

PRACTICAL DRY-FLY FISHING



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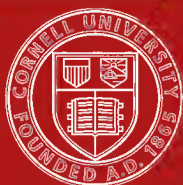
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PRACTICAL DRY-FLY FISHING

BY
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INTRODUCTION

No excuses or apologies are necessary for offering to American anglers a little treatise, worthy perhaps of a not more dignified name than "hand-book," on dry-fly fishing. It may be said that the subject has been fully covered by a number of expert writers who have lived in the home of the dry-fly, England, and who have spent many years of their lives in practising this most delicate, artistic and fascinating of sports on the English chalk streams, so smooth, so placid, and fished so long and so constantly that to take from them successfully their highly "educated" trout more scientific methods than those offered by the use of the wet

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fly had to be devised. As a matter of fact, any angling writer who thought for a moment that he could go over the technical ground covered by Mr. Frederic M. Halford, the greatest of English writers on dry-fly methods, and do it successfully without much repetition, or suggest many new or startling improvements over Mr. Halford's methods, would, indeed, exhibit a self-assurance that would be most abnormal, and he might properly be called an eccentric. Mr. Halford did not invent the dry-fly; but he has been an angling enthusiast from his boyhood days. He has been the happy possessor of a keen and studious mind. His one hobby throughout his long life has been the dry-fly. Most fortunately he has had almost unlimited time to devote to its study, and as a result he is the greatest recognized authority on

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this subject. When a very young man he began practising this method of angling, and from that time he has used no other lure than the floating fly. When forty-five years old he retired from business, and since his retirement (he is now nearly seventy) has devoted his life mainly to the study of his favorite sport. Therefore, his works have become *text-books*, studied and followed by all other dry-fly anglers and writers.

But though twenty-three years have elapsed since his most important work appeared, it has produced but little effect upon American angling methods, and the number of Americans who have read his books is so comparatively small as to be almost a negligible quantity. Among the few who have studied his doctrines and followed his methods the effect has been great; they have be-

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come fascinated by dry-fly angling, and some of them practice it to the exclusion of all other methods. But up to 1911 the dry-fly had aroused little interest in this country, and if one of the very few enthusiasts mentioned the subject to other anglers, he was very often met with the question, "What is the dry-fly?"

With the exception of a few magazine articles, there has been practically no American literature upon the subject. And yet, it seems to the author that there is a large field for it. During the past year the floating fly has been discussed more and more by our anglers, and the author predicts that within a few years, in certain parts of our country at least, the dry-fly will become as well known and as popular as the wet fly, or sunken lure, which has been recognized from our earliest angling

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days as the one accepted method of taking trout on American streams; while the further prediction is confidently advanced that at least on the best known, most constantly fished streams of New York and Pennsylvania, and other similar waters, the dry-fly will rapidly supplant the wet fly.

Mr. Halford and other English writers have treated the dry-fly as a lure for the smooth, placid chalk streams of southern England. The writer will endeavor to show that it is equally efficient when used on our American streams, where conditions are somewhat different. Therefore, while endorsing in general the methods of Mr. Halford, the author will write from the stand-point of an American angler, and will give simple directions, so far as he is able, for using this most fas-

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cinating lure upon American waters. Some minor differences in methods will appear.

Owing to the great scarcity of American dry-fly literature, and a very general desire manifested by many anglers of the writer's acquaintance for information on the subject of the floating fly, early in 1911 the author was requested by the editor of *Field and Stream* to write a few articles for beginners. He consented, but being unwilling to pose as an expert, or even as one of the American anglers most capable of instructing others, in his articles he explained that his position was that of a beginner willing to lend a helping hand to other beginners, to guide them in their first steps on the dry-fly path. This is his attitude in taking up the present work. There is a constantly growing number of wet

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fly fishermen who would like to use the dry-fly. But how shall they go about it? It is difficult, if not impossible, for the majority of anglers to find instructors who take them upon the streams; it is next to impossible in this country to procure Mr. Halford's early works; at the time these lines are written there is no American book upon the subject. It is the hope of the author, that some anglers so situated may acquire from this little book at least a rudimentary knowledge of this beautiful art that will enable them afterward to follow alone the delightful paths travelled by the dry-fly enthusiasts, and by practice become experts.

In treating a subject so fully covered by other writers—in this case, English writers almost exclusively—it would be unfair to withhold appropriate thanks

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from those who have helped to make this book possible. First, I must speak of the kindness of *Field and Stream* in allowing me to use certain parts of articles written for that magazine; due acknowledgments have already been made to Mr. Halford. I should be lacking in all the ordinary instincts of courtesy if I did not mention my friend, Mr. George M. L. LaBranche, in the author's opinion one of the very best of all-around American anglers, and the most expert of American dry-fly fishermen. I have been on the streams with him, and when watching his work have seen by far the most skilful handling of the fly that has ever come under my observation in an experience of thirty-eight years as an enthusiastic fly-fisherman. His knowledge of dry-fly methods and of the habits of the trout is profound. For about fifteen

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years his sole method of taking these game fish has been by means of the floating fly. For many months we have "talked dry-fly" together, sometimes almost daily. I trust, however, that no reader will assume that in this book for beginners I shall attempt to transcribe the ideas of Mr. LaBranche, who doubtless will give them to the angling public himself at the proper time. But my frequent talks with him have become a part of my angling knowledge, and there is no way in which I can disassociate it in my mind from knowledge gained in other ways. Therefore I render thanks to him for any thoughts advanced in this book that he may, as he reads it, believe to have been the result of his own observations and investigations, or of our various discussions of this subject.

The floating fly has been looked upon

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very generally in America as an English "fad," of value when used on the British chalk streams, but unsuitable for our American waters. This I believe to be a very great mistake. To my personal knowledge, on certain streams, and under certain conditions, the dry-fly angler is successful when the wet fly fisherman fails; while in many cases the wet fly angler who becomes expert with the floating lure never returns to the use of the sunken fly.

In this work the author will confine himself as closely as possible to his subject, the floating fly. The beauties of nature, one of the chief attractions, if not the principal pleasure, of a day on the trout stream, may be well left to such poetic pens as those of Dr. Henry van Dyke, and other masters of English literature, while the habits of trout

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and their favorite lurking places are discussed in nearly every book on angling. We are now concerned with dry-fly methods only.

