrust. A muddy boot slipped on the log — and I did a perfect swan dive into about four feet of the coldest of cold waters. In about two jumps I came out, blowing like a whale. A slack line trailed behind me — and the gosh-awfullest trout in all of Colorado was roaming his native heath. And then I knew that I had passed through my most "tragic moment."

Then and there I bared myself to the breezes that prevail at such altitudes and "hung my rags on a pole."

Then came another tragic moment. I sat there calmly and nakedly in the high grass and watched old T. take seven of the finest of fine trout from that slough that couldn't be fished. I could not, having earlier delivered my lecture, go back to barbed hooks. For days thereafter both of my companions frequently asked if they must learn how to submarine 'em, and if there was any art in that branch of the game.

The Tragedy of a Barbless Hook

And now, since I have told you where the big ones are to be found — go! But when you catch all you need for the wants of the day, for the sake of all fishermen, and for the sake of those who are to come after us, use a barbless hook. You can make them out of the flies that you have at hand with a pair of snippers and a small file. It will give you just as many thrills, nay more. If you can land 'em that way, you are more than a fisherman — you are an angler and a sportsman. With wet hands you can turn them back with no torn and bleeding mouth, and they will be waiting for you next year in this land of sky and water.

Keep Your Head Above Water

Mr. Will R. Willan, of Sunnyside Farm, Morgantown, Indiana, has here written a bully fishing story and those who are just about to step into the fly fishing game will enjoy it hugely. Many of us own Hardy and Leonard rods, but I question whether any of us ever got more fun out of them than did Mr. Willan with his mail order outfit.

Over twenty years ago I contracted a case of fly fever, and thought I would try fly fishing for bass. So I sent to a large mail order house and got a combination fly and bait rod which cost me $4.00. It was a four-joint rod. The butt and second joint were of ash; the third one, and tips, were lancewood. There were two fly-tips; a heavy tip for bait-fishing and a short tip in the hollowed end of the butt. It was a whale of a rod, but not a "Whalen." It was twelve feet in length — I do not know the weight; but the butt alone weighed ten ounces.

I paid $2.50 for a reel, but got a good one of a well-known make. The line was *some* line; I don't know how many pounds it would take to break it, but I would hate to be strung up by the neck with it. For flies, I had six, a red one, a black one, a white

one, and three off colored ones. I had never seen a fly cast, or a fly-casting outfit, but I thought I could learn. So after the corn was laid by, the wheat threshed, and the hay put in the mow, I decided to try my new outfit.

I had practiced some on the pond at home, but only caught a mud catfish about five inches long. But I had hopes of something better when I tried my luck at the river — which was twelve miles away, at the nearest point, from home. But by getting up at two o'clock in the morning, I could get there in time for the morning fishing.

One morning, about the last of July, I started for White River to try my luck. I got there and was ready to fish by five o'clock. I tried a white fly and one of the off-colored ones first, and fished about a quarter of a mile of the river, and never got a fish to raise to them. I had no boat, so I just waded and fished. I changed my flies, placing my black one on the end of the line; and the red one back about four feet, and "at it" again I went. I could not keep from making a splash when the flies hit the water, and my wrist got tired, so I took both hands and tried it awhile.

Just below me the river made a sharp bend. There was swift water at the turn, and about fifteen feet depth below it. I waded out twenty-five yards and began fishing the swift water, gradually working down

toward the deeper. I finally made a cast near the far bank, and there was a swirl of water as something took the black fly. I put the hook into him, and I did not know whether I had the fish or the fish had me. I was in water up to my waist, and it was very swift too, and much deeper below me.

I grabbed the rod above the reel with both hands and held on. The fish was doing everything he knew to break loose, rushing first to one side as far as he could, then to the other, and twice he came out of the water and looked as long as my arm, and six or eight inches wide. I realized I could hold him, and decided to back out to shore with him fighting every inch of the way.

I had gotten about half way to shore with him, when my foot caught on a sunken limb. I stumbled and fell backwards in the water. When I got to my feet, and got the water out of my eyes, I still had the rod in one hand, and it felt as limp as a wet dishrag. I had lost the best fish I had ever hooked. What I said would not look well in print — and I will leave it to the imagination of the reader. I have had more fun and pleasure with that old rod than you could put in the Woolworth Building, and now there's nothing left but the second joint and butt to remind me of my tragic moment.

Guerre a' Mort!

Mr. D. L. Holmes — professor, yachtsman, fisherman, nature student, etc. — declares that a bass' dorsal fin is his "battle flag." My friend Zane Grey thinks so too and so do others of lesser fame. Our Professor's story is less tragic than it is comic. I had a good laugh over it. Read it and have one too.

It was about May, I think. "Sherry, let's buy a sailboat and sail for Georgian Bay this summer. What say?"

Now, coming from the South as I did, I hadn't a very definite knowledge of just what and where Georgian Bay is. I knew it was up there somewhere near Nova Scotia and Duluth, but just exactly where I wasn't sure.

"All right, Ben, you're on. Is this bay large enough to get a sailboat in? I acknowledge that as a sailor I'm well qualified, for in Oklahoma I had considerable experience on prairie schooners, but I like plenty of room for sailing."

It took us seven days to get to our first stopping place. This was some hundred miles from Georgian Bay, too. During those seven days I had spent all

my spare time getting my outfit ready. You should have seen that outfit. My tackle-box was about as big as a steamer trunk — and jammed full of about everything I had seen in that sporting goods store in Detroit. The proprietor had sized me up correctly. (I know him well now!) He simply took me into his confidence and told me about tackle that very few fishermen even knew anything about. He confided that he liked me personally, that he was going to do something he seldom, if ever, did — pick out my entire outfit himself. Gosh! think of it — me not even claiming to know anything about the piscatorial art, yet getting this personal attention!

Now for "the tragic moment"! We anchored in a beautiful bay that seventh night out. We were "amongst the fish," Ben said. Next morning we were ready to go fishin'. Ben helped me carry my tackle-box up on deck and dump it into the dink. We rowed about between islands, around boulders, through reeds. Not a bass was to be seen. Ben took my rod, for I had it all rigged up, of course. I rowed. Ben cast everywhere. I watched him closely, for I had never tried the casting game. It looked very simple. Finally Ben rigged up a trolling line and handed it to me. He rowed a spell; I trolled. We worked for hours. No bass.

"Doggone it all, Sherry! Say, that d —— d arsenal of yours there has scared 'em all away, that's

all there is to it! I don't blame 'em one bit, either. I have profound respect for the bass up here — they have sense, Sherry!"

Next morning we were out again. We had rowed some distance. Ben was casting in all directions. I had taken a few lessons in the art the evening before, and was ready for Ben to take the oars any old time. Finally he did. First he had to fill up his old corncob pipe. We were between two small islands. Ben started an oration on the beautiful scenery, the salubrious climate, the opalescent waters — no mention was made of fishing or fish. I was feeling a bit sick at heart. Here we were up here in the land of the bass (or the water of the bass), with every known appliance for catching bass — and no bass for to catch! I was gazing around while Ben orated. Suddenly . . . !

"Ye very gods, Ben! Say, for the love o' Mike, gimme my rod up there!"

"*Give* it to you? Whatcha talking about? *Take* it! Whatcha gonna do — try to snare one of those sea-gulls flying overhead?"

"Sea-gulls be hanged! Fish, man, fish! I see a million of 'em out there!" And I *did!*

I managed to take my eyes off the water (that is, I took my gaze off the water; my eyes, though sticking out well toward the water, weren't really on the water) and to grab up my rod. Ben had by this time

seen what I had seen. He slid the anchor silently overboard.

"Sherry, hand me my rod, will you? Quick!"

"Hand it! Ben, I — I'm unconscious — I — I — I'm — get your own rod!"

I was busy getting that plug out of my pant leg. Ben jumped up — his whole two hundred and fifty pounds at once — and made a lunge for his rod. The skiff nearly capsized — Ben did. The sudden lurch of the boat sent me sprawling backwards over the seat, where I landed right-side-up-with-care, my head firmly lodged down under the stern seat, my feet wildly beating the atmosphere, my rod in one hand, the other hand closely pinned to my knee by a half-dozen hooks, the rest of which had already found a nestling place in my trouser leg, as before stated. Ben finally got to his feet and helped extricate me, screaming with joy profuse the while. Then he had to help me get that plug out. It was accomplished. The bass were still out there! I floundered to my feet and stood up on the seat, the plug dancing wildly at the end of my rod. Ben was searching madly himself in his tackle-box and mumbling something about snaps and swivels (he had forgotten to tie these very handy accessories on his line). I think some parts of his remarks were strong.

I got ready for a cast. Something was wrong — the darned old plug wouldn't wave any more! Oh,

yes! A very simple matter — it had only wrapped line around the end of the rod a dozen times, and had ended up by securely fastening several hooks to the innocent rod. Very simple. I undid that mess and got ready to cast again. Ben had tied his snap and swivel on by this time and was just searching for a good plug to attach. I flipped out my line a bit, got the plug down about where I wanted it, and got set for my first cast at real bass.

"Look out, Sherry, you got my rod all tangled up!" I looked around. That unnamable plug had managed to get hooked to his rod somehow!

Ben got that fixed up. I straightened the line out again and prepared for a mighty cast.

"Now, Ben, look out, for I'm gonna shoot them bass right betwixt th' eyes!"

"Yes, and you look out, too, that you don't shoot me right betwixt the eyes, Sherry! I oughta get out on that island over there when you cast!" Ben was getting all set for a cast — and it looked as if he were going to get the first one, after all.

I made ready again to cast. The bass were still there, smacking their lips at that plug of mine. Seeing that Ben was just ready to accommodate, I drew back for a mighty cast. I felt something gently prick my arm, and stopping the mighty cast just in its inception, turned to find Ben's plug clinging to my sweater sleeve.

"Well, now wouldn't that get your goat!" Ben was about as sore as he was tickled. "Go ahead, Sherry, you get the first cast after all. The gods are against me. If you don't muss things up, I have to! Take the sweater off and go ahead with the fishing. I'll cut the darned (I believe that was the word) sleeve off!"

Once again I got ready to cast. The bass were standing up on their hind legs all around the boat, giving us the merry ha-ha.

"Now, Sherry, do look out! I'm back here — don't forget that — I'm back *here!*" Ben had crowded back as far in the little dinghy as he could get.

I sighted, shook out my rod, aimed — fired!

"My God, Sherry! You've hooked me!" yelled Ben.

Something had happened — of that I was certain. I heard a dull thud behind me. Looking back, I beheld Ben crouched way down in the boat, with his arms wrapped round his head, his nose buried in the bottom of the boat, blood streaming from one hand. I looked at something dangling on my plug — Ben's hat! Ben uncovered and quoth as follows:

"Sh-Sherry, d-d-don't you know you m-m-might have h-hooked me instead of my hat?" He stuttered more than that, even.

