
Fly Fishing

... for ...

Trout and Bass

... by ...

CHARLES F. JOHNSON.

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

FLY FISHING

FOR

TROUT AND BASS

BY

✓
CHARLES F. JOHNSON.

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POCKET EDITION.

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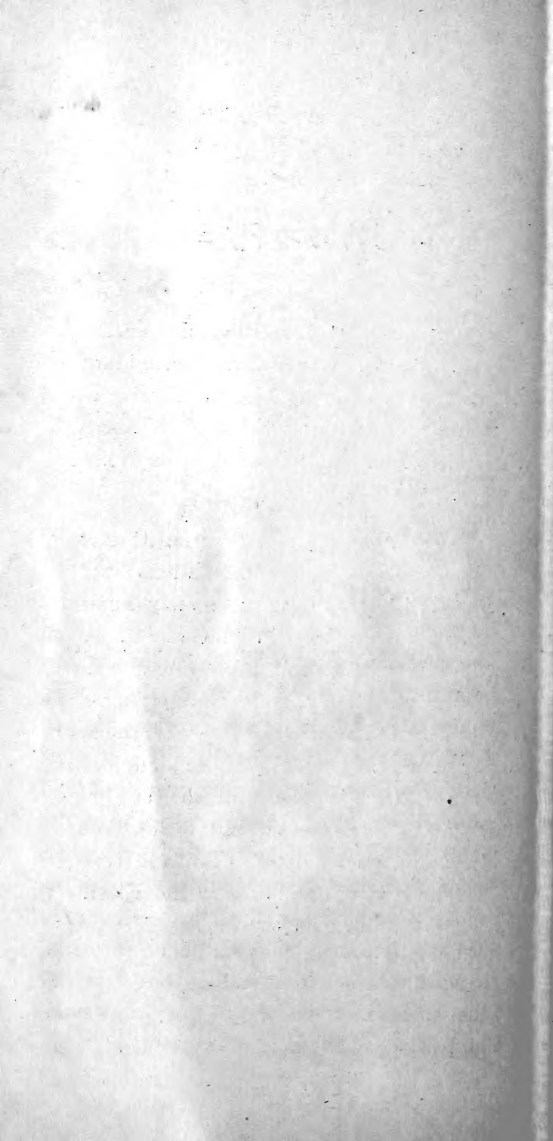
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The Johnson Fly Book

Contains one dozen bass flies, (six varieties on No. 1 hooks. One dozen assorted large trout flies on hooks No. 5. Twelve assorted medium trout flies on No. 7 hooks; and one dozen small trout flies on No. 11 hooks.

Individual caprice and experiment have produced so many combinations that the well informed angler scarcely knows what flies to select in the stores. It is believed that this collection embraces the necessary varieties, thereby simplyfying, so far as selection of flies is concerned, the art of fly fishing. The choice and adoption of these flies is the outcome of long study and experience in angling for Trout and Salmon on England's beautiful rivers, as well as for trout and bass in the delightful waters of our own country.



Trout Fishing.

During the day, the large trout lurk in the deeper waters above or below a shallow, secreting themselves in holes, by stones, under logs and projecting banks, in irregularities of the bottom or sides of the stream; ever closely watching for indications of food or danger. They seldom venture upon the shallows, except in extremely hot weather, when a sudden rise in the water occurs, and also as evening approaches. Then they become extremely bold and scour the shallows for small fry, making havoc among the affrighted fish life, as they rush here and there.

Deep pool fishing for large trout during the day, is apt to prove discouraging, unless there is a surface ripple or slightly discolored water. Either of these desirable conditions aid the angler in concealing himself and tackle.

Large trout usually take the fly under the surface, often following the fly some distance before seizing it. They seldom take the fly with that abandon and splash which characterizes smaller trout; hence, the fly should exhibit its most seductive flutterings as long as possible. It should not be jerked quickly and unceremoniously through the water.

One large trout is worth many smaller. Work for the prize and disdain counting on numbers.

As you approach a good "holding ground" and while yet hidden from view of any expected trout, quietly watch the water for a few moments before casting. Study the situation—perhaps a large trout is observed rising at a certain point—stealthily occupy the most favorable position for casting; if necessary, crawl on hands and knees—any way to remain unseen—avoid all quick

motions in sight of the pool—aim to identify your appearance with that of the surroundings. Hold before you, if there is no cover, cut willows or bunches of grass.

Small and medium sized trout frequent the shallows, usually near the middle of the stream, and are found under cover of weed beds, skirting the channels with rapid currents.