NEW YORK, *May*, 1912.

PRACTICAL DRY-FLY FISHING

CHAPTER I

English Dry-Fly Methods Modified by American Ideas and Conditions

“WHAT is a dry-fly?”

 This question, asked by a prominent sportsman at the annual Field Day of the Camp-Fire Club of America, at Mr. Ernest Thompson Seton's beautiful estate at Cos Cob, Conn., in the latter part of June, 1910, rather startled me for a moment, as the man who asked it had been a thorough out-door man all his life; had visited nearly all the haunts of big game in this country and in Canada; had shot at different times mountain sheep, mountain goat, moose, bear, antelope, elk, caribou, various kinds of

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deer, and other varieties of wild animals, and had, as a rule, carried at least one fishing-rod with him on most of his trips, if not on all. I knew that he had been successful in luring many kinds of game-fish, as I had seen some of his records; and had also examined, mounted in his office, fine specimens of large bass, silver trout, ouananiche, muscalonge, and other inhabitants of the streams and lakes.

A day or two before this question was asked an article written by the author had appeared, the general purpose of which had been to place the question seriously before American anglers, as to why they had not taken more interest in this most fascinating branch of angling, used so extensively for many years on the English chalk streams, and recognized almost universally by British anglers as the most sportsman-

English Dry-Fly Literature

like, most artistic, and most scientific of all methods of taking trout. In the article referred to there had been an important error—an error of omission. While believing that a comparatively small number of American anglers were familiar with dry-fly methods, yet I had assumed that all would know what was meant when the dry-fly or floating fly was mentioned. The first important contribution to dry-fly literature was made in England in 1851; and from that time until now in that country it has been one of the most fully discussed methods of fishing. Some of the British dry-fly books published within the past thirty years may be ranked properly among the greatest works of angling literature. Many American enthusiasts and collectors possess at least a few of the most important of these works; and yet even

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a slight investigation would show that their circulation in this country is by no means general. To ask the average English sportsman the question propounded at the beginning of this chapter—"What is a dry-fly?"—would be almost equivalent to asking an American to define base-ball.

While it is true that the past year or two the floating fly has been discussed more generally than ever before by American anglers, yet some of our old-timers—those who have been fly-fishing enthusiasts for years—have assumed that Americans have been familiar with dry-fly methods since the publication, many years ago, of Mr. Halford's earlier works; but a little thought and observation, in the author's judgment, will prove this assumption to be entirely erroneous, and made possible only by that psychological condition

A Psychological Fallacy

which often exists in the minds of experts in many branches of learning that makes them think that merely because *they* are thoroughly familiar with a certain subject *all others* must share their knowledge in at least some degree. The fallacy of the line of reasoning that the works of the great English expert must have produced in this country a wide-spread familiarity with the angling methods advocated by him may be discovered easily by one who endeavors to procure in any of our leading cities a copy of Mr. Halford's most important book from the beginner's stand-point—and I think from the stand-point of the expert as well—“*Dry-Fly Fishing in Theory and Practice*,” published in 1889. For many months, some years ago, the author made a search for this work among New York dealers both in new and in

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second-hand books, and failed to find a single copy. Later, after another equally thorough search for the same author's "Dry-Fly Entomology," the writer was compelled to send to England for it.

From his early boyhood the author has been an angling enthusiast; as a believer in heredity there exists in his mind no doubt that some of his love of angling was transmitted by his parents and grandparents, to go no further back. This love of his favorite sport does not blossom like a flower in the happy days of the fishing season, to wither away with the approach of winter. Many winter evenings are spent in his library, where he may select for his evening entertainment one or more of several hundred of the most interesting angling books written since the days of Walton. He may go even

Angling Books, Old and New

farther back than that, for once in a while he feels like reading from a rare old volume published in 1633 a few verses of the "Piscatorie Eclogs" by Phineas Fletcher, or from the English translation made in 1722 of "Opian's Halieutics." Of English works on the dry-fly he has endeavored to make a complete collection, and, unlike books in many libraries, these do not exist merely for ornament. They have been studied and their contents often discussed with angling friends. After having read many of the works of both old and modern angling writers one is forced to come to the conclusion that angling literature since the days of Walton has been one long series of repetitions. Here and there a book shines out conspicuous for the originality of its ideas. Were this the proper place for such a discussion it would be

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a delight to mention these shining lights, and endeavor to show wherein they excelled in new ideas of value to the angling world.

While Mr. Pulman explained dry-fly methods in 1851, yet when Mr. Halford began to write, after an exhaustive study made on the trout streams themselves, he had practically a virgin field before him. Therefore his early books were entirely original in conception, they described clearly and fully this important method of angling, and were contributions to angling literature of great and lasting value. That all writers coming after him must necessarily go over a certain part of the ground covered by him, however much they might differ with him in minor details, follows as a matter of course; for the entire theory of dry-fly fishing is founded on a comparatively few basic

American Dry-Fly Methods

principles upon which all experts agree. So the general rules governing the use of the dry-fly that will be described in this work resemble closely those advocated by Mr. Halford and other English authors; but in all cases the methods are those used by the writer himself, which have been learned, first, by his early crude experiments, made before he had read any authoritative works on the subject; by study of the books by English writers; by experiences on the streams in the company of expert dry-fly anglers; and last, by many long discussions with several skilful users of the floating lure. The various differences between the methods that will be advocated for our American streams, and those described by English authorities for use on their chalk streams, will be pronounced in some details, and such things as the advo-

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cacy of "fishing the stream" instead of "stalking the fish" and "fishing the rise" only, may seem heretical to what is known as the dry-fly "purist" of England. In this book we shall cast our fly wherever our judgment tells us that there should be a trout. Mr. George A. B. Dewar, in his most excellent work, "The Book of the Dry-Fly," says: "The best short description of the difference between wet and dry-fly fishing is that which describes the first as 'fishing the stream' and the second as 'fishing the rise.'" We cannot agree with this; there is no good reason for not "fishing the stream" with the floating fly. Then again we shall endeavor to show that while in England the dry-fly is considered the proper method to use only on smooth, placid water, yet it is equally efficacious on our swifter and more turbulent streams.