"Sure I know I might have, Ben, but fact remains I didn't. To be perfectly frank, didn't t-try to

h-h-hook you. Very few anglers, Ben, who can take a man's hat off his head first cast."

Ben by this time had a finger in his mouth, for it was there the plug had first landed, glancing from his hand upward and onward — or hatward. The hat had the plug securely imprisoned. Ben broke into a roar. Bass or no bass, he had to laugh. The bass were still there, only right up to the boat by this time.

Off came the plug and hat; on went yet another plug. I was going to get one of those bass if it cost me my life — and Ben's. I didn't like the color of the plug I had just put on, so unsnapped it, grabbed up my tackle-box, put it on the seat beside me, and finaly managed to pry loose a new plug. It had fewer hooks, too! Leaping up on the seat, I flipped the red-head right among the convivial bass. With a splash it alighted; almost simultaneously it shot up into the air, a raging, shaking, snorting bass attached thereto!

"Strike 'im, Sherry! Strike 'im!" shouted Ben.

"Strike him your godmother! How the devil can I strike him when he's way out there on the end of the line? Gimme a shotgun an' I'll shoot him!"

But that bass had a strangle hold on the plug. He shot into the air again. I was ready to leap overboard and graple with him.

"Reel him in, Sherry!"

Exactly! — reel him in, to be sure! I had for-

gotten that one trivial little detail. But the darned handle of the reel was going around so fast I couldn't get hold of it. It managed to get hold of my thumb, however. At last the reel handle paused for a moment, and in that moment I grabbed it and started to reel in, with Ben giving directions. That bass didn't want to come up to the boat a-tall, a-tall! Up and out of the water he went again! I'd swear he bellowed! I felt something give way somewhere in the vicinity of my hands. The reel had come off! In my left hand was the rod; in my right, the reel.

"Drop the pole and reel him hand-over-hand!" commanded Ben.

I promptly dropped the pole, which as promptly slid rout out into the water and gradually sank as slack line was supplied it by my reeling-in process. For some unknown reason I hung onto the reel. But the old bronzeback was now making good headway toward the boat.

"Don't let him hit the side of the boat, Sherry, or you'll lose him! Lead him right up; then with one yank swing him on board." Ben should have been a general in the late war.

Up to the side of the boat came my victim, shaking and gnashing his teeth. With one mighty yank I lifted him out and up into the boat, where he started another smashing program. I threw down the reel and leaped for my prey! The reel hit the gunwales

of the boat and went overboard. The open tackle box on the seat accommodatingly accompanied me, landing bottom-up in the boat. Plugs, hooks, spoons, swivels, snaps, sinkers, leaders, scales, etc., flew all over the scene. I tried to gather my bass up in my arms, but found that impossible. Next I tried to lie on him, but he would ooze out somewhere. I could feel a plug sticking in one of my legs, and could distinctly see others hanging on various parts of my anatomy.

"Hit him over the head!" howled Ben.

The first thing my hand happened upon was an oar. This I grabbed up and, waiting a favorable "rise" struck viciously at the bass' head. Instead of hitting the bass the oar struck the gunwales of the boat a terrific smash — and popped right off close to the handle. With the handle I soon beat the head of my vicitim to a jelly.

"*Guerre a' mort!*" shouted Ben, as he picked up the war-club I had just abandoned and flourished it overhead. "*Guerre a' outrance!*" And writhed in glee.

Get the scene : In ten feet of water, plainly visible, lay my rod and reel and a mess of tangled line. I picked up my sweater from the bottom of the boat. Hanging to it were behooked demons of every color and description. On my south trouser leg hung a South Bend Bass-Oreno; on the north one, a spotted

Haddon. On different parts of me hung Wilson Wabblers, spoons, etc. Rolling about on the stern seat was one demented, contorted, convulsive, completely contagious companion. And, in the bottom of the boat lay — one dead bass. *Veni, vidi, vici. He sureabus slewum!*

Not Even a Smoke

Here is a humorous Maine coast story written from the Golden West by Mr. Wolcott Tuckerman, Carpinteria, California. Those of us who are willing slaves to Lady Nicotine will understand the tragedy of being without the solace of tobacco after losing a big fish.

" Oh me! look you, master, a fish! a fish!
Oh, alas, master, I have lost her."—Walton.

With these doleful, but to my notion quite inadequate, words does the great Walton's pupil express his Tragic Moment. That he was a novice may be sufficient excuse for using the feeble and altogether paltry word " alas " at such a time. Any good fisherman I know can spot Mr. Venator four " alases " and a couple of " tuts " and tell the story better with one well-aspirated Hell, to say nothing of sitting down and writing the gall out of his system for a Tragic Moment story.

Most of the tragic anglers who grab me by the waistcoat button to tell me about a grievous occasion make me laugh before they get through. Probably I have lost a good deal of popularity just that way. But they always seem to have some consolation. Generally

tragedies are like that. The golf nut does a hole in eight strokes and twenty minutes, and then you find out he shot the next in two.

Well, just for contrast, listen to my tale of woe. I was fly-fishing for the gamy pollock from a rocky point somewhere in Maine. It was about five a. m. Little fellers of one to two pounds were plentiful and bold, so presently I became rather careless whether the next one dropped the hook or came in to have it taken out. I hooked one of a pound and a half or so and let him run around. Suddenly he began to jump, which pollock never do after the strike. As I drew him close to the rock, there rose from the sandy bottom a great striped bass, as long as my leg, and seizing my little pollock, he started immediately for Kennebunk, Portland, and points N by E ½ W. I had a five-ounce rod. I had about twenty-five yards of old silk line, rotted in salt water. Did I stop that fish? I did not. Alas, and oh h—l, masters, I did lose her.

Was that sad? Was that grievous? Was that, in short, tragic? Nay, not so much. Listen. When I had exhausted my stock of audible wailing for the departed I relaxed, limp as a dead worm, on a convenient bed of mussels, feeling a great need for a consoling smoke. But there was no pipe in my pockets. Nor any tobacco. And I was two miles from home, home!

The End of the Rainbows

George W. Long, of Louisville, Kentucky, philosopher, essayist, and fisherman, has sent me this most charming little tale. Merely as a bit of writing it is great, but as a bit of philosophy it is even greater. I consider it a real achievement to have lured this great Kentuckian to contribute to the series.

We all know that Dr. Henshall, Bill Dilg, Bob Davis, and, as Hank the Guide would say, "et cetera and so-forth," are afflicted with a most malignant and incurable attack of Bassitis. My friends say that I have been bitten by a rainbow trout "bug" of a virulent species and am an incurable "nut" on rainbow trout fishing. But I like to catch the gamy bronze-backs; it's the greatest sport in the world — when and where rainbows can't be found.

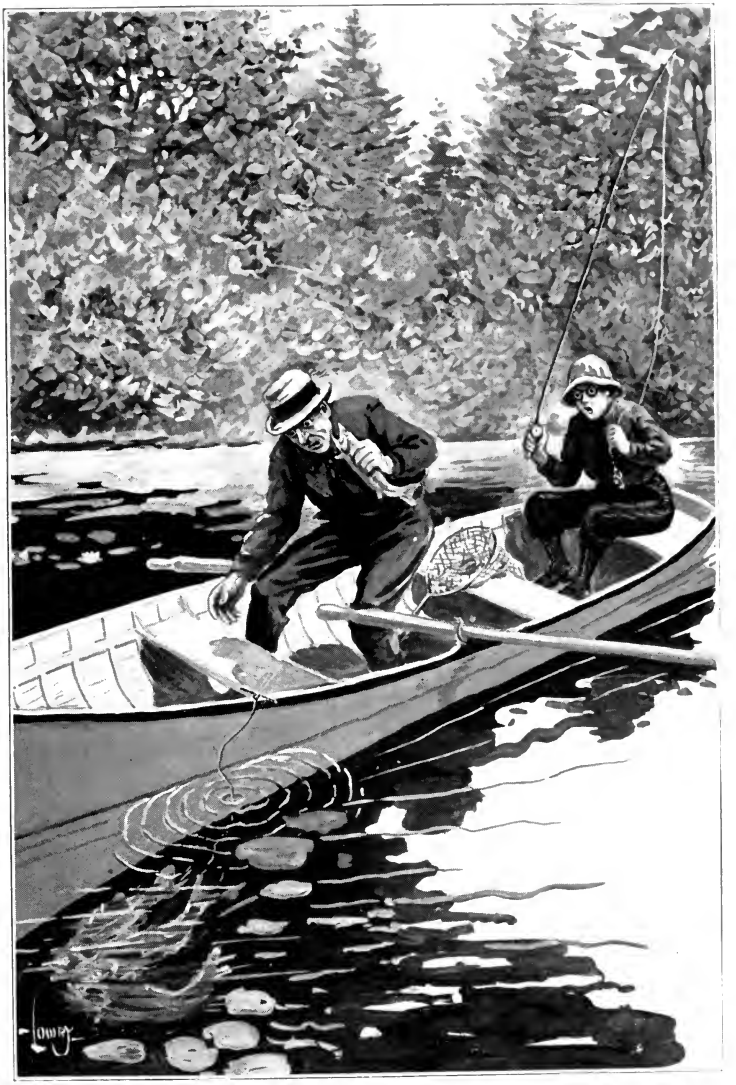
Now, anglers for game fish all stress the thrill of the strike and the playing of the fish. These, they will tell you, are the things that make fishing worth while. In order to impress an important lesson on the beginner and to instill in him a proper spirit of sportsmanship and due consideration for that fair chance which all true sportsmen are disposed to offer a gamy

fish, we who are older in the game insist that when the fish is in the boat or in the creel the fun is all over — but is it? Pleasure may be without the element of fun, but fun can never be without an element of pleasure. We enjoy the merriment and hilarity which constitute the heart of fun, and equally as well do we appreciate the agreeable sensation and mental gratification which we find in our pleasures.

We are thrilled by the strike of a game fish and are delighted with his leaps, runs and the many other stunts which he pulls off in his frenzied fight for freedom. But when these are over and he lies before us, a thing of beauty, we anticipate a pleasure unspeakable and full of pride, perhaps of egotism, as we think of the wonder, the admiration, possibly the jealousy, of friends at the hotel when we return in triumph with our cherished trophy to tell of the fight and of the victory won.

This anticipation, the fun of the strike, and the fight having been successfully ended, filled me with pride, and, I fear, egotism, as I gazed on three lovely rainbows hanging on a stringer tied to my boat. They weighed, respectively, four, five and a half, and six pounds; and I knew certain anglers at the hotel would be green with envy as they gazed upon their iridescent sides and contemplated their lines of grace and beauty, and wondered at their size.