A warm day with light clouds and sufficient south, southwest, or west wind to ripple the water slightly, is the best weather for trout fishing. High water when not discolored, is favorable.

When low water has been continued, search the banks of the stream to discover any springs which flow into it. If there is any depth of water at such places, you are almost sure to find fish. Extremely low water is unfavorable.

During the heat of the day, insects, frogs, and small fry are inactive. During a warm cloudy day or as evening approaches, insects and other food become more active. At such times, trout feed with great freedom.

The most killing method of fishing the

still, deep, shady pools especially when trout appear disinclined to feed, is to fish up stream, using a small fly. Make several casts, not permitting the fly to touch the water. This casting will dry the flies. Each successive cast should carry the fly nearer the desired spot. When the fly reaches this position allow it to fall lightly upon the surface. Elevate the tip of the rod enough to keep the line taut, but not to impart motion to the fly. Let the current bear the fly toward you. As it thus sails upon the surface, the largest and most apathetic trout in the pool seldom refuses it. Should no trout take it, and the fly become saturated and sink beneath the surface, withdraw it from the water and repeat the preliminary casting as above described. This is technically termed "Dry Fly fishing" and is the most killing method of taking trout. The "dry fly" floating on the surface of the water is the nearest copy of nature attainable. Observe how closely dry fly fishing imitates the conduct of a natural insect wafted from some neighboring bush into the water and floating on its surface.

Use sad colored flies in low, clear water, and in high water just as it is clearing

after a protracted rise. In small streams where quick, short rises are of frequent occurrences, the medium sized trout fly is preferable when the freshet is subsiding. In such streams trout do not have time enough to surfeit themselves upon food abundant during a flood. After a protracted state of high and discolored water, trout becomes surfeited, and will rarely rise to anything but a small fly.

Study the stream—its rapids, pools, eddies and falls. Note the stumps, logs and stones, and all obstructions. Determine by careful observation, the spot which appears most likely to harbor a large trout—then make your cast. In fishing in a rapid current, cast the fly across and up stream. Do not cast directly across the stream—the line so cast cuts the water roughly, alarming the fish. Make every movement by the water stealthily. Every action in fly casting can be made in a deliberate manner, with but slight motion of the body and fore arm—let the wrist alone do the work. Trout, like deer, are easily frightened by a quick motion.

Fish lay head up stream and have keen sight. In all cases where practicable, fish

up stream—that is, throw your fly against the current.

Remember the mere act of dragging a mass of saturated feather and hackle through the water, in a “chuck and chance it” style, is not fishing. By means of the wrist, impart a life-like flutter to the fly. Humor it—let the hackle and wings open and close with that tremulous, quivering motion, which is attractive and irresistible to the large fish.

Note carefully the immediate surroundings where you catch fish; thus learn how to recognize those unmistakable signs of nature, which indicate to the angler, where trout hide.

Their sense of hearing also is acute, when the sound is accompanied by motion which transmits vibration to the water in their vicinity. Hence tread lightly and avoid any action that will convey a jarring or grating sound to the water. Extreme caution and skillful casting is necessary when fishing still, deep water. The novice will have better success in broken water.

Do not over estimate the value of long

distance casting. Thirty-five feet of line thrown delicately and accurately is sufficient for all ordinary fishing.

The Large Trout Flies.

Large trout flies may be used with success in broken water, in turbid or high water, and on dark days in well fished streams. In streams seldom fished large flies may be used more generally.

In well fished streams "dry fly" fishing, as before described, is the most killing method. In this style of fishing, the conduct of the natural insect is imitated and the trout, when taking the artificial dry fly, regards it as a natural insect. It seems, however, that the larger trout fly is usually taken beneath the surface and on the supposition that it is one of the many different small fry on which trout feed.

It is not necessary for large trout flies to resemble the natural insect; they may be nondescript in appearance, size and color determining their value.

The large trout flies are the Johnson Fancy, Brown Palmer, Edgar Allen Poe, the Abercrombie, Apparition and Red palmer.

The Johnson Fancy.

The Johnson Fancy, body of gold tinsel, wing from eye of peacock feather with golden hackle and topping of scarlet, tail of scarlet.

The Johnson fancy is an excellent fly for large trout at all times. In pool fishing it should be sunk deeply and drawn through the water very slowly. For the northern streams and around Lake Superior it is the most killing fly that can be used.

Red Palmer.

Body of bright scarlet wool, ribbed with gold tinsel, and palmered with reddish brown hackle.