Rods, English and American

In the tackle, especially the rods, used, there will also be some differences in ideas. It would be hard for an American angler to read carefully the descriptions of English rods contained in even the latest catalogues of some of the largest British tacklemakers without imagining that he had gone back several generations.* Some of their "light" rods are of a weight seldom if ever seen in this country. Instead of the very beautifully made German silver suction ferules, with which all American anglers are familiar, they advertise various styles of "lock-fast" joints which would be an eyesore to any American fisherman. They also have rods with steel centres, and some of them are wound with steel or bronze wire on the outside. A well-

* Many of the best anglers of England are now using our light American rods.

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known dry-fly “purist” and angling writer, in a book published as late as 1908, advocates the use of a rod eleven feet long, weighing eleven ounces—one that “can easily be wielded single-handed.” What strength must he possess who can wield such a weapon easily!

Some views, entirely contrary to those held by English authorities, will be expressed by the author, which he would be glad to designate “the American methods,” if we had a number of dry-fly anglers sufficiently large to merit the somewhat ambitious title, “the American school.”

Incidentally, some of these differences of opinion may meet with the severe criticisms of a few of the old-timers among American anglers, who read Halford in 1889, and who have regarded his book as almost sacred ever since.

Experts Not Infallible

In dry-fly discussions it is sometimes customary for them to quote the ideas to which Mr. Halford gave utterance twenty-three years ago, and that is the end of the argument; the case has been decided by the court of last appeal. We admire Mr. Halford, but we would not thrust upon him an infallibility which we feel very sure he would have no desire to claim, especially if he were to give advice in regard to fishing American streams; while it is at least possible that in the years that have elapsed since 1889 he may have changed or modified some of the views he then expressed. As late as February 25, 1912, Mr. Halford said, in a letter to the author of this book: "I note what you say about the absence of rises on your streams. I have had similar experiences in England, and have, like you, found it profitable to float a fly

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over a likely spot, especially if a good fish is seen in good position and likely to feed.”

CHAPTER II

“*Fishing the Rise*” and “*Fishing the Stream,*” and a Word About the English “*Purist*”

THE theory of dry-fly fishing is founded on the use of an artificial fly that is an exact imitation* of a natural insect, in size, shape, and color, and so made that it will not easily sink; it is cast *up-stream* and al-

* Several times in this book I shall speak of flies tied in exact imitation of natural insects. It will be readily understood, especially if one looks at some of our common insects through a microscope, and sees with what wonderful delicacy they are formed, how impossible it would be to fashion with feathers, silks, and other materials at the command of the fly-maker, exact reproductions, from a technical and scientific stand-point, of live insects. The author means by “exact imitations” artificial flies that have been made to match in size, shape, color, and other details the original insect with all possible fidelity.

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lowed to *float* down on the surface of the water with no other motion than that imparted by the current.

However much anglers may disagree about many theories, yet on these points all writers, all experts, and all users of the floating fly are apparently in accord. They all accept the exact imitation theory—a bone of contention among wet fly anglers for many years. There is no divergence of opinion in regard to fishing up-stream—another topic of discussion among the wet fly men that probably will never be settled to the satisfaction of all. And the proposition that the dry-fly must float down with the current, with no other motion whatever, is universally agreed to. So in many ways the dry-fly fishermen form a happy and harmonious family, and the knotty problems that are forever coming up

Ways of the Dry-Fly Purist

to cause disagreements among the users of the sunken fly are reduced to a minimum.

And still harmony does not always reign supreme among members of the English floating fly fraternity. The dry-fly "purist," as he is known, casts his fly usually only when he sees a trout rising; he "stalks" the fish; if he sees a rise, he goes within casting distance of the spot, carefully places his fly so that it falls exactly where the trout had risen, or just above it, that the fly may float down over the fish. If he does not get a rise, it is not unusual for him to try a fly of a different pattern; if he finally gives up in his attempt to catch this particular trout, he looks for another rising fish, but does not make another cast until he again sees a rise. If no rises occur within his vision during the day, he

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does not wet his line. Some of this cult carry field-glasses with which they scan the surface of the stream.

These methods undoubtedly mark a very high type of sportsmanship in angling; perhaps I should be somewhat tempted to say the *highest* type of sportsmanship if I did not have reason to believe that our method of taking a fish that has not already *indicated its exact location* to the fisherman requires at least as much skill on the part of the angler as the purist's method of fishing the rise only, where the exact whereabouts of the fish is known. It seems to me that when an angler sees a rising fish, within casting distance, the battle is at least half won.

An American, with a mind capable of seeing humorous features in almost all things, and also at times not beyond the temptation of indulging in

Gloom by the Riverside

ridicule, may easily see an opening for poking fun at the disappointed purist, as he returns at evening without once having cast a fly during the day. In fact, he does not escape ridicule in England; he has been the victim of much sarcasm, even from some members of the British angling fraternity. Mr. G. E. M. Skues, a bright and at times sarcastic English writer, says, in his "Minor Tactics of the Chalk Stream": "I know of no sight more gloomy than that of a golfer painfully tramping from shot to shot. But perhaps the next gloomiest sight is the angler, who, with perhaps but a single day at his disposal, lounges hour by hour by the side of the main river, waiting with such patience as he can muster for the rise which comes not."

The strict purist, in turn, has retorted to those who are inclined to make of

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him a ridiculous figure, by calling all who do not adopt his methods "poachers." It would not be fair, however, to the British angler—men of the Halford type—to convey an impression that ill-natured criticism is common among the British sportsmen. I have read much of their literature, bearing on all sides of the question, and have found a general inclination to be tolerant of each other's opinions, and most courteous in their arguments. Their ideas of sportsmanship are high, a condition that I believe is very general among dry-fly anglers everywhere. The fascination of the game seems to be the attraction of this method of fishing, and not the "heavy creel" at the end of the day.