Mrs. Long was with me. Never having handled a



"Away went my three beautiful rainbows."

rainbow, she was of course exceedingly anxious to hook one of these beauties. Finally she succeeded, and after my refusal to help her, landed him herself and began her shouts of triumphs and of joy.

I removed the hook and untied my stringer from the boat, preparatory to adding her catch to mine, when the stringer slipped out of my hand. Away went my three beautiful rainbows, and with them went all my pride, my egotism and my anticipated pleasure and gloating.

I threw my rod into the boat, said things that Mrs. Long has not excused to this day, resolved never to fish again, sat there in silence for a long time, then went home, like little Bo-Peep's sheep, with my tale untold. This, dear friends, was *My Most Tragic Fishing Moment.*

The Poisoned Pool

Here is a dandy boy story. It runs as smoothly and as songfully as did that little stream where Mr. James P. Prickett, of Rural Retreat, Virginia, when a very little boy, used to fish for suckers. I can see our friend's little stream in my mind's eye, because there was just such a one running through my uncle's farm in Kentucky. Dear me, how I did love to catch suckers in those golden days. Any "old boy" who doesn't like this little tale never spent his boyhood days in the country, and it is a question in my mind if he is much of a fisherman anyway.

The most tragic incident of my fishing experiences happened when I was a small boy — a very small boy, no doubt the reader will think when he reaches the conclusion of this little story — when life held no greater charm for me than fishing for suckers. My boyhood days were spent among the mountains of West Virginia, and my fishing career began at an early age when I could not command a better outfit than a cotton string for a line, a hickory pole for a rod, and a bent pin for a hook, and was allowed to fish shallow pools for minnows. When I became a little older a regular "store bought" line and hook were substituted for the cotton line and bent pin, and

the glory of a " sure nuff " fisherman rested upon me.

The stream where I was permitted to fish with a brother a year or so older than myself at an unusually early age was a small one that flowed quietly through rich meadow lands, and was lined with willow bushes and overhung here and there by tall sycamore trees. It contained minnows, chubs, a larger fish which we, for want of a better name, called horny heads, and suckers, the last being the prize fish of the stream. While we kept everything we caught, from minnows up, as a sort of by-product of our little fishing trips, we always fished for suckers; and to catch one of these seven or eight inches long was to give me a greater thrill than I have ever felt in catching larger and gamier fish in later years.

Our little fishing excursions rarely ever took us out of sight of home, but as we grew older we became ambitious to venture far afield. In a stream much larger than our own, about two and a half miles distant, there was a certain pool noted as a " good sucker hole " which we desired to fish, but our mother at first would not entertain the idea of our straying so far from home. Finally, however, as customary with all good mothers, she consented, and so one bright morning in the latter part of March we started off on our hopeful journey to the pool.

But on arriving at the stream we found to our chagrin that two men there ahead of us had appro-

priated the most promising part of the pool to their own use. Nevertheless, not to be outdone after our long and muddy walk, we selected the most likely looking place that was left, threw in our hooks, and settled down for a day's fishing. But great was our disappointment! Our total catch for the day was less than a half dozen small-sized suckers; we could have done as well if we had stayed at home and fished our own little stream.

On the other hand, the number of fish acquired by the two men was a revelation to us. Never before had we seen suckers caught in such great numbers. It seemed to us that they were continually throwing them out, and like a poor boy at a frolic, we had to sit by and see the fun going on and take but little part in it ourselves. We felt as if we had in some way been cheated and that every fish the men caught would have been ours if they had not been there. However, their wonderful success stirred up all the piscatorial longing of our souls. To catch suckers as they caught them became at once the great and consuming desire of our young lives. And so as we made our way back home that afternoon we decided that the next day or day thereafter we would return to the pool, place ourselves in the very spot the men had occupied, and catch suckers to our heart's content.

But the next day proved to be rainy, and then there followed a week of dismal, dreary weather, a com-

bination of April showers and March snows, that kept us indoors most of the time. And what a long, dreary week it was! Our patience knew no bounds. The days appeared interminably long, and every morning when we looked out our hearts sank within us at the dismal prospects before us. Finally one evening the clouds fell apart, and the next morning was bright and clear, foretelling a perfect Spring day. Losing no time, we ate a hurried breakfast, dug some worms out in the garden, and with hearts full of subdued excitement, started out a second time for the pool.

In spite of our long walk, when we came in sight of the pool, which was off the road some distance down in a meadow, we broke into a run, so great was our impatience, and reached it out of breath and in a flutter of excitement.

Casting a glance over the smooth sheet of water spread out so entrancingly before us, we hurriedly adjusted our tackle, baited our hooks, and were just in the act of making our first cast when we were suddenly halted by an overgrown country boy, much older than ourselves, who appeared mysteriously upon the scene. The boy, a sort of rural Job Trotter, was not an entire stranger to us. We had gone to school with him the previous winter, and knew him to hate him, believing there was nothing too mean and despicable for him to do. He lived in the house in sight

on a hill, and the pool was on land rented by his father.

"Say, boys," he said, with a malicious grin distorting his ugly face, "I've given them fish pisen, 'nd if you catch 'em 'nd eat them they'll just naturally pisen you 'nd your family."

As the horrible import of these words flashed through our minds, destroying at once all our high hopes of fishing, without a moment's reflection and with the shadow of a narrowly averted tragedy, as we believed, hanging over us, we turned and fled the pool precipitately.

Of course, by the time we got home the absurdity of the boy's statement had seeped through into our minds, and as might be expected we were two highly indignant and mortified boys.

We wanted to try our luck again the next day, but our mother, fearing the boy might do some bodily harm, would not consent for us to return to the pool, and so, as it turned out, we never saw it again. Neither did we ever have the satisfaction, like Sam Weller, of getting even with our Job Trotter.

The above, no doubt, is a tame story, not having a single thrill to its credit, nevertheless the incident it relates is still, as it was then, the most tragic of my fishing career — one that took all the color out of the landscape and left life not worth living.

The Small but Important Hook

I always like to hear from Mr. H. H. Brimley of Raleigh, N. C. It is plain to me that he is a first class fisherman and he writes in a way which gets into your heart. He is curator of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture.

In packing for a hunting trip last December, after deer, turkey and ducks, I slipped in a small assortment of bass-casting tackle just to see how late in the year I could catch a big-mouth on artificial bait.

I always keep a spare casting rod at the club house to which I was going, so I didn't pack an extra one, but I was undecided about taking a landing net. I had mine all ready to pack, but there was such a mass of hunting clothes, as well as shot gun, rifle and accessories and other winter impedimenta, that at the last moment I left the landing net out.

My destination was the headquarters of the Onslow Rod and Gun Club, on New River, in eastern North Carolina, from which we get both salt and fresh-water fishing, the latter practically during every month of the year.

The time was about two weeks before Christmas, and the weather was comparatively mild and open,

so, on the second day — after deer hunting all the morning — I got out my fourteen foot canvas canoe and paddled up French's Creek to try for a bass or two for supper, the rest of the bunch going on the river after ducks.

About an hour after starting I came to a large dead pine lying from the bank out into the creek, the big, bushy top of which had yielded up more than one bass on former trips.

Starting in near the bank I cast all along the trunk of the tree and then worked the openings among the limbs. Crossing the end of the top and working the upper side I had a light strike. Quickly reeling in and casting back over my left shoulder a fish took the lure and took it hard. I hooked him — and the battle was on!

I felt at once that he was a good one and, as I have found almost invariably the case when the water is cold, he did all his fighting below the surface. He also followed the usual bass tactics of exercising every effort to get back among the submerged tree limbs from which he had come and I had to use blacksmith work to keep him away from them. But a new sixteen pound test line and a trusted rod gave me the confidence to put it to him hard, a necessary method of treatment if I was to keep him away from the safety of those tangled, water-soaked branches.

Finally, I had him coming, but not before his efforts

to reach harbor had dragged the light canoe dangerously near the tree top. He came to the top at last and he showed up as a real He-Fish! I reached for my landing net — and remembered that it was in my den at home a hundred and fifty miles away!

The canoe was still drifting in and almost among the limbs, so I had to act on the jump and by intuition rather than by reason. Instinctively realizing the strength of the line, I slid my left hand down it almost to the fish's mouth — and started to lift him into the boat! I had his head and shoulders out of the water — when he dropped back and slowly swam out of sight!

At first I supposed that the hook had pulled out, but an examination showed that it had broken off where the shank joined the lure. My fault, entirely. I had selected the lure without examination and it proved to be an old one I had used in brackish water the previous August with the result that the hook was badly corroded at its junction with the lure.

How large was he? Well, boys, he was a big fish: I have seen bigger bass — but I don't know that I ever landed a larger one!

Where Are My Shoes?

Sailors are usually good fishermen. This was true of Lord Nelson, and is true of Admiral Beatty, and plainly true of our friend, Sidney V. M. Ray, United States Pacific Fleet, U. S. S. Tennessee.

The happiest life is the uneventful one, and for that reason I am afraid I cannot dig up a single " Moment " tragic enough to appear in company with the soul-searing catastrophes I have been enjoying so very much.

Combing a willing memory, I find only three moments that were anywhere near the tragic, and if you can stand to listen to them I'll spin the yarns for you.

The first is so common it is trite. A September day in Big Marco Pass. Six glistening feet of frantic tarpon jumping six times on a taut line—a seventh jump so high that the fifteen fathoms of line between us entirely cleared the water. Tip and butt both pointed straight at him in a desperate fight to keep the line stretched. One last thrashing shake, and the glint of a silver spoon snapping seventy-five feet toward the boat with the spring of the rod. Tableau!

The second tragedy happened fifteen months after the fish was caught. In February, 1917, I caught a

fourteen-pound large-mouth bass on twelve-pound line and the three-ounce remains of a well-beloved Heddon rod, many times broken, spliced, and rewound. The big fellow was tenderly brought ashore amid scandalized whisperings of the moss-hung cypresses as to the antics of a certain lumbering fisherman trying to do the can-can on the center line of a cranky skiff, and promptly entered in *Field and Stream's* 1917 contest. In the spring of 1918 the awards were announced, and at once I wrote asking why a fish of lesser weight had been given a prize and why mine did not appear. The answer came that Mr. Savage had gone to the war, and my entry had been lost! That I went to war myself shortly after made me realize that thing couldn't be helped, but the disappointment was none the less keen. There is a big 'un in that same lake right now with a reputation for smashing tackle with preternatural cunning, among his tactics being a hundred-yard run for the goal, and for three years I haven't been able to get within one thousand five hundred miles of him! Please pray with me that a 'gator doesn't get him!