The Red Palmer is always seasonable, it is best on windy days. The Red Palmer as dropper and the Johnson Fancy as stretcher, is the best combination with which to test strange waters.

Brown Palmer.

Body of dark red wool, palmered with a brown hackle. A good fly for chilly windy days; when the water is clearing after a freshet; and also for midday fishing late in the season.

Edgar Allen Poe.

Body thin, of silver tinsel. Wings black, legs green hackle, tail black and green welded.

When showy flies fail to tempt the fish, the Edgar Allen Poe often fills the angler's creel.

The Abercrombie.

Body thin, of gold tinsel. Wings golden brown, legs brown hackle. Tail, brown.

Good for early morning fishing in hot weather, and pool fishing on chilly, windy days, with occasional gleams of sunshine.

The Apparition.

Body thin, of silver tinsel. Wings white, with topping of peacock hurl, legs, badger hackle, tail red.

The Apparition is a standard fly for twilight and late evening fishing and is good on dark days in discolored water.

The Medium trout Flies.

Smaller trout feed chiefly on insects. Flies used in their capture, should resemble

insects such as smaller trout feed upon. Color and outline of form, as viewed by the trout, are the essentials in such resemblance. It is desirable that such flies should embody certain of the general features common to numerous family; for instance there are many kinds of coleoptera or beetle family, upon which trout feed. The coch-y-bundu hackle fly, when in the water, resembles the beetle family in general, and is recognized as a standard fly to use.

Small cylindrical cases open at each end covered externally by bits of wood, shells, stones, and the like, containing the larvae of the Caddice fly may be found in summer in the bottom and sides of a stream. The larvae after partial developement leave the cocoon-like cases and ascend toward the water's surface. Upon emerging from the water and while resting on its surface, they quickly mature.

Trout feed eagerly upon these larvae and flies. The blue dun natural belongs to this class. It is a water fly, hatching from the bottom of the stream. Its primary color DUN is the prevailing color of many other flies. Hence the blue dun artificial is a standard trout fly.

For twilight and late evening fishing, a white fly (the apparition) is most suitable, not only because white is then conspicuous but is characteristic of many insects who venture abroad at twilight.

The activity of the natural fly, when in the water is derived chiefly from the movement of its legs. In the artificial fly the hackle represents its legs, and are the means by which activity and apparent life can be given to the fly. The body, wings and tail each aid in the deception, but it is to the elastic quivering of the hackle imparted by the cunning of the angler that the artificial fly owes its deceptiveness.

The medium size trout flies are the Blue Dun, Red Spinner, the Apparition, Coch-y-bundu, Johnson Fancy and Yellow Sally.

The Blue Dun.

Body of Dun and yellow colored hair mixed, legs, light reddish brown hackle and Dun Wings.

A standard fly during the early part of the season; on cold windy days as the season advances, and for evening fishing during the warmer months.

The Red Spinner.

Body, thin of golden brown silk, ribbed with gold, tail, fibers from a red hackle, dun wings, legs, red hackle.

This is the best fly for use in currents, between weeds on shallows, during extremely hot days with bright sunshine. The angler must not expect to catch large fish, but sport can then be had with the smaller trout with the Red Spinner, it is also good for early evening fishing late in the season.

The Apparition.

Body thin of silver tinsel, legs, badger hackle, wings white. The Apparition is the best fly for late evening fishing.

The Coch-y-bundu Hackle.

The body of peacock hurl, palmered with a dark furnace hackle. The Coch-y-bundu hackle kills best on close hot days.

The Johnson Fancy.

Body thin of gold tinsel, wings, eye from

peacock feather with golden hackle at sides and topping of red, tail red, legs green hackle.

The Johnson Fancy is the best fly of all for general use.

The Yellow Sally.

Body, of yellow silk, legs, yellow hackle.

This is a standard fly for twilight and evening fishing, and in low bright water. The Yellow Sally as a dropper with the Apparition as stretcher is a most killing combination for high clear water.

Small trout Flies.

The small trout flies are the Black Gnat, Blue Dun, June Dun, Apparition, Coch-y-bundu hackle and the Brown Palmer.

Of these the Blue Dun, Black Gnat and Coch-y-bundu hackle are invaluable in low bright water. During hot days, the Orange Dun and Brown Palmer kill well in shady pools.

The Apparition is good for evening fishing in extremely low, clear water.