The purist's method of angling, sportsmanlike and praiseworthy though it may be, is not, I think, the style of

When Patience Has Its Limits

dry-fly fishing that would generally appeal to American anglers, even though conditions on our streams made it at all times possible. It is difficult to imagine an American fly-fisherman so patient that he would spend a day on the stream without casting a fly. In the first place, he enjoys the practice of casting, whether the fish rise or not. Then again, abundant experience has taught our American anglers that on some of our near-by streams they may often pass an entire day without seeing a trout rise at a natural insect. So the dry-fly angler of this country begins casting when he reaches the stream, more or less "for general results," as the Englishman might call it; but the work of an American expert is not always a bungling performance, and frequently there is very little "hit-or-miss" about it. He generally

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shows a keen knowledge of the habits of the trout, and where they should be lying in wait for their food. His methods may differ from those of the English purist in that instead of casting at the rise, he casts at those places where experience has taught him that the trout hide, live, and seek their food. There is nothing more skilful to be seen on a stream than the casting of a dry-fly expert. It is seldom except when watching them that I have seen flies "light like thistle-down"; or that I have been deceived for a moment into thinking that an artificial fly was a natural insect as it fluttered through the air to the surface of the water.

But no American fisherman familiar with English angling literature can help feeling admiration for the English dry-fly enthusiast's deep study of

Angling Entomologists

his favorite sport. The English expert is an entomologist and knows upon what insects the trout feed, and as a rule finds out what insect they are taking on that particular day and hour that he is on the stream; and from his fly box he selects a fly tied in exact imitation in form, size, and color of the living insect. How small a part has a knowledge of entomology played, as a general rule, in American trout fishing!

The dry-fly angler endeavors to present the fly to the fish in the most natural manner possible. He knows that weak, flying insects cannot swim against a current with the speed of a torpedo boat, and that they do not move about under the surface by starts and jerks. He reasons that if a winged insect is on the surface of a running stream it can have but one action; that is the motion imparted by the current. In other

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words, the fly simply *floats* on the surface of the water; and so his artificial lures came to be known as dry-flies or *floating* flies.

And from this comes the whole theory of dry-fly fishing, as described briefly at the beginning of this chapter: The exact imitation, and the fly that floats down-stream with a natural motion. If any movement is given to the fly, other than that imparted by the current, the dry-fly angler's theory is that the trout will look upon it as an entirely unnatural proceeding, something that it has discovered that live flies will not do, and that therefore the lure will have no attraction whatever for the fish.

CHAPTER III

*Largely Statistical, Describing
Rods, Lines, Leaders, Flies,
and Other Tackle*

AS to the equipment necessary for this method of fishing, the author will assume that the reader is thoroughly familiar with the proper clothing to wear, the several styles of wading trousers or wading stockings, landing-net, reel, creel, and various things of minor importance, and in discussing this part of the subject will confine himself principally to rods, lines, leaders, and flies.

The rod is generally and properly regarded as the most important part of a fisherman's outfit. There is nothing that can equal a good rod of split-

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bamboo. For dry-fly fishing the rod should have plenty of what is commonly known as "backbone"; that is, it should not be weak or "whippy." It may be nine, nine and one-half, or ten feet long, though, perhaps, the ten-foot rod is the favorite.* It is impossible to describe a rod adequately by merely giving weight for length, for the very simple reason that one nine-foot rod of six ounces may have much less power, backbone, and resiliency, than another of the same length weighing four and one-half ounces. What are known as four-ounce or five-ounce tournament rods, weighing four and three-quarter ounces and five and one-half or five and three-quarter ounces, respectively (an allowance of

* The favorite of all rods used by the author is nine feet long and weighs, with metal reel seat, four and three-quarter ounces.

Weights of Rods and Lines

three-quarters of an ounce is always made for a metal reel seat in fly-casting tournaments), are in my opinion ideal rods for the purpose. Not, however, that tournament rods are at all necessary. The author has several rods that were not built for tournament casting, but which are ideal for dry-fly fishing—one in particular, nine and one-half feet long, weighing five and one-half ounces, full of backbone, snap, and ginger, and easily capable of handling an English water-proofed D tapered line, a line much heavier than lines usually used in fishing. There are several reasons why a strong, powerful rod should be chosen for dry-fly work. A heavier line is used than is customary in ordinary fly-fishing, for reasons that will be explained; the rod is called upon to do much more work, for in using the dry-fly, after each cast

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there must be several casts in the air, or "false casts," for the purpose of dry-flying the fly, and lengthening the line before the insect again touches the water. Therefore the rod should be powerful, though not necessarily heavy; in fact, unless one likes to have a tired wrist at the end of the day, an unnecessarily heavy rod is anything but desirable. Incidentally it may be stated that it is a good plan always to select a reel of the exact weight to balance the rod perfectly, so that the rod does not feel top-heavy.

Expert anglers will advise without qualification an English water-proofed silk line for dry-fly fishing. It may, perhaps, hurt an American's pride to feel compelled to admit that while nothing can equal the best American-made split-bamboo rods, there has not as yet been produced a fly-line in

Lines Dressed in a Vacuum

this country that can compare with the best English product. These lines are expensive, but well worth the money they cost. Some anglers who would like to possess an English line feel that they cannot afford it; yet they can afford to go on expensive fishing trips. My advice would be to get the line, and to pay for it, if necessary, by reducing the duration of a fishing trip by one day. The line, having thus been paid for, will furnish pleasure for many other trips to come.

The English fly-lines are water-proofed in a vacuum, so that the "dressing" may permeate every fibre of the silk. Then they are rubbed down, and afterward dressed again. Just how many times this operation is repeated depends upon the make and quality of the line. The completed product is a line of great beauty,

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smoothness, and flexibility, and the angler who has not used one has a fresh pleasure before him in fly-casting. As to the size of the line, the same thing that was said of "weight for length" in rods may be said of lines, changing the expression to "weight for size." In a line it is the weight that counts; and lines of different makes designated by the letters D, E, or F, vary both in size and in weight. It is probable, however, that the beginner in dry-fly fishing will be perfectly safe if he buys an E line, though I often use with much pleasure the heavier D line. Some may look upon a trout line of this size as suitable only for tournament work, and be inclined to criticise its use on the streams. They may be right. But if the reader will bear with me for a moment I think that the proposition will seem more reasonable to him: In

The Line Must Fit the Rod

the first place, the author does not believe in "far-off" casting, excepting when absolutely necessary. The D line tapers gradually for from fifteen to eighteen feet from its largest diameter to a very fine diameter at the end; to this is attached a nine-foot leader, so that before one begins to use the thickest length of the line he already has from twenty-four to twenty-seven feet of finer line and leader out. Then on his long casts he begins to avail himself of the driving power of the heaviest part of the line. Perhaps, however, it will be more sensible for the beginner to buy an E line, but by all means it should be tapered. And remember that the line must be neither too heavy nor too light for the rod. It should, in other words, "fit" the rod exactly.