The third and last was a little thing, but so damnably galling that to this day it is a standing joke between us. My pardner and I went into executive session on the state of the water, and decided that the recent continuous rains had made the lakes impossible. Determined not to get farther behind in our fishing, we

cast about for something to do that Saturday, and finally agreed to go to Rocky Point and catch a million little sheephead out of Tampa Bay. Those little chaps about the size of your hand are mighty sweet in the pan.

We went to Rocky Point and rented a leaky boat for a dollar, and then for an hour and a half turned over stones on the tide flats of the point hunting bait. We accumulated a hundred or so little green fighting salt-water crawfish in the bottom of a coffee can and set sail for the two-fathom curve, I ensconced in the stern sheets and pardner doing the "sailing" with a pair of mismated oars. There were two or three cans lying in the bottom, and when the incoming ocean set them all afloat, I was ordered to bail the boat. I reached for the nearest can, scooped up a quart or so of water and heaved it over the side. Scooping a second canful, the squall of a maddened catamount stopped me in mid-scoop and before my stricken eyes appeared the shiny bottom of what had been our bait can. Then followed scalding vituperation, stinging references to ninety minutes of back-breaking bait-hunting among the stones, invocations to Jove that I be required to fish in Purgatory for eighteen thousand years without ever getting a bite! Slowly we turned about and slowly we returned to the beach. We cranked the flivver and started for town, and only the sequel lightened the tension.

Where Are My Shoes?

Pardner had changed shoes to go out on the flats, and left his Sunday-go-to-meetin' ones on the running board. His dollar had paid for the boat, and in that blighting grief he failed to take the shoes aboard when we left the point. About half way to the city he remembered them and looked over the side, but no shoes. For the second time that day we reversed the course, and found one of them a mile or so behind and the other lying on the beach where we had turned around. This was my chance to bawl him out for a witless numskull. "Where are my shoes?" I sang, echoing his cry of dismay when he missed them.

A half-smile struggled up and crept out from under the corner of his nose, and suddenly he turned and barked: "Bail the boat, you woodenhead!"

The ice was broken, and from that day to this, whenever either of us makes a particularly thick-witted blunder, bystanders are mystified by the wail: "Where are my shoes?" answered by the cryptic command: "Bail the boat!"

The Wages of Sin

Here is a sparkling boy story from the pen of Mr. Harry Lyons, of Evanston, Illinois. My friend Harry has fished all over the continent and is the real quill at the ancient game. He says: "You have 'boy' readers, and they can understand the black horror of the awful moment I have attempted to describe." Yea, yea, Harry and the big boys too.

Most tragic moment while fishing? Who has not had them galore while following that most absorbing of pastimes? And how does one select from memory's record the one superlative thrill of disappointment? 'Tis difficult, very difficult, indeed.

Shall I recount the near tragedy of the strenuous halibut which took Captain McDermitt out of the stern of a skiff into the icy waters of the outer bay of Chignik, Alaska? That was indeed tragic, and although having no more serious climax than the ruination of the reckless sea-dog's jewel-studded watch, might well have made codfish bait of him.

Or shall I tell of the leaky skiff that sank under the writer while a lusty bass required exclusive attention and prevented any bailing of the boat one mem-

orable evening on a pond in Taylor County, Florida?

No, those were exciting events, and so was the experience of losing the big barracuda off Key Largo, in Florida, but they were not tragic — they had their compensations, and caused no bitter regrets. There is a certain trouting experience that might do, but I was a grown man when it occurred.

The tragic moment that stands out in my experiences was a never-to-be-forgotten Monday morning in the vicinity of New Lothrop, Michigan, back in 1879, in the days when boyish emotion made disappointments real tragedies indeed. There was a creek flowing through New Lothrop, and just below the wagon bridge it was dammed to furnish water for my uncle's grist mill. He owned a store there, a saw mill and a grist mill, had a wonderful rambling house, and an orchard that produced such apples as one cannot now find—or was it a boy's supersensitive palate that discovered rare flavors in such fruit? It was my privilege to spend my long summer vacation that year with my uncle, or rather with my grandmother, Mrs. Janet McKay, who lived near-by.

Given a creek which harbored numerous rock bass, many sunfish and a few pickerel, any boy of nine would be sure to turn ardent fisherman, and I haunted the water every available moment. Even in those days there were times when the fish were willing to meet a lad halfway and bite satisfactorily, and other times

when not a fish would respond to the most persistent offering of worm, grasshopper or grub.

No objection was made to my fishing week days, but Sunday fishing was a " crime " in the eyes of my Scotch-Presbyterian grandma, who was normally sweet and kind but who could be stern enough if her little grandson misbehaved. A glorious Sunday afternoon came along. I had been both to church and Sunday School, was dolled up and clean as all little boys had to be on the Lord's Day then, and it was really not with the intention of fishing that I made my way through the woods and down to my favorite log jam, along about three p. m. No, I intended to hop up and down on those logs and scare the pickerel out into the open water, where I could look at and admire them. Always half a dozen or more pickerel could be depended to scoot out from beneath the shelter of the log jam when I hopped in a special place. The jar of the heavy logs frightened them.

It was a small frog that started the crime of fishing that day. I saw the little speckled devil and captured him, and then remembered that, through habit, I had a fishing line and hooks in my Sunday clothes. So, just as an experiment, I decided to throw a little green frog into the pickerel pool and see if a long-nosed pickerel would stand for it. Deciding I might as well have the frog on a hook, I cut a " pole," rigged up line and hook, slipped into a strategic position without

jarring the log jam, and introduced the most effective of all pickerel baits to that pool.

Of course, Grandpa Pickerel himself had to be there, and be hungry, and see that frog. And, in less time than it takes to write about it, I was fighting what seemed to my boyish eyes and arms the King of All the Pickerel. It was a proud little Sabbath-breaker who finally grassed that fish. Do not ask me what it weighed. I never knew, and I refuse to estimate. It was a lordly pickerel, and it was mine. But was it mine after all? I never once thought of the possibility of taking that fish back to Grandma McKay's on Sunday afternoon. No, indeed! Just what dire punishment would be thought suitable for my lapse from virtue as evidenced by the possession of a pickerel caught on the Sabbath I did not exactly know, but I was sure the least I could look for was not to be invited by any sensible boy. It might be that I would be forbidden to fish for a week, or something almost as cruel, unusual and much-to-be-avoided. No, I dared not take the noble fish to the house.

What to do? The pickerel was still alive, and occasionally gave proof of it as he breathed heavily in his dire situation out of his element.

"Why," I thought, "I'll stake him out here overnight, go fishing tomorrow, and no one will know I did not catch him on Monday, so I can really yet gain the honors and applause amply earned, although on a

forbidden day." Accordingly, I fastened the pickerel to a convenient branch in among the logs by using a fishline stringer.

And then, being fully guilty of Sunday-fishing, I decided to make an afternoon of it, and catch some more. We all know how it is when once we have yielded to pleasurable wrongdoing. We decide naturally that "one might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb," and proceed to "go the limit." Man, how those fish bit that day! I got no more pickerel as large as the first, but I took two other good ones, and I sought for and found angleworms, and landed at least a dozen nice rock bass. All of these fish went on the stringer, and I finally went home with sweet thoughts of the morning when I should return and start the day with a record catch. I planned to carry that "string" down to my uncle's store and weigh the fish, along about noon when there would be plenty of people to see 'em.

Now comes the tragedy, and it brought tears to my eyes. Next morning when I returned to that log jam those fish were gone. Yep, every one of them — stringer and all! It was a bitter moment when in my eagerness I ran directly to the spot where that string of fish should have been, and found that either someone had found them and stolen them or the stringer had come loose.

It was hard to believe. What had I done to be

punished so? Who would be mean enough to steal a little boy's trophy? How did they get loose, if that explained their disappearance? All day long I stayed on that creek and fished, and fished and fished, but got no such beauties as had rewarded me the day before. I carried no fish back to grandmother's that night, but I did carry an aching heart, and the worst of it was I could tell no one about it.

Honest Injun, Mr. Dilg, was it not a *tragedy?*

Lost — by One Step

Mr. Guy A. Baker, of Syracuse, New York, gives us a Tragic Moment of his boyhood, and though he has fished in many waters since he has had no experience so poignant as this one. His story is beautifully told, and you will enjoy every word of it.

As I think and remember my different experiences in fishing, I find they are as varied and as thrilling as a man could wish for. I have fished for salmon in the waters of British Columbia, and for bass and trout in the Adirondack Mountains. Three months in Florida gave me a taste of salt-water fishing and added to my store of yarns. I have had moments of joy and of despair, but the only moment I consider really tragic was one in my early youth.

My father was an enthusiastic fly-fisherman and scorned to catch fish by any other method. One day while teaching me the intricacies of the art of fly-casting, he said: "My boy, the man who will use a worm or a grasshopper or any kind of a live bait to catch a game fish is little better than a savage."

I am now inclined to disagree with that statement, for I believe that a man can catch a game fish with a live bait and do it in a sportsmanlike manner. At

that time, however, I regarded his statement as words of wisdom from one who could not be wrong and was as intolerant of a live bait user as he was. I believed in the absolute superiority of the fly over any other bait or lure, and an effort to prove this superiority to some boys of my own age resulted in what was my most tragic fishing moment.

It was during the month of April, and I was visiting my uncle in Madison County. About a mile and a half from his farm ran a small, winding stream—an excellent place to catch trout. On this particular day three neighboring farmer lads and myself started for the stream to catch a mess of fish.

I had an excellent bamboo casting-rod which my father had given me, a good assortment of trout flies, a landing net and other paraphernalia necessary to a fly-fisherman. The boys had straight sticks of bamboo about fifteen feet long and very ordinary hooks and lines. Their bait consisted of a miscellaneous collection of worms, grubs and grasshoppers thrown together indiscriminately into an old paint pail, which was half-filled with earth and grass.

I am afraid I was a bit snobbish over my superior equipment and we were soon engaged in an argument as to which outfit could catch the most fish. I declared hotly in favor of the fly and determined to show them I was right. They were equally positive that their worms, etc., would entice the best catch from the

water. We finally decided to settle the dispute in the most practical manner. We were to fish the stream together, and the one catching the largest trout would be the winner. His judgment in all matters pertaining to fishing would then be considered supreme and his method of catching the fish would be declared the best.

I had so much faith in myself and my equipment that I readily agreed to this test, although they had three chances to my one in the argument. We fished the stream all morning, but for some reason or other I did not get a single strike. The other boys had about a dozen trout among them.

Their gibes and ridicule were by this time becoming unbearable, and I uttered a silent prayer as I made a neat cast and dropped the fly on the water. It was immediately seized by a trout which exceeded by far the size of any of those previously caught. I caught a glimpse of him as he turned in the water and judged him to be at least fifteen inches in length. By careful playing I managed to bring him within a few feet of the shore. I reached for the landing net which hung on my belt, and as I did so I stepped on a loose stone. Whish — down I went with a splash, landing in about a foot and a half of water. The fish, needless to say, was lost, and that moment, as I sat there with the water swirling about my neck and the sound of my companions' laughter in my ears, was my most tragic fishing moment.