These suggestions as to the use of these flies are not to be regarded as unbending rules, but rather as hints, derived from long and varied experience of the writer and others in Fly Fishing. It is well to begin fishing with a cast of flies apparently the most appropriate, considering the hour of the day, the condition of the water, the size of the fish usually found in such waters, and any indications noticed of what fish are taking.

Several changes may be necessary before discovering a killing fly. The angler should invariably examine the contents of the stomach of the first trout caught. This examination may suggest the best fly to use.

There are days when no fly can be found, natural or artificial, which will tempt the fish: On such days even the much praised farmer's boy with alder rod and angle worm, cannot entice the lazy trout from his den. When trout are feeding, the proper fly properly cast will insure a catch.

Fine gut snell and leaders are desirable. The finer the gut, the easier it is to catch but the more difficult it is to land a trout. The aim should be to acquire such skill in

landing, that the finest gut can be used. He who uses heavy rods or coarse tackle, depending chiefly on their strength knows but little the joy of skillful angling.

Bass Fishing.

Fly fishing for black bass cannot be said to have been hitherto a success. The angler who practiced it, did so for experiment and from an anticipatory point of view rather than from any decided belief in its merits.

A series of careful experiments pursued by us during the spring and fall of 1892, together with the experience of seventeen years' previous, in fly fishing, established these points. The fly should be light enough to fall, when cast upon the water,

delicately and without commotion. Otherwise, instead of enticing, it will scare the bass. Then the fly should be attractive in appearance and of colors that are alluring. Third, the fly should be bulky enough in form to promise a bass substantial reward for his effort in pursuing it. And lastly, the general appearance of the flies in the water should be such that bass will eagerly seize them under the impression they are species of the numerous small fry upon which bass habitually feed.

The Bass Flies mentioned herein have been developed in these experiments, and after thorough testing, are pronounced the most killing flies made. If used in the line of the hints given, fly fishing for black bass will become a delightful success. The tinsel body formed by the hook's shanks without the usual body stuffing, renders the fly attractive without being cumbersome and heavy. The absence of the usual hackle permits these flies to be cast farther and with greater accuracy. To satisfy himself on this, let the angler cast first a winged and hackled fly; then, after cutting away the hackle, cast the fly. The superiority of the fly without hackle, for accurate long casts, is quickly perceived. A fly, en-

cumbered with a mass of hackles standing out at right angle from the hook, offers much resistance to the atmosphere, without adding to the killing qualities.

From the beginning, the principles involved in successfully applying the artificial fly to the capture of bass, have been generally misunderstood. The ordinary fisherman treats the bass as though he were a small trout. Small trout are insectivorous. Bass seldom take the fly as do smaller trout. The bass is essentially predatory, largely carnivorous. Cray-fish, water snakes, minnows and small fry, crabs, frogs, mollusks, form his larder. The bass fly, ordinarily used, is simply the trout fly enlarged. And it has been presumed, that this enlarged fly must be used for bass, in the same manner as its small prototype, for trout. Hence, fly fishing for bass has been almost a failure, as every angler knows. Occasionally a bass would be taken, but the fact could not be concealed, that the trip for bass with a fly was not satisfactory. Yet the superior attraction of the fly rod has been such, that anglers have been extremely reluctant to give up the hope of ultimately making fly fishing for bass a success. At intervals an enthusias-

tic fisherman has taken up the subject and introduced a new fly, which sufficiently revived the interest, to keep the art of fly fishing for bass from becoming obsolete.

Bass are not insectivorous, hence do not habitually take their food at the surface like smaller trout. If analogy should be permissible, we refer to that king of the water, the Salmon. The bass takes the fly at from six to nine inches beneath the surface of the water. Repeat your cast until you get the fly over the desired spot; then allow it to fall delicately upon the water. Let the fly sink the required depth. Then by elevating the tip of the rod, by a series of short hesitatory jerks bring the fly toward you. On feeling a slight resistance, strike smartly. The fly **MUST** light on the water without commotion and with the least possible ripple. While the fly is sinking, the bass has occasion to investigate it; by the time the motion of the rod is given to the fly, the bass is anxious to seize it and perhaps is caught, almost before the angler knows it. Small fish, you can catch in almost any bungling manner, but large fish must be kept in complete ignorance of yourself, rod and line; otherwise you will seldom catch them.

Small fry in disporting themselves, do so without excessive violence. A frog in taking to the water, does so in a quiet, easy manner, marking his submersion with a light splash, devoid of any violent agitating action. A small water snake, alarmed in the act of swimming upon the surface, disappears almost silently. Everything obeys the law of nature. So perfectly do bass recognize these laws, that any lure placed before him in a manner foreign to that which his instinct accepts, will be eyed with suspicion and left alone.