Next in importance comes the leader. There are various opinions as to

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whether this necessary article should be tapered or not, and also as to the exact length that should be used. The beginner may study all these things out on the streams, and be guided both by his own experience and that of expert anglers whom he may meet. It is safe to say that a large majority of dry-fly anglers both in England and America use a tapered leader nine feet long, and dry-fly leaders are commonly listed in this way in nearly all catalogues. It is true that a long, light leader is difficult to manage against a strong head-wind, and in these weather conditions a leader of six feet might be better. The conventional dry-fly leader is tapered, and is rather coarse at the line end, tapering down from fine drawn gut to the finest undrawn at the end to which the fly is tied. Personally I prefer the fine undrawn gut

English and American Flies

ends or points to the drawn gut for general fishing.

It is generally a pleasure to an American writer to do all American products full justice, and not to advocate the purchase abroad of things that are made in this country of equal quality. I have unhesitatingly advised my readers to buy English lines, but I am in much doubt as to what to say about the purchase of flies. Of course, England is the home—the birthplace, so to speak—of the floating fly, and its use in this country has been so limited that American fly-tiers have not had sufficient encouragement to make efforts to put upon the market a product that can compete in quality with the English floating insect, or to attempt to tie flies in imitation of insects found upon American streams. So personally, I think that our most

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expert dry-fly fishermen generally use flies of English make. There has been much more interest in the dry-fly in this country recently than ever before, and some of our dealers have imported English dry-flies of the best quality, and have put them on the market at reasonable prices. They should be encouraged in this good work. As to the flies themselves, it has already been made plain that they are "tied dry"; that is, so that they will float. It is therefore necessary that the bodies of dry-flies shall be made of materials that will float readily, and that will not become water-soaked easily. There are certain objections to the use of silk, as most of it changes color when wet, and the "dubbing" commonly used for the bodies of wet flies, becomes quickly water-soaked and the fly consequently loses its buoyancy; so that now Mr.

Fly-Dressing Materials

Halford recommends quill, horse-hair, and Rofia grass for dressing the bodies of floating flies. This, however, is a subject that properly belongs to the fly-dressers' art and need not be enlarged upon in a book of instruction in the use of the fly.

CHAPTER IV

*Showing that Americans May Use
the Dry-Fly, Though There is No
American Fly-Fisher's Entomology*

WHILE perhaps American anglers as a rule have suffered no particular inconvenience from being compelled to use English patterns, yet who would not feel much more pride if Americans were able to procure flies of the highest class tied in imitation of the insects found upon our own streams? But there is one obstacle that seems to make this impossible at present. In 1836, seventy-six years ago, Mr. Alfred Ronalds gave to the English angling world a very complete entomology, containing the names

Nature Imitated Accurately

of forty-six flies commonly found upon the English streams, which formed a large part of the insect food of their trout. Very careful drawings of these insects were made, and in the book the plates were hand-colored to resemble the natural fly in every particular. Side by side with the natural insects were plates of the imitation flies, also hand-colored. In 1886, Mr. Halford published one of his celebrated works, "Floating Flies and How to Dress Them," and in this book were shown ninety artificial patterns, all dressed from the natural insects, and in the *de luxe* edition hand-colored. In 1897, Mr. Halford gave to anglers another work, his "Dry-Fly Entomology," containing one hundred patterns. The great accuracy aimed at by Mr. Halford in all his entomological studies may be understood when we

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learn that he in no case was satisfied that he had the correct type of any insect until he had secured at least two hundred specimens of that insect, all taken from the water and none from the air. In America it is doubtless true that many anglers have examined carefully various insects they have seen on our trout streams, but no one apparently has carried his investigations so far as to make them of practical value to a large number of his fellow anglers.

But still this situation does not make the successful use of the dry-fly on American streams impossible or even inadvisable. The favorite English-made floating flies are imitations of the Ephemeridæ, and there seems to be little doubt that many of the duns found upon the streams of England also exist on American waters. Whether

A Word About Size of Fly

English dry-flies, tied to resemble English insects, imitate exactly in all points similar insects common to American streams is a mooted question, owing to the fact that we have no American authority; but there is little question that they resemble them closely in important particulars, such as size, shape, and general color. In shape, the duns are precisely similar. One of the most important things is *action*, by which is meant that a dry-fly shall float down exactly as a living insect would float, and that depends entirely upon the skill of the angler and not upon the make of the fly.

It is perhaps worthy of mention that the majority of American dry-fly anglers have a belief that the use of a slightly larger fly than is used in England, tied on a larger hook, is advisable on our streams. Mr. Dewar, the Eng-

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lish writer, advises the use of as large a hook as possible even on English streams, meaning, of course, a hook that is not too large to prevent at least an approximate resemblance to the live insect. A larger hook is certainly more sure to engage itself in the fish's mouth than one of the little 000, 00, or 0 hooks so commonly used by British anglers. It is held by Mr. LaBranche and other American anglers that it is much more difficult to keep very small flies in a "floating condition" than flies somewhat larger. In England, where they fish the rise almost exclusively, the fly is on the water but infrequently, and has plenty of opportunity to dry. But we fish "likely spots," and the fly is floating a large part of the time. Hence the difficulty of keeping the small fly long in a sufficiently dry condition to float properly.

An Aid to Floatability

To increase the floating power of the dry-fly it is customary to "paraffin" the flies from time to time. For this purpose it is well for the angler to carry with him on the stream a small bottle of paraffin oil, or one of the several preparations made especially for this purpose. It will also pay to buy a small "dry-fly oiler" made to hold this oil when on the streams. After tying the fly to the leader, the angler should put a small quantity of oil on the hackles and on the body of the fly. A rag, an old handkerchief, or a folded piece of blotting-paper, is used with which to "squeeze out" the superfluous oil.