Cause for Cussin'

Dr. B. F. Wilson writes from Golden City, Missouri: "You dear old bass fishing promoter, I can't resist the impulse to chip in on the Tragic Moment game. Of course, we bass men all have many such moments, but the humiliation and disappointment that were mine on the occasion I here recount seem to stick out more prominently than do any more refined tragedy-comedies of later years."

Time, happily, has a way of healing the smart of humiliation and smoothing the asperities of many experiences, else I would not care to recount this, to me, tragic affair. The date, more distant than I care to contemplate, was in my bait-fishing period of angling growth. Three of us were camped at a deserted mill site by a broken dam on Sac River, a considerable stream heading in the Ozark country. We had had a surfeit of bass, jacksalmon and drum, and were ready to welcome a suggestion that would add a bit of adventure or variety to our activities.

Tales by the natives of huge catfish to be caught in the millpond prompted our efforts catward. These same fighting cats, our tempters allowed, could not be handled by our bait rods, reels and slender lines. This was too much; we'd show 'em.

There was a rude sort of a punt tied to a tree above the dam which we appropriated for the work. Mitchell, the huskiest one of the lot, was selected as oarsman. I insisted on handling the tackle and catching the cat because I had the best tackle, consisting of a lancewood rod and double-multiplying reel full of heavy linen line.

Laboriously Mitch rowed the old tub to the upper end of the millpond. I put a large dead chub on the biggest hook we had, and getting into the middle of the stream we started to float down through the fancied retreat of the siluroid monsters. I used a cork or float, of course, and naturally all eyes were constantly turned to it. I sat in one end of the scow, Mitchell at the oars and Lyman, just a spectator, at the other end, all tense and expectant.

Three voices gave the cry, "A bite!" as the cork popped under and out of sight. I struck hard and hooked. I could feel the swaying of a huge body as it surged unyielding to the strain of the rod. Line ran from the reel in spasms in spite of all the pressure I dared apply to the spool. Lyman and I both directed Mitch how to row and he, poor soul, by watching the line, had his work cut out for himself to keep the line from fouling. How he rowed that unweildly craft up and down stream, roundabout and across! We tried to get the quarry close to the boat but were afraid to get it too close.

"Did I think I could manage the monster from the bank?"

Slower and shorter its runs became, and I began to sense victory. It was slowly getting under my control. I got it close to the boat, but it was running too deep for me ever to get a sight of it.

Then the question arose — "How are we going to boat it or land it?" We had no net, no gaff — nothing but bare hands. A regular "gig" was what we needed. "Did I think I could manage the monster now from the bank if we should row ashore and have one of the boys go to a neighboring farm house for a gig?" I thought I could. Then Mitchell put his weight on the oars and headed in with a vicious surge.

"Oh, he's off!" I yelled. The sad misery of it cannot be described. Mechanically and disconsolately I reeled in my flaccid line. The line, hook and bait were all intact, but from the barb dangled a strip of bark, apparently from a water-logged grape vine.

The humiliating truth dawned upon all of us at once. None of us had paid any attention to our relative position to anything except the spot where my line was continually cutting the water. Mitch and the crazy boat had supplied all the movement of as great and erratic a fight as it could possibly have been had the grape vine been a forty-pound cat!

That afternoon Mitch sulked in the tent, contemplating his blistered palms; Lyman went over the ridge, squirrel hunting; I sneaked off by myself and fished for pumpkin seed in a pond.

Too Great a Temptation

Here is a short and sweet one from our friend Mr. A. B. Gilbert, of Minneapolis. I can well understand how a kid would want to catch those shiner minnows. Mr. Gilbert closes with some excellent fishing philosophy, and it's plain that to him there is a lot more to fishing than just fish.

My most tragic moment, the one which pops into my head frequently and which came to mind first when I noticed the announcement of your hard luck symposium, takes me back east to Croton Lake, New York, and in years to the age of nine.

I was then a fisherman of some two years' experience. The twig had been bent permanently, one might say, but I had not reached the stage where all fish are not pretty much alike. A sucker was a wonderful fish with which to surprise the family, but the kind I thought most of privately was the yellow shiner.

On a Sunday afternoon (my tragedy could have happened only on a Sunday) I was crossing a little bridge over an inlet near our grist mill and by force of habit examined the water beneath for signs. It was all right for a little Quaker to look over the possibilities of sin so long as he did not yield to temptation!

Too Great a Temptation

Well, under that bridge was the finest school of lazy shiners I had ever seen — big fellows with black backs — and occasionally one would strut around a little to show his broad yellow side.

I hurried around to the mill by a back way, took a line from a pole so as to present a minimum of evidence to the world, dug a few worms, and ran to the bridge. Lying down behind a post to be out of sight of fish as well as people, I let the drop line down cautiously toward the snout of a shiner. And just as Mr. Shiner became aware of the worm, my father grabbed me by the arm.

A licking would have been the normal thing, but I was so wrapped up in those shiners that the fear of it did not occur to me. I was dazed, shocked, and upset so completely by losing those shiners that I could say nothing nor do anything. I couldn't even get relief by tears. It was the tragedy of the lost shiners and not fear of a switching that gripped me. And I still consider it a bit of good judgment that my father omitted the switch. All he said was: "It's time for thee to go get the cow."

Many years later in my first attempt at salt-water fishing on the Massachusetts coast, I persuaded a brand new wife to row a dory beyond reason while I cast for mackerel. I enlarged on my knowledge of mackerel and the reception we would get at the hotel on bringing in the first mackerel of the season.

Several persons met us as we came to shore and as I spread my fourteen mackerel on the sand, a native said: "Nothin' but a lot of pollock." This was tragedy for me, of course, but there were ways of getting out of some of it. One good soul said the pollock and the mackerel were almost alike; another that the pollock were really fine eating if eaten fresh. And I knew that my wife had taken me for better or for worse. We also knew that we had had a splendid time in the excitement of seeing our "mackerel" strike at a two-inch sinker and bare hook.

My first tragedy was the greatest because there were none of these offsets which one finds later in life. It was total loss, the kind that deprives one of reasons for living.

Now if the biggest in the lake do not respond to our temptations, we have a good time with smaller fish. If the big fellow gets away after a hard fight, well, we might have wanted to put him back anyway.

A Big Fish for a Little Girl

Here is a delightful story by an equally delightful little girl of fourteen:

Miss Florence Pierce of Rhinelander, Wisconsin, is surely a daughter after a fisherman's own heart.

It is a fact that each year more and more of our American girls and women are taking up angling and realizing its charm, which, boys, means a wonderful comradeship for us.

The Lady-Who-Fishes-With-Me is so skillful and ardent an angler that I consider her about the best all-round fisherman I know.

I am a girl, fourteen years of age, and an only child, somewhat handicapped, I'll say. The fish story I shall write happened to me when I was ten. We have a cottage on the Pelican chain of lakes in northern Wisconsin. This chain consists of five lakes with thoroughfares between and has been noted for its game fish, especially muskellunge.

My parents wanted to confine my fishing ambition to a small hook on the end of a rotten line, a bright red bobber, a green birch pole, and an unwilling grasshopper for bait. My heart was supposed to pound at the sight of a sunfish or bluegill. Nothing doing!

The day I embarked on my great adventure, the

thrill of which will always remain with me, I insisted on having fifty yards of new trolling line, and a fancy and alluring Dowagiac minnow. For once I got my own way. We had two boats to accommodate our party, the larger (and safer) propelled by a motor, the smaller trailing behind. Of course, I spoke for a place in the trailer, but lost out in that, but luck was with me that day, although it dodged me at first.

My mother sat in the trailer. My father did not go, so my handicap was reduced anyway 75 per cent. Our man of all work headed the expedition and, believe me, my father laid down the law to him, what he should and should not do if I got a big fish strike. He stood on the shore and gave advice until we could no longer hear his voice.

August, our man, presided at the motor — quite a responsibility, I'll say, for in spite of the glowing ads we see in different magazines of the perfection and dependability of this little motor, it has a temperament all its own and should be rechristened "Maud." At any rate, Maud was for going this day.

I got the first strike, a musky, and contrary to all advice, which I resented, I pulled it in as fast as I could. But that trailer boat was in the way, and my mother, no doubt with good intentions, tried to assist. Her assistance was all the fish needed to make a getaway. He flopped under the trailer and swam away leaving me sad and lonely, with a lump in my throat I could

not swallow, and in a very undutiful frame of mind toward my mother. She promised me another and better strike, and the day was still young.

Between the third and fourth lakes the thoroughfare is two miles long and has a treacherous entrance for about a quarter of a mile; rocks a few inches below the surface. My father had more than cautioned friend August in regard to this stretch, to shut off the engine and row slowly until past the danger and keep a sharp lookout.

We went through without a mishap, had our dinner cooked over a picnic fire, sat around and told stories, went swimming, and late in the afternoon we started back. This time I looked my mother right in the eye and planted myself in the most desirable seat in the trailer. She knew how keen had been my disappointment of the morning, so I was allowed to remain.

No one else had had a musky strike, so that helped some. We were just entering the danger zone of the long thoroughfare when I had my strike. This time no one offered advice, so I pulled in as fast as I could, the fish fighting for dear life. My mother afterwards said I was as white as a ghost and my eyes like wagon wheels. August forgot my father's instructions and the motor was going full speed and where she wanted to. No one was looking ahead and I was getting along fine with my fish, which proved to be a 11¼ pound musky. Then Maud struck a rock, and quit of her

own accord. Some kind, thoughtful person in boat one cut us loose and my mother took to the oars. We were alone in the trailer and I had my fish right back of the boat, fighting hard, but he was hooked for fair. I could not land him because he was too strong and heavy for me.

After a bit my mother stood up in the boat, contrary to all advice of my father, and struck him with an oar. I also arose to the occasion and half lifted, half dragged him in the boat. My fish! ! ! I sat down in the bottom of the boat with him and stroked him and talked to him. The first boat teetered on a rock for a few minutes but finally got off and Maud, being a good sport that day, started off nicely. Soon we were on our way.

It seemed a long way to me, as I wanted to show my father, weigh my fish, and have my picture taken. He was awaiting us on the dock. All day he had had in mind the hidden rocks and when he learned it was there that all of the excitement had occurred, that my mother and I had both stood up in the boat at the time when the other boat was stranded on a rock and could not have helped us had we struck a rock, he looked so funny. However, he went to town and bought me a wonderful box of fishing tackle.