Seat yourself by the pleasant river side and learn these lessons from nature. The study will repay. Do not make fishing all mechanical work combing the river from dawn till dark. Investigate the wonderful watery world in which fish so strangely have their being. Learn therefrom reliable data which will assist you in their capture.

In boat fishing, use the sculls as little as possible, DRIFT ALL YOU CAN, and SIT DOWN WHILE CASTING. In wading, avoid splashing the water or any violent, hasty movements; advance stealthily from one point to another. Should there be a slight deposit of mud over a hard bottom, lift the feet carefully, straight up from the bottom.

This will prevent the water in your vicinity from becoming muddy.

Fish have a keen sight and are easily alarmed, hence let the angler seize every advantage of natural cover. The projecting corners of banks, sedge-beds, sudden turns in the stream, and the like, afford opportunities of approaching unawares.

Do not forget to sink the fly well. The deeper the fly is in the water, the deeper the bass will be when he seizes it. Therefore the less chance he has of seeing you and discovering the method of presentation. About nine inches is usually as deep as a fly can sink and clear the bottom growth of weeds. Do not be too anxious to recover the fly from the water. Bring it towards you slowly, without undue haste, interposing its progress with slight, momentary pauses. Thus a not over-hungry fish is given a chance to seize it. Whereas, if pulled too quickly, a "short rise" will be the result.

Now a few words as to those portions of a river in which to fish. Ignorance on this matter will render the best flies, and the utmost proficiency in casting them, of little avail. Each river has certain parts particularly adapted as holding grounds for bass, and other parts where bass are

seldom or never found. Waste no time in fishing those dark deeper portions of a river bordered with sedge and of muddy bottom. Fish places with hard, irregular and rocky bottoms, here and there dotted with a sufficient deposit of mud to encourage a straggling growth of that variety of water grass which seldom grows quite tall enough to appear above the surface. This is a desirable formation, being sufficiently dense to afford fish cover and secrecy, without seriously impeding their movements.

Give particular attention to the shallows and ripples with their deeper channels and holes, both above and below. Fish such places carefully. Note any obstructions in the current caused by projecting logs, or rocks, and the like. In the eddies formed below these, bass are almost sure to be found.

Successful fly fishing depends to no little extent (apart from the merits of the flies used), upon the ability to cast the fly with some degree of skill, in conformity with the hints given. There are some, who, owing to their deficiency in acquiring this skill, may at first fail to realize the full success desired. To such, we, would say: Endeavor

to increase your proficiency in the use of the fly rod.

Bass Flies.

The Johnson Fancy, Apparition, Magician, Abercrombie, Edgar Allen Poe, and Polly Perkins.

Johnson Fancy.

The best fly of any for general use.

The Apparition.

For late evening fishing; on dark days, and for slightly discolored water.

The Polly Perkins.

A very useful dropper; with the Johnson Fancy as a stretcher in bright, but not low water.

The Magician.

This fly makes a killing combination with the Johnson Fancy for high and slightly discolored water. Use the Magician as a dropper.

The Edgar Allen Poe.

The best fly to use in bright low water during the day time.

The Abercrombie.

Is an excellent fly to use in bright sunshine with a strong cold wind blowing.

How to Cast the Fly.

Use a light ten foot fly rod, a small click trout reel bearing twenty-five yards of No. 6 dressed, braided, water proof silk casting line, a four foot leader, and a winged trout fly on a No. 4 hook. Break the barb off the hook to prevent it catching. Cut away the hackle close to the body, it will cast easier. Joint the rod with the guides exactly in line and fix the reel securely in the reel seat on the butt. Then thread the end of the casting line through the guides up the rod and out through the ring of the tip. Fasten this end with a small knot to one of the end loops of the leader. To the other end of the leader, attach the fly.

Select a suitable spot, a stretch of water if available, or grass plat with forty or fifty

feet clear space, front and rear. With a handkerchief bind the right arm just above the elbow, firmly to the side.

All action must be made gently and methodically, chiefly by means of the wrist, with but little movement of the fore arm and without movement of the upper arm; any movement of the upper arm should be checked. Remember it is knack, not force you have to use. The more force the beginner uses, the less quickly will he attain success. When more advanced, long distance casting may be essayed, then the upper arm may be used to advantage.