The majority of dry-fly anglers also own a small tin of deer fat. With it they grease their line occasionally, or at least from ten to thirty feet of it. The deer fat is best put on the line

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with the thumb and forefinger of one hand, and the line is then carefully rubbed down with a soft rag to remove the superfluous fat. The purpose of using deer fat is to make the line float more readily. It also preserves the line and keeps it soft and flexible.

In the series of magazine articles already referred to, entitled "Practical Dry-Fly Fishing for Beginners," the author explained just what he had in mind when he used the word "beginner"; and as this book is intended merely to carry out the idea that inspired his first writings on the subject, namely, to lend a helping hand to the dry-fly beginner, it may not be out of place to close this chapter with a quotation from that article:

While it has been made plain that these words are written for the beginner only, yet I hope that

A Dry-Fly Beginner Defined

the exact type of beginner that I have in mind will be equally well understood; he is not the tyro who has never as yet had the pleasure of using a fly-rod, or the man who has no knowledge of trout streams or the habits of trout. I assume that those who have asked me to write these instructions are already good anglers. It is my hope that this article will be of assistance to those who are fly-fishermen, but who have not as yet tasted the pleasures of luring the trout with the dry-fly. It is not difficult to believe that the step from the expert wet fly fisherman to the dry-fly expert is a comparatively short one, and easily accomplished by one willing to devote some thought to the subject, and some time to practising on the streams. In this way it is probable that all our best American dry-fly anglers have become experts. They have first been expert wet fly anglers; then their attention has been drawn to the dry-fly; they have received a few "points" from friends—enough to start with; they have practised on the streams, perhaps somewhat crudely at first; they have read much of the very fine literature written in England upon the subject; they have been quick to understand the methods used by our English cousins; they have adapted and changed the English ideas to meet the conditions upon our streams, and in a comparatively short time they have become successively our pioneers and our experts in dry-fly angling.

CHAPTER V

Up-Stream Fishing, Methods of Casting, and Some Condensed Rules for Using the Floating Fly

IT has already been noticed, possibly, what a part naturalness plays in dry-fly fishing; we have learned that the fly is an exact imitation of the natural insect; it must be presented to the trout in an absolutely natural manner, and when the fly is on the water it must have a natural motion. We do not merely *hope* that by some lucky chance the trout may take the feathered lure for “something good to eat” without knowing exactly the nature of the food presented; the trout must see that the fly is an insect upon which it has fed many times before;

By All Means, Fish Up-Stream

it must light on the water as it has seen thousands of other insects light; it must float down the stream in precisely the same manner that it has been accustomed all its life to see other insects float with the current. In other words, the very naturalness of the entire game must deceive the trout completely.

The dry-fly angler must fish up-stream, or up and across stream, and the beginner will make no mistake in following this advice blindly without being influenced by the arguments pro and con by some wet fly fishermen as to whether it is better to fish up-stream or down. True it is not always desirable that you cast directly ahead of you on the stream, so that you may risk "lining the fish" as it lies with its head up-stream. By this is meant casting the fly above the trout so that the

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leader falls directly over its head and body, thus placing the fly, the head and tail of the fish, and the angler in a straight line. Usually trout are "gut shy." It is obvious that the fish may get a good view of the leader before it sees the fly, or that it may see the fly and leader simultaneously.

Before taking our first trip to the stream, even at the risk of repetition, it may be well to recapitulate and bring together the principal rules of dry-fly fishing that have been already mentioned in a general way. (1) Use but one fly and that an imitation of a natural insect, and a fly that floats. (2) Cast this fly up-stream, at or slightly above a spot where you know there is a trout from having seen it rise, or a spot where your "fish sense" tells you that a trout may be. (3) Let the fly float down with no motion whatever

Some Rules, Briefly Stated

except that naturally imparted by the current. (4) After the fly has floated well below the place where you think the trout may lie, lift it very gently from the water and prepare for the next cast. (5) Make at least three or four false casts in the air, both to dry your fly and to lengthen your line, and do not let the fly touch the water again until you see that it will strike the exact spot that you have picked out for it to land. (6) If you "bungle" your cast—that is, if the fly does not light on the right spot, or if it does not light properly, with wings nicely "cocked" in the air, do not immediately remove the fly from the water with a jerk; let it float down as if you had made the best cast possible, and then lift it out gently as before. By following this course you will lessen much the chances of frightening the

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trout, which may take the fly at the next cast as if nothing out of the usual had happened.

“Dry casts,” or “false casts,” play a most important part in dry-fly fishing, and are seldom used by fishermen who are not accustomed to this method of angling. In wet fly fishing it is customary to lift the fly or flies from the water, and after the back-cast to make immediately another forward cast, again placing the lure or lures on the water. But it is one of the cardinal principles of dry-fly fishing not to allow the fly to touch the water until it has reached the exact spot previously picked out by the angler. The line is always lengthened by false casts, or casts in the air, and the fly is not allowed to touch the surface of the stream until the angler sees that it will reach the desired position. The

False Casts to Dry the Fly

dry-fly, in order to float readily, must always be kept as free from superfluous moisture as possible. Therefore, after each cast the fly must be driven through the air several times, and when the fly gets very wet, many times. As a rule three or four false casts will be sufficient to dry the fly; at other times, when for some reason the fly has become thoroughly soaked, twenty or thirty trips through the air may be necessary.

In order to become a proficient fly-fisherman the angler must learn to use his left hand skilfully in manipulating the line. The reel is an absolute necessity for holding the line, and for taking it in when there is too much line out for convenience. But in retrieving it, after a cast up-stream, the reel must not be depended upon, but the line must be *stripped in* with the

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left hand (assuming that the angler holds the rod in his right hand). In other words, the line at practically all times should be grasped by the fingers of the left hand of the angler, while between the reel and the first guide of the rod it should pass under the first and second fingers of the right hand, and these fingers, pressing the line against the cork grip, are in a position to act as a brake which always controls and regulates the rendering of the line.

Of the general methods of fly-casting much has been written and much has been explained. And yet perfect casters are rarely to be seen on the streams. This is a pity, as ability to cast adds greatly to the pleasure of angling and is an art easily acquired. At times one casts all day, while the fish caught are few and far between.