When I Was a Boy —

Here is a short and sweet one from a veteran fisherman who has fought 'em all, sometimes to thrill with the pleasures of victory and at other times to feel the sting of defeat. Mr. B. R. Hart, of Washington, D. C., says: "You will find enclosed a 'little minnow' of a Tragic Moment. If you think it 'legal size,' I trust it will recall pleasant days to some tired city angler, and that he may derive one small part of the joy out of it that I have had from each and every one that you have printed." Brother Hart, I hereby guarantee every fisherman of us will like your little tale.

As old Father Time begins to thin the hair on our heads, and our joints become squeaky from too much of life in an office chair, we do not regard many things as tragic. The opportunity to be out in God's great outdoors is in itself such a wonderful thing that what happens to us there is rarely tragic. In my days afield I have landed the trout and salmon of Maine, the large-mouth bass of Florida, and the small-mouth from many a stream and lake from New York to Virginia. The lordly Chinook salmon and the steelhead trout of the Pacific coast streams have risen to my lures, and I have taken that most beautiful of all fish,

the golden trout of the Sierra Nevada mountain streams. Of course, I have lost many a big one, and had my share of disappointed hopes and lost tackle — but no real tragedy.

I must needs go 'way back along the trail to the time when, as a small boy in the Blue Grass Region of Kentucky, I fished for the chubs, the sun perch, the suckers, the bluegills and — yes, I admit it — the lowly mud cat.

Did we have "tackle" boxes in those golden days — rods? lines? lures? leaders? and theories about their use? No; we had a pole, a spool of cotton thread, a nickel's worth of hooks, a pebble sinker, a tin can, a cur dog, and *Youth.*

With the money my father gave me for feeding a bunch of calves all of one winter I purchased a bamboo rod, a silk line, a reel, a red and green cork float and three Cincinnati hooks with real gut on them. Then came a day in the Spring when I hied me down to the river (where I had never been before) to try out my new tackle. I carried it in my hand very carefully all of the eight miles for fear of its getting broken. As if it were only yesterday I can recall that beautiful river, and well do I remember the pool where I chose to do my fishing. I can see the live shiny minnow bait as it sank into the water covered with benedictions, spit and hopes that a crappie would take it.

Soon the cork began to move slowly and then

stopped. Thinking something had gotten my bait, I pulled up to see — and then it happened. The whole pool seemed to explode, and something went tearing off with my tackle — my first small-mouth bass. It was all over in a second, and all that was left was the butt of the rod, the reel, some experience and my most tragic fishing moment.

As I look back on a life, thank God, fairly full of adventure in the great outdoors, nothing ever seems so tragic to me as that walk home, contemplating the loss of my first tackle, my first bass, and wondering where on earth I would ever get another silk line.

An Angler at Five

Few men can handle a bait-casting rod with more accuracy than does Mr. L. J. Boughner. He uses dainty six foot, three inch rods and they weigh less than five ounces. He casts a weighted fly of his own make. His lure weighs a little less than one-quarter of an ounce. Boughner has bait-casting down to a fine art. He is a student of outdoors, knows all our game fishes and their habits.

That boy of his is a fishing kid for fair. Such boys are the fishermen of the future and there are thousands of us who are willing to fight for them under the banner of the Izaak Walton League of America.

(Since writing the above L. J. Boughner has reached the end of the trail and I doubt not has long since been welcomed by his pal, Larry St. John, who preceded him by only a few months. Let us hope so.)

Jackson Leroy Boughner is nearly nine years old, and a fisherman of prowess. He has a steel rod that so loves him it objects neither to be stepped on nor to being brought down with a whack on the gunwale of a boat. He has a reel whose musical click can be heard a mile away, and makes the summer resorters think there's a new rowboat motor on the lake. He has a line that would have held the Lusitania from sinking. He has learned how to cast as far as twenty

feet, and — more important than all — he knows when to spit on his bait, and when, as the catalogues have it, it's of no use so to do, because the lake is "temporarily out of stock." And he has been known to go fishing, and beat the old man to an ignominious frazzle.

But Jackson Leroy Boughner was once only five, and with no laurels on his brow. Once he had not even caught his first bass. Yet he wanted to fish, and his Dad was going to stick to one deep hole for an hour or so, so there was no reason why the boy shouldn't fish. His Dad cut a six-foot maple gad near the water's edge. There were a few feet of old line in the bottom of the boat, rotten and frayed, but strong enough for perch, and this was tied to the end of the pole. There happened to be a shortage of sinkers, but the piece of perch that was put on the hook was heavy enough to take their place. It was a little too big to attract perch, but the boy's Dad knew it would spend most of its time hanging over an oar, so no great harm could be done.

But it didn't hang over an oar a minute. "You want to watch carefully here," said the man to the boy, "because all the fish are whoppers" — and no sooner were the words away from his lips than the tip of the maple gad was jerked down under the surface of the water. The rod nearly left his hands, but he caught it in time. A moment later a two-pound small-mouth black bass broke water.

The bass in this lake are made of layers of steel wire. They have the disposition of a Missouri mule. They have the craft of Machiavelli. The only reason Jackson's Dad fishes the lake is that many fishermen know it, and when he tells them he made a good day's catch they look up to him in honor, and tell him to his face he is a wondrous fisherman, and tell their friends he's the biggest liar in Northern Wisconsin. These sentences are not new; they went through the man's mind for the first time that August morning, four years ago, when Jack's first bass broke water. They went through his mind eight hundred times in the succeeding five minutes.

"Hadn't you better let Daddy take the pole?" inquired the man.

"No; this is MY fish," shouted the boy.

No other conversation marked the course of the fight. The bass was well hooked, and he had only a radius of ten or twelve feet in which to play, but he was at the free end of the rottenest line ever left as flotsam and jetsam in an old boat, and he had as captor a five-year-old, whose only asset was determination. He had wanted to fish; his Dad had told him he could fish; he had hooked his fish; and, Jiminy Crickets! he was going to fish.

There is little to write. The bass sped back and forth, around and under the boat, out of the water and down to the bottom, while Jackson Leroy hung on

for dear life. The maple sprout gave way a foot above his hand; Jack seized the longer part and continued to hold on. The line threatened to foul on an oar; fate intervened and the bass took a sudden header in the opposite direction.

In five minutes the boy's Dad had aged ten years, but in five minutes the fight had been fought and won. The boy leaned over the side of the boat and seized the line. Hand over hand he pulled the fish toward him. Disregarding his struggles, he gave him not an inch, and when he got him to the gunwale he lifted him in.

Tragic moment? Let all anglers tell of their lost beauties; who else ever lived who saw every one of the long list of fishing truisms defied and conquered in the space of five minutes? Any? I want to meet him. He and I are veteran aces of fishing thrills!

On Pistol Billy's Trout Stream

Mr. Otis Francis, somewhere in Wyoming, has sent me this funny one. There are some things that will interrupt one's fishing, even if fast to a sixteen-inch trout. Here is such a case. I believe Mr. Francis' haste was not only pardonable but commendable. It reminds me of the old darky who when asked if he had stood his ground in his first battle, replied: "No, sah, I runs. I runs at de fust shot and I would 'a' run sooner had I known it was a comin'."

In our city of Casper, Wyoming, every sportsman knows Pistol Billy, who has a ranch some six miles out of town with the closest and also a very fair trout stream running right out of the Casper mountains through his place. The name Pistol Billy came to him some years ago when he took a dislike to all fishermen, who when found on his land were run off at the point of Billy's pistol. And there are few trout men in Casper who cannot minutely describe Bill's pistol and, furthermore, who will say that he would not use it.

On one lazy warm July day I started for Pistol Billy's place with twenty-five feet of silk line in the band of my hat and a half dozen Royal Coachmen in

my pocket. This stream is too brushy to use a long rod and as the stream is but four to six feet wide, casting is out of the question.

I figured that strategy was absolutely essential, so decided that I would carry nothing that looked like fishing paraphernalia. Upon my arrival, the scene before me was very peaceful; indeed, there was no one in sight. I drove the car into some brush, got under the fence and had almost crossed the open land when a shout turned me about and there coming for me was Pistol Billy. I did some quick thinking, and when he came within speaking distance, he in no uncertain tones asked me who gave me the right to walk upon his land.

I told him I was a geologist and was looking the country over and was tracing a fault, as the country around is quite an oil country. My statement sounded reasonable, and with a few parting words he advised me that he was h—— on fishermen, but seeing as I was not one of them everything was all right. Once in the brush of the creek I cut a supple willow and was at work. I had started upstream and was delayed some time in getting to the holes where the trout were. So upon my first cast, which required the working the rod through the brush and allowing the fly to fall onto the water, a beautiful Loch Laven trout — never mind the size; he was a trout, and trout in Wyoming are all large—hit the fly and was headed for the Platte River.

I jumped through the brush and was in the stream, just having the time of my life with this boy, when in my excitement I had wandered into an open space.

There was I with a trout on one end of the line and Pistol Billy coming with something in his hand!

Listen, good people, if you should meet up with a sixteen-inch trout who is towing a willow rod, please get into communication with Otis Francis, because I just now figured out that the trout was going due north. I passed him the first hundred feet. And that ain't all—that trout knew he had competition, because I made time, and a world's record for two miles was broken, only there were no official witnesses.

The "Goods" — in Spite of a Ducking

Here comes one from the Reverend H. Dean Miller, or "Dominie Dean," as he is called by his fishing pals. Our Reverend Sir is the minister of the First Presbyterian Church, of Bradford, Pennsylvania, and I am not venturing far when I say that those with a drop of angling blood in their veins or a love of God's great outdoors are often found among his congregation, especially on rainy days when the fishin' is not altogether too good.

I have enjoyed the letters of the "clan" very much. Some of their experiences have seemed almost personal, for I have had almost identical experiences, but as I look back over more than twenty years' experience on lake and stream, I have no hesitancy in selecting the following as my most tragic moment.

It was a rare October day, a crisp frosty morning followed by a beautiful sunshiny day. The air was crisp and cool. "Fine for casting," the Doctor said when he and Hugh called to pick me up for a short trip to the river after bass.

The Doc is a rare sport, a fine trap shot, just as good in the woods as they grow. "Plugging" is his middle name; he has been "shooting" the wooden lures for years.

Hugh is just beginning, but he has all the earmarks of the real thing. I have been fishing ever since I was knee high to a grasshopper, but only in the past two or three years have I become a devotee of the plug.

When we reached our fishing point, it was decided that the Doctor and Hugh would fish from one boat and I was to go it alone. We had quite a discussion as to which boat would land the most fish, but somehow I had a hunch that I had an even chance, and so accepted the challenge.

When we ate our lunch at the head of an island, honors were even, but they both assured me that they had just been taking it easy, and that I had no more chance than a rabbit to win, for they were going to do some real fishing that afternoon.