Place some small object fifteen feet away at which to cast, grasp the rod firmly by its handle with the ball of the thumb pressed against the upper part of the hand grasp, pointing toward the tip. The ball of the thumb plays an important part. The grasp of the hand holds the rod securely; the thumb directs its action. Unreel and pull through the tip, line half again as long as the rod. Hold the fly between the finger and thumb of the left hand, with the rod at an angle of about 45 degrees in front of the caster, with the tip pointing slightly to his right.

Wave the rod gently from right to left, at the same time releasing the fly. This motion places the fly in front of the caster, and at his left; when the fly reaches that position, bring the tip of the rod to a position over and behind the left shoulder of the caster. This action should place the fly behind and above the caster. Pause a moment that the line may straighten out behind; then bring the rod forward until it reaches about the same position the caster began with. The last motion should place line and fly extended in front of the caster. Before the line thus extended falls to the ground, with a sharp twitch of the wrist, combined with a slight movement, of the fore arm, bring the tip of the rod to a position over and back of the right shoulder. This position can be determined by the thumb, which should be vertical. Stop the rod when the thumb of the caster is perpendicular. Do not allow the rod to go further back, otherwise the back cast will throw the line too low. Observe this rule. This is technically known as the "back cast." In making it, the tip of the rod should not describe an arc, but a straight line. This is accomplished by the combined action of the fore arm and wrist. It is

essential that the back cast be properly made—Herein lies the secret of successful fly casting. First is the preliminary cast which extends the line in front of the caster, preparatory for the back cast. Second, comes the back cast in which the line is extended high in the air, behind the caster. Then follows the forward cast by which the line is impelled forward. The movement of the fly must be such that the fly will not at any time fall to the ground until the completion of the forward cast.

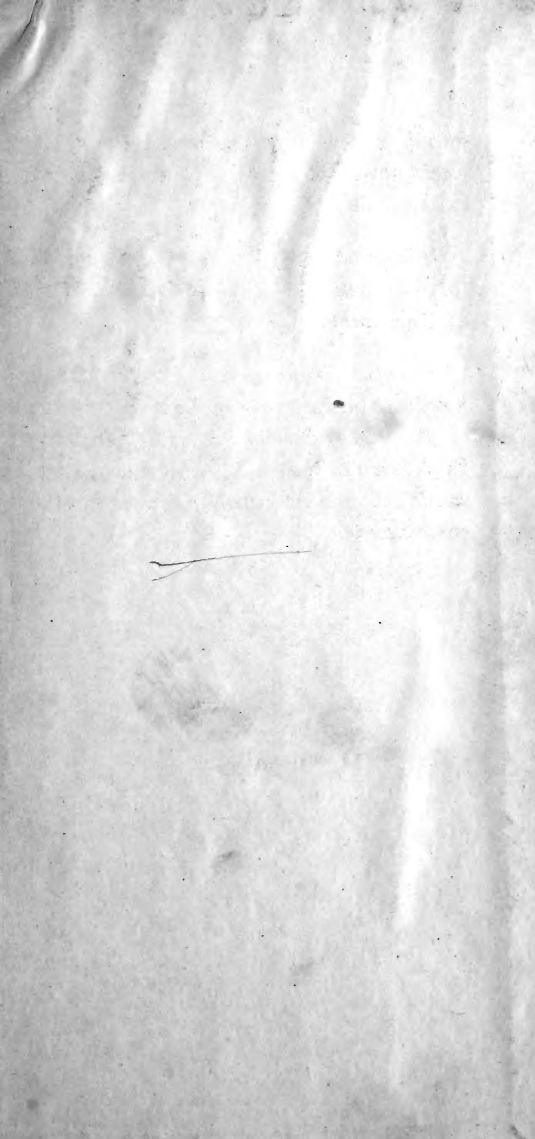
The thumb having reached the vertical, pause a moment, for the line to lose its backward velocity; then the back cast is complete. At this instant and before the line extended behind begins to fall, bring the rod forward to an angle of about 45 degrees, impelling the line toward the mark chosen. This is termed the forward cast. Accuracy and delicacy are the essentials of the forward cast. In the back cast the tip of the rod makes a straight line; in the forward cast the tip describes an arc. If the forward cast is begun before the back cast is complete, the fly will snap off.

Activity is imparted to the line by the

spring of the upper part of the rod. A slight action of the wrist properly directed is sufficient.

Practice diligently until the back and forward casts can be correctly and accurately performed.

In actual fishing, the caster seldom has level banks and clear space before and behind. Obstacles of all sorts interpose. First learn to cast a fly as outlined; afterwards adapt this accomplishment to the environment.



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