Advice on Skilful Casting

The unsuccessful angler has much more satisfaction in feeling that his work has been skilfully performed than he would have if in doubt as to whether his lack of success had been due to a scarcity of feeding fish, or to a series of bungling performances on his part. To become a good caster is simple if one learns a few of the first principles of handling the rod and line. One of the greatest faults of anglers who have difficulty in making accurate or long casts is that on the back cast they allow the point of the rod to go entirely too far behind them. Some angling writers—many, in fact—who undertake the task of teaching beginners, advise them to let the rod go back until it reaches an angle of forty-five degrees. To do so is a grievous fault. The rod should be stopped when it has barely passed the perpendicular. In

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wet fly angling it is usually proper to remove the fly from the water with a snap; the backward movement of the rod is stopped when slightly beyond a perpendicular position; there is a pause long enough to allow the line to straighten out behind, and then the forward cast is begun; not much strength is used, but the spring of the rod is allowed to do practically all the work. If the man who has not been able to cast well will practice along these lines, he will be astonished to find how far he will soon be able to place his fly, and how easily and accurately he can make any length of cast necessary in actual fishing.

To cast the floating fly, first strip from the reel with the left hand a few feet of line. Work the rod backward and forward, holding the tip well up, and allow the fly to move back and

What the Rod Should Do

forth in the air without touching the water. Meanwhile, keep stripping off line until the desired length has been taken from the reel. But do not swing your rod violently as if you were trying to beat a carpet with it; let its movements be gentle and graceful. The wrist and spring of the rod should do all the work. Allow the tip to describe only a small arc; that is, let it go only slightly beyond the perpendicular on either the forward or the back cast. Gentle movements of the rod in the air are far less liable to alarm the trout than quick, violent motions. Before the series of false casts has been begun the angler is supposed to have picked out some particular spot on the water where he thinks there is a fish, and therefore desires to place his fly. He keeps his eyes on the fly as it goes through the air, and when he sees that

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there is a sufficient length of line out he lets the imitation insect fall gently upon the water. Then he allows the fly to float wherever the current takes it. If the lure has fallen as it should fall, it sits on the water, with its little wings nicely "cocked," or upright in the air, and it looks for all the world like a natural member of the Ephemeridæ family off for a little sight-seeing trip. As the fly is coming down-stream and toward the angler, it is necessary to strip in the slack line, but this should be done carefully, for no unnatural motion must be imparted to the insect, or a trout seeing it will look upon it with a mind full of suspicion.

While the theory of making a fly light gently upon the water has been told many times, yet, as this book may fall into the hands of some beginners who do not know how to do it, it may

Making a Fly Light Gently

be well to repeat the instructions here: Do not cast for the spot *on* the water where you desire the fly to fall, but at a point in the air a few feet *above* this spot. This is a useful thing to know, as dry-flies must not hit the water with a splash.

And now, if your first cast has not been successful in every way—if the fly has fallen on its side instead of “cocked”—it may be a consolation to the beginner to know that the most expert anglers cannot always control the position that the fly will assume when it reaches the water; but the expert will not lose patience and retrieve the fly too quickly, for he has had too much experience to alarm the trout unnecessarily.

CHAPTER VI

Tying an Eyed-Fly to a Leader, and Some Practice on a Hypo- thetical Pool

THERE are still many technical and tactical points that properly might be discussed before we accompany the novice to the stream to cast his first dry-fly, but perhaps after having read the preceding pages, devoted largely to a description of methods used in handling the fly, the beginner may think that the information already gained is sufficient to warrant at least some preliminary practice on the stream.

As flies tied to gut have been largely used by American fly-fishermen, and as nearly all floating flies are tied on eyed-hooks, I have met many anglers

Tying an Eyed-Fly to Gut

who have professed entire ignorance of the way, or ways, of attaching eyed-flies to leaders. There are various methods of doing this, and they are all extremely simple when once learned. Several knots that are efficacious may be found illustrated in many angling books and tackle catalogues. After having lost several large fish in my earliest experiences with eyed-hooks, I then and there became prejudiced against some of the knots used by anglers in favor of what is known as Major Turle's knot. At times I have been criticised for using this, on the ground that it is not as simple as some others; but in the case of minor details, each angler is apt to think that his own way of doing things is the best, and after some criticisms from experts for whose opinions on most matters relating to the dry-fly I have

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much respect, I have found satisfaction in the fact that the knot I have used for several years is that recommended by Mr. Halford and many other authorities. Though other knots, when properly tied, doubtless hold as well as Major Turle's, yet, having once tied a fly to a leader with the Turle knot, I have a feeling that the fly is there to stay until taken off or until the gut breaks. It seems almost unnecessary to caution the reader not to attempt to tie a fly to a leader until the gut is thoroughly soaked, but to make assurance doubly sure I will do so. The Turle knot is made as follows:

The end of the gut (there is no loop on the fly end) is put through the eye of the fly, and an ordinary slipknot tied, as in Fig. 1. The loop is then carefully pushed over the bend of the

How the Turle Knot Is Tied

hook and over the wings, clearing both wings and hackles, as in Figs. 2 and 3. It is then pulled tight as in Fig. 4. It



FIG. 1



FIG 2



FIG. 3



FIG 4

will be seen that the knot does not go through the eye of the fly, while the loop is pulled tight between the head of the fly and the eye of the hook. Last, cut off the loose end, *E* (Fig. 4.)

We have already learned that dry-fly

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fishing was originally invented in England for use on slow, clear, placid streams, and as comparatively smooth water is often considered more or less necessary to the successful floating of the fly, our first practice will be made upon a pool. For the sake of simplicity we will say that the pool is of more or less regular shape, some twenty feet long, and in the neighborhood of ten feet wide; also for our purpose we will assume that it is all good trout water, from head to tail and from bank to bank. While the surface of the water is not ruffled, yet there is a fairly good current, slightly swifter at the centre of the stream than near the banks. We are supposed to have already fished the waters below the tail of the pool, so we need pay no attention to them now.

We are wading, and we take our stand a few feet below the pool, a

The First Cast on a Pool

short distance from the left bank, or, as we are fishing up-stream, from the bank at our right. It is a good rule to cover carefully all promising water, and, that we may not disturb any trout in good water before we fish it, our first cast is over the water nearest to us. Stripping some line from the reel with our left hand, we make a few casts in the air to lengthen the line so that the fly may be able to reach our objective point, which in this case—our first cast—is near the bank at our right, and from three to five feet above the tail of the pool. The fly lights gently and is allowed to float with the current until it reaches the end of the pool. Meanwhile, as the fly comes toward us, we are stripping in the slack line with our left hand, but so deliberately and gently that we do not in any case “drag” the fly.

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The "drag" is most fatal to the success of the dry-fly angler, and, with the methods of overcoming it, will be discussed at some length in another chapter. We have already discovered that one of the basic principles of dry-fly fishing is the natural motion of the insect on the surface of the stream, and if this motion, or action of the fly, is disturbed by interfering causes, one might as well give up hope of taking a fish until another cast has been made.

When ready to make the second cast in our pool, draw in your mind's eye an imaginary line, beginning at the spot where you made your first cast, straight across the pool to the other bank. Again make the necessary number of false casts, both to dry the fly and to lengthen the line, and then let the fly drop on the imaginary line, but

Imaginary Lines on a Pool

this time about a foot to the left of your first cast. Go through the same operations of allowing the fly to float down to the foot of the pool, lifting the fly from the water, making your false casts in the air, and let the third cast be about a foot to the left of the second cast, and on the same imaginary line running across the pool, and repeat these operations until your fly has reached the opposite bank. Then lengthen the line still further (and you can now also probably advance carefully a step or two up-stream) and let the next cast be near the bank at the right, but a few feet above the spot where the first cast was made. Draw another imaginary line across the stream parallel with the first one, from the point where the fly dropped on the water on this cast. Allow the fly to float down, this time not neces-

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sarily to the foot of the pool, but well below the imaginary line across which you made the first series of casts; in other words, do not remove the fly until it has reached water that has been already fished. Continue across and up the pool in this way until all the water has been entirely covered. You can readily see that the fly has floated over nearly every square foot of the pool, and that the casts have been so made that no unfished water has been disturbed.

This is only a general scheme for fishing a pool. It must be understood that where distances in feet are given it is only to illustrate a point, as the distances between casts will depend largely upon circumstances and will be determined by our own judgment. Apparently I have allowed for only one cast at each good spot. But in practice

Advantages of Many Casts

this by no means follows. While in England, where many purists cast only at rising trout, not more than two or three casts are usually made at any one fish; yet generally the American dry-fly angler has adopted entirely different rules. Some of our experts, when they see a spot where they feel sure that a good trout may be feeding, cast in the same place over and over again. There are well authenticated cases where a trout has apparently paid no attention to a dry-fly until twenty or thirty casts have been made, and then has come for it with a rush.

Though I know that this doctrine is diametrically opposed to the theories of some English experts who have practised the art of dry-fly fishing on the English chalk streams for thirty or forty years, or even more, yet at the present time it would be impossible to

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convince many American anglers that it is not advisable on our streams to cast over promising water until one is well satisfied that the trout supposed to be there is beyond hope of being lured to the surface at that particular time. One of my acquaintances, who had been a successful dry-fly fisherman for more than a quarter of a century, caught his first large trout with the dry-fly, after a day of discouragement, on the thirty-sixth cast, all the casts being made at one spot in the pool; and he met with this first success only after having been compelled by Mr. LaBranche, who was standing by his side, to cast over this trout until he got it.

In the author's make-up there may be something akin to obstinacy that often makes him linger long below a particularly alluring stretch of water,

Optimism on the Stream

though the looked-for rises come not; or the compelling force may be a very persistent kind of hopefulness, or an enlarged optimism that exhibits itself in a marked degree when he is casting a fly in which he thoroughly believes. Sometimes the resulting persistence is rewarded, as in the following case: On the Willowemoc one day I came to a most enticing little run, the deep water being only about two or three feet wide and four or five feet in depth, flowing swiftly but smoothly along the edge of an elongated brush heap close to the bank. Being in a persistent and optimistic mood, and believing that there must be a good trout in such a delightful stretch of water, I determined to remain there until the fish had been brought around to my way of thinking. For half an hour I floated fly after fly over its supposed

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feeding place, resting the water from time to time, and then sat down to think it over, deciding after a few more casts to go on up-stream. In what I had decided would be the final endeavor, probably from fifteen to twenty casts had been made, when I was rewarded by the rise of a trout of just about the size that I had imagined must be lurking in such a splendid run. Mr. H. G. McClelland, the author of a bright little English work on artificial flies, advances the theory that flies may be "cast and recast so as to create the idea that flies of this sort are passing over the fish in large numbers." While the author thoroughly believes in the idea of floating a fly many times over a spot where the angler is convinced that a good trout lies, yet it should be remembered that the utmost degree of skill must be shown to make every cast

Skill vs. Trout Cunning

so perfect that not even twenty or thirty casts at the same spot will arouse the suspicions of the cunning trout.

CHAPTER VII

*In which the Beginner Visits a
Real Pool from which a Few
Trout Are Taken*

THE first casts of our beginner, accompanied by the author, have been made on an imaginary pool; and from its description it might be properly considered a purely mathematical or hypothetical pool, almost rectangular in shape. There is a little *real* pool, on a stream in Sullivan County, which frequently occupies a place in the author's thoughts, because he first cast a fly on its placid surface when he was rapidly reaching the end of the transition period marking the parting of the ways between the wet fly angler and

Wet Flies on Dry-Fly Water

the enthusiastic devotee of the floating fly. It is interesting, also, as having furnished a notable example of the great efficacy of the dry-fly at a time when the sunken lure had proved entirely unavailing.

Toward the end of a May afternoon, I approached a very beautiful pool, though a small one, and when less than a hundred yards below it, saw another angler, a wet fly fisherman, nearing it from above; much to my disappointment, I must confess, as it was typical dry-fly water. I had not been particularly successful for some time, and had approached this pool with much eagerness. There was nothing for me to do, under the circumstances, but to sit on a large rock below the pool and watch the work of the stranger, and after seeing him place his flies several times I judged him to be no bungler

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in his favorite method of fishing. This opinion was confirmed later when I learned that he had the reputation of being an expert, and had fished this particular stream for years. After he had covered the pool thoroughly, he sat beside me and told the story of his day's work. He had fished since 5.30 A. M., and up to this time—about 5.30 P. M.—had caught only two trout, neither of them much above the legal limit; in the pretty pool, lying almost at