As we pushed out from shore the Doctor cautioned me to be at the landing place promptly at four o'clock because he had an engagement in the office at six, and if I was not there the walking was good, and it was only twenty-seven miles back home.

The fish were not striking, and it looked as though we were out of luck. Then about three o'clock they began to show some interest. I took several nice ones, and instead of killing them like a good sport should, I threw them in the bottom of the boat. The boat leaked like a sieve and had about three inches of water, most of it just where I was sitting. The fish splashed around considerable and gave me a shower bath every

few minutes, but I was too much interested in the game and too busy casting to pay much attention to it.

At four I pulled up to the landing place. Doc and Hugh were already there eagerly waiting to see what I had. Six or seven good bass were using my leaky old boat as an aquarium. I felt I had won, and so I gave my boat a long, strong heave up onto the shore so that the fish would be in plain view. As the boat nosed up on the bank the water made a race for my hunting coat, which I had rolled up and placed under the rear seat of the boat. I dropped the oars and tried to beat the water to that coat. The old tub turned on its side, and I went into twenty feet of clear cold water.

You have heard people tell about their sensations and thoughts when they fell in. Some tell us that all the mean things they have ever done pass by in about one minute. Now I want to tell you that I did not think about any of these things; I did not even think about my Heddon and my Reddifor, nor about my fine case filled with casting lures. The only thing I thought about was those six or seven unkilled and unstrung bass, which had been swimming around in that boat about a minute previous. Would they be there when I got back into that boat? or would they all escape when I climbed into the boat? The first thing I looked for was my fish, and " Oh, boy, it was a grand and glorious feeling." They were still there.

Now the editor knows the reputation we fishermen

have for truth, and while my reputation along that line is fairly good, I knew if those fish floated out of that boat I could never make old Doc acknowledge that I had caught them, but I had the "goods" despite the ducking.

An Angler, Not a Matador

Here is a funny one but it's tragic all right. I have read it to a few of my fishing pals, and we all had a good laugh. Mr. Wallace Lewis has written a dandy story, and it's a cinch everybody will laugh and sympathize with him.

I have enjoyed your Black Bass Chats to the extreme limit of my capacity for enjoyment, but could not screw up my nerve to venture an opinion in the presence of men whose fishing experience began long before I started serving my term on earth. But your Tragic Moments lets me in, for while my life has been comparatively short, it has been unusually filled with experiences, so I will try to tell you what I consider my most tragic moment.

Were you ever chased by a bull, Mr. Dilg? No? Well, take it from one who knows, there are enough excitement and thrills in that alone to satisfy the ordinary person, and if you are a charter member of the "Order of the Heavy Foot" and cannot exceed the gait of the proverbial ice-wagon, then the chances are that your experience will be tragic. But to be charged by a bull — a real, old, red he-bull while playing with the daddy of all bass, and to lose Daddy

Bass because of Brother Bull, is to experience the most tragic of all tragic moments. That was what happened to me. Could we only see events ten minutes before they happen or see how they would end, I would now be the proud possessor of Daddy Bass — but alas!

On the shores of a certain lake in Texas there lived a red bull noted far and near for his bad disposition and his ability to scatter picnic parties pronto. In the lake lived a large-mouth black bass whose years made him the Methuselah of all bass, whose size compared favorably with Jonah's whale, and whose pugnacity shamed even the red bull. This bass was known only to a few friends and myself, and we had arranged to give its captor a supper, also some tackle, as a tribute to his skill as an angler.

I slipped out early one morning and dropped my line, baited with a minnow, right into the front door of Daddy Bass' house, but he must have been out, for there was no response. The home of this bass was in some deep water right at the foot of a very steep bank, probably eight or ten feet high. My plan was to hook the bass, and when he tired, lead him down the lake a short way to shallow water, and then bring him in. But that bank was too good a place for concealment; by lying flat upon it, Mr. Bass could not see me at all.

With the perseverance of a book-agent I tried and

"I hit the water all spread out like a carpet."

tried. About ten-thirty A. M. I succeeded in arousing Mr. Bass so much that he hit that minnow like a pile driver, just from annoyance, I suppose. I hooked him, and the fight was on. He cut all the capers he knew, but the hook was well caught. To facilitate playing the fish I had raised up to a kneeling position and was enjoying the fight of my life when there was a deafening bellow from Brother Bull, and I knew he was right behind me.

Now when a bull bellows in rage and is right behind you there is only one course of action, and it must be instantaneous or it's too late for action — step on the gas and start in high; you won't have time to shift gears! Climb a tree if you can reach one, but make it snappy. I was three hundred yards from the fence and half a mile to a tree. Mine was Hobson's choice and I took it in a manner that would have delighted Steve Brodie!

Without looking around and with all possible speed I went over the bank down into the cool, deep water. I hit the water all spread out like a carpet. When I came up I started swimming around so that I could see where the bull was. Imagine my chagrin, not to say anger, to see Brother Bull charging, head and tail up, a half mile down the shore where he did a magnificent job of scattering a picnic party. The bellow I had heard was one of many general warnings meant for the party, but it cost me the Daddy of All Bass. He

had not even seen me at all, but how was I to know it then? The supper I did not miss; the tackle could easily be replaced; the kidding was easy to stand — but oh, how it hurt to lose that bass!

Caught Unprepared

Mr. August A. Fick, of Milwaukee, contributed the following. It offers good proof that it doesn't pay to start forth leaving your landing net behind. I don't think that the event happening on a Sunday had anything to do with its tragedy. The big outdoors is the best place I know of in which to worship God. I am sorry for the man who doubts the Supreme when amid the wonders of His lakes and streams.

I wonder if you would be interested in a few lines from a stranger — one who considers himself neither an authority nor an expert. Nevertheless, you can put me down as a dyed-in-the-wool fishing fan, one who has been at it ever since he was old enough to play hookey from school some thirty years ago.

Unfortunately I have not the leisure to devote to the sport that I should like, but I do manage to get in a vacation of two or three weeks every summer, which I usually spend at some lake in northern Wisconsin. These trips have been so uniformly delightful and satisfactory that it has never occurred to me to consider any other locality in my plans. I may envy the fellow who has fished in Florida, the Rockies, and Canada; but as long as Fortune keeps on smiling on

me in Oneida County, there is little danger that I shall be tempted to roam.

In attempting to describe my most tragic moment as a fisherman I want to say that "the biggest one that got away" doesn't always cause the most regrets. At least that has been my experience. While every vacation has its episodes of hard luck, there are some that leave a more permanent impression than others. For instance, I can recall the morning when my partner and I hooked the biggest musky in our careers. This happened about five years ago up at Pelican Lake on a morning just before a rain. Oscar was handling the rod, while I was furnishing the motive power. We had been fishing for about two hours, when suddenly Oscar was nearly jerked out of the boat. I glanced back just in time to see an enormous musky jumping over the tops of the bulrushes, Oscar's spoon prominently visible in his jaws. Unfortunately my partner was not in a position to "play him" properly, and soon was minus the major portion of his line, to say nothing of his catch and bait. We have no means of telling how big the fish was, but you can imagine our feelings when we observed another boat a short distance behind landing a forty pounder when they reached the same spot.

Still I do not consider this the most tragic moment I experienced while fishing. A fight with a black bass occupies that position. This also occurred at Pelican

Lake, a body of water that has a reputation among fishermen as a "hard" bass lake. Muskies, pike, and pickerel can all be secured by the man who tries in this lake, but black bass seem to bear a charmed life. It isn't that there are none there — that theory has long been dispelled by anxious investigators. It seems merely that they are too wary to be taken by the means ordinarily employed. Naturally, all the real fishermen are more than anxious to land a few just for this reason.

The year the big fracas burst out in Europe, my wife, my sister and I occupied Doc Grosskopf's cottage on the north shore of Pelican Lake for about three weeks during the month of August. Luck was "fair to middlin'," even though I wasn't exerting myself as much as usual that year. One fine Sunday morning I overcame my scruples sufficiently to row the old punt out beyond the bulrushes to do a little lazy man's fishing for perch. Funny how a man will try to keep his city habits concerning Sunday while in the woods, and then succumb in the end, even if only to wet a line! The perch didn't worry about Sunday though, and kept my little alder pole busy. I soon had approximately forty on my stringer.

I had another short alder pole in the boat, and as it had a heavier line and hook on it — too heavy for perch — I baited it with a small crab and placed it in the bow of the boat. I had completely forgotten about

it, when suddenly it was jerked down, and I barely had time to grab it before it went overboard. Then the fight was on!

The outfit was never intended for that kind of fishing, and you can imagine the problem confronting me — handling a big bass with a short pole and about seven feet of line. Still after about ten minutes of the most intense work I ever endured, I got the fish up to the side of the boat, only to discover that my Sunday scruples had caused me to leave my landing net with my other casting tackle safe in the cottage! I held the pole high up into the air, and decided to attempt the old fisherman's trick of lifting him out by the eyes (by thumb and forefinger). I can safely state it was the largest bass that I have ever hooked, or seen hooked, apparently measuring well in excess of twenty inches, with an exceptionally wide back. Mr. Bass took exceptions to my methods of landing him, however, and with one final effort completely straightened out the hook and took French leave. Although the perch were still biting, I pulled up my anchor and made for shore. I was too "sick" to fish any more. Since that day I have never essayed to fish without taking the outfit with me, but I have not been able to land a bass that weighed over three and one-half pounds. I'll keep on trying though — maybe Opportunity will knock again. I'm an optimist.

A Lost Opportunity

Harry B. Logan, of Madelia, Minnesota, sends us this tragic story and it is a good one. My friend Harry and his wife fish together, and he says she is quite as good as he with rod and reel. A few years back we marveled when we saw a lady bait-casting or fly-casting, but in these days it is a common thing, proving that the American man has found the lady of his heart to be the best of pals. Those who don't know this by experience had better try it. You got her once boys, now get her again.

I must still be regarded as an infant bass fisherman. Two seasons bassing tells it all. When a boy I caught pike, pickerel, sunfish and rock bass aplenty, but we had no black bass then. As I grew older my fishing interest lagged. Several years ago I started reading outdoor magazines. I don't remember which writer first interested me in the black bass, but I know now I owe him a debt of gratitude. I'm afraid I am even dubbed a "nut" by some who can't understand the ways of a fisherman's heart.

It was in June of my first season when my Most Tragic Moment came. I'm positive I shall never have another which will assume the tragic proportions that

one did, for the picture is stamped indelibly on my memory.

I had collected quite an assortment of tackle — good rod and reel, several lines and many gaudy lures. An acquaintance had given me glowing reports of a lake up in the pines of northern Minnesota: "Bass so thick it wasn't fun acatchin' 'em! Good lake 'cause most folks didn't know about it. Yes, they used mostly as bait them wooden wobblers." That was the lake for me, no doubt about it, and June 21, 1920, found my pal and me heading north over the Jefferson highway.

We were just a little disappointed when we finally stood on the shore of Spring Lake. Forest fires had denuded the pines, and it was uncomfortably warm without the shade we had expected to find. But there was cool clear water, and that meant a chance for bass. And hadn't our friend assured us it was all very simple? Several hours later we were covering the likely looking places, but the fish were not rising. We did see, however, thousands of small bass feeding in the shallows.

Next morning we awakened at three-thirty. It was still dark, and very cold and damp. Our teeth chattered merrily as we jumped into our clothing. Foolish mortals we, to be climbing out of our warm beds at this unearthly hour — just to fish. But we were happy. The lake lay as still as glass. We had good

tackle and a good boat. What more could fishermen ask for? A few hours later we pulled ashore opposite camp and held a council of war. Had our informant been a cheerful liar? Was this a clever joke to get two uninitiated fishermen stranded on a fishless lake? My pal was moody. We hadn't taken a single bass, and Heaven knows we had tried hard enough. He chose to tramp along the shore to limber up a bit. He took his rod, shoved me off, and was gone.

It was joy just to paddle leisurely along and to study the formations on the lake bottom. At ten feet it was all clear as a crystal. There were great jagged rocks in places, an occasional sunken log, and then stretches of clear white sand and gravel. I had gone probably a third of the way across when the water shallowed very suddenly. Looking ahead I saw a gravelly bar, its upper rush-covered point only a foot below water. But ye gods and little fishes, was I seeing things? I swear I hadn't touched the stuff — yet there they were. Just ahead where the water deepened on the far side of that bar lay all the bass in Kingdom Come.

I stood up and looked for my pal, but he was nowhere in sight. I tried to estimate their numbers. Why, there were hundreds of them! And, man o' man, they looked a yard long. I thought of my pal. He had left me voluntarily, and see what he was missing — a scene of a lifetime! The clear, quiet water

portrayed them beautifully. Almost lifeless they seemed, so still did they lie. A slight fin and tail movement was visible — that was all.

I dropped that anchor ever so gently and reached for my rod with a shaking hand. Now for action. I really hesitated to cast — I might scatter them — yet I could not wait longer. My first cast brought action. A smashing strike, a few minutes of the hardest fighting, and I had him in the boat — three pounds of obstinate bass. For just a moment I surveyed the situation. Had I scattered their ranks? Apparently not. I cast again. More action. My plug barely hit the water when there was a savage tug — then more fight.

When I drew him alongside the boat several others followed. I surmised they were badly disappointed at not having that wobbler for their own. Well, they would have their chance directly. I cast the third time, then the fourth — always the same, strike, fight, and capture.

In four casts I had hooked and landed four bass — and then it happened. My fifth cast ended in winding my lure around my neck. In all my excitement I had failed to wind my line evenly on my reel. This had been my reward. I tore those hooks out — clothing mattered little then, and proceeded to undo that bird's nest of snarls. But it would not be undone. Instead, all I could do seemed to make it only worse. I reached

for my knife. I'd cut that three dollar line into a thousand pieces. A survey of my tackle box convinced me this would be folly. I had left my only other line at camp.

I attacked that snarl again, and worked up a useless sweat. It was of no avail. Why wasn't my reel, the level-winding anti-backlash kind? And couldn't I have held my head and been more careful? I can never tell you how completely helpless I felt. As the realization came upon me that my fishing was over, I had a queer feeling in the pit of my stomach. I had wanted so much to connect with one of those larger ones. I tried to sit quietly as I watched those beauties — an opportunity of a lifetime at hand, yet I could not take advantage of it. I knew this picture couldn't last. All good things end — and this one did too. As by a signal they broke ranks, the whole army of 'em, and more than one monster bass swam directly under my boat, almost at arm's length, and was lost in deeper water.

Reluctantly I left that bar and made my way to camp. We had fish enough for our table, that was sure. I couldn't help but think of the large one I might have had, had not that measly backlash occurred at just that tragic moment.

Prepared for a Rain

Here's a funny little sketch from Mr. H. C. Pomeroy, of San Antonio, Texas. It is well written and is loaded with a big laugh at the end.

If the following incident had happened to me instead of to Jesse Newton, it would have been my most tragic moment, as it was his. As it turned out, it was tragedy for him and comedy to the rest of us. That, I believe, is the usual way with life.

Jesse is an old-timer, and when he was a young man he was among the best trappers, hunters, and fishermen in his little town of Lowell, Michigan. He owns up to it himself — not only owns up to it but insists on it. But he is getting old and rheumatic, and after a week's work, feels more like staying around home than traipsing up and down a half dozen creeks looking for a trout.

His younger brother and I have "parded" on the fishing stuff for many years, and in framing up one of our Sunday trips we asked Jesse to come along. He was pleased to accept the invitation. His jointed cane "poles" had been put away years before, all wrapped in newspaper and thrown into the attic, together with the usual amount of cast-offs relegated to that part of

a well-regulated home. He gathered his package and his tobacco box full of the usual junk, and when Lizzie came, Sunday at about two in the morning, he was as "peppy" as we were and "rarin" to go.

It was a great pleasure to see the years fall from him and although usually taciturn, he talked a blue streak all the thirty-five miles to the first creek. These are "grasshopper" creeks — too narrow and grass grown to get a fly to, and at many places even too overgrown with grass to get a hopper into.

We hit the first one just as it was getting light enough to find hoppers. It was a perfect morning, everything set. Jesse was as cocky as an Airedale pup, and assured us that, when he got his pole to working, he would have his limit by eight, and then would have to help us catch ours. The thrill of anticipation had him and he acted about thirteen years old.

First out of the car, he got his junk from under my feet. All of a sudden, he "blew up." I have said he was quiet and unobtrusive. Right then, he was not. He sure does know lots of one-hundred-proof swear words, and I learned a great number from him in the next minute or two. Calamity had overtaken him. He had thrown his package into the grass, and after we had calmed him and had him coherent again, he showed us what he had trustingly brought thirty-five miles on a trout trip. What he had thought was his package of "poles" were two little parasols belonging to his girls!

"And I Was Present!"

Being perhaps too serious minded a fisherman myself, practical jokes about fishing have never appealed to me very much, but Mr. P. H. Moore of Moore's Camp, Lake Rossignol, Nova Scotia, has sent me in a story so well written, so amusing, so original and so human that I know you will enjoy it. Personally I am perfectly sure that I too would have fallen.

As the migratory birds flock, cackle and feed together for the great flight to the South in the fall, so every spring do the skillful and migratory fishermen gather around the club tables in New York to cackle and feed while planning their vernal and piscatorial adventures in the North. Whether their skill lies in the way they do it or in the way they tell it is a secret known only to many close-mouthed and wise-eyed old guides who hibernate in the outposts of civilization while recuperating from the arduous labors pertaining to their professions, which consist largely of baiting hooks for fly-fishermen and of accepting the lion's share of their employer's winter earnings.

A boastful triumvirate of talented and empirical lovers of the dry fly and the wet story were outdoing

each other in their attempts to entertain, with the aid of cocktails and fish tales, a dandified but rather emollescent old party. There was no doubt about the emollescent old party (whom, for the sake of brevity we will henceforth call E. O. P.) absorbing their drinks, but whether their stories "took" or not is left for the reader to decide. He was polite and listened attenteach other in their attempts to entertain, with the aid tively, thereby satisfactorily playing the part allotted to him by his triumvirate of hosts. After nodding "yes" to the waiter many times and nodding appreciatively to his hosts at the culmination of each story, he timidly ventured, with a deprecating air:

"Gentlemen, I consider it a privilege to have had the honor of being entertained by three such patently experienced fishermen. The value of the information you have given me has been exceeded only by the gracious way in which you have taken me to your bosoms, as it were, and admitted me into the secrets of your select fraternity. As a slight compensation for your kindness I will, with your permission, impart to you a rather remarkable experience of my own."

With scarcely concealed about-to-be-bored expressions on their faces, they condescendingly indicated their willingness to listen. E. O. P. impressively continued:

"A matter of twenty or more years ago I was attached to a state fish-hatchery. Among other duties

I tabulated and kept track of various lakes and ponds where our institution released the fry of game fish. In checking over a list I was interested to note that some years before a Tammany politician had succeeded in getting five hundred thousand lake trout fry placed in one of the ponds in Central Park."

He paused, lit a cigarette and noting that he had the close attention of his auditors, proceeded:

"Later I read in a sporting magazine that the old institution I had served was being closed down. I happened to remember the incident of the fry that had been deposited in the park. It was in the month of May and I had been much disappointed that business had prevented my annual fishing trip to Lake Rossignol, Nova Scotia."

Again he paused and apologetically went on:

"Perhaps you gentlemen did not know that I had done a little fly-fishing in a small way?"

He now had the undivided attention of his hearers. Their eyes revealed an expression of calculating shrewdness. Was it a wolf in sheep's clothing they had been entertaining? E. O. P. continued:

"A preposterous idea occurred to me. I had a most compelling temptation to investigate that pond with my fly-rod and see if peradventure any of those lake trout fry had developed and were still alive; so, one Sunday morning before daylight I took my rod, and in my runabout, slipped up to the Park. There was

no one about. Hastily assembling my tackle I dropped a Parmacheene Belle into a likely looking spot under the bank. There was a splash and a shower of spray in the dim gray light of early dawn. The rod was all but jerked out of my hand. For fifteen minutes I fought that fish up and down the pond and finally succeeded in gaffing him. It was an enormous lake trout. In the next thirty minutes I caught two more. Then being afraid of intruders, and the circulation becoming stagnant in my pedal extremities, I put the fish in my car and, in the words of the vulgar and unwashed, beat it."

Fumbling in his pockets he produced a photograph of three magnificent lake trout reposing on the running board of an automobile. The jaws of his hearers collectively sagged in amazement. He replaced the photograph and glanced at his watch; then pleading an engagement excused himself and left the club-room.

* * * *

A few days later, very early in the morning, three battered, bruised and disheveled gentlemen in charge of three equally disarrayed cops were lined up before a sleepy desk-sergeant.

"What's the charge, officer?" asked the lately somnambulant representative of law and order.

A collection of much tangled fishing-tackle and broken rods were gingerly tendered by one of the patrolmen as *prima facie* evidence.

"Diggin' and fishin' in the Park, sorr, and reschistin' officers," ponderously declaimed a uniformed son of Erin.

"Frisk 'em, MacCoy," commanded the sergeant.

A search of the crestfallen prisoners revealed the expected collection of pocket-books, knives, keys, watches and so forth. The nadir of their humiliation, however, was reached only when each was discovered to be in possession of a can of Central Park worms!

And I was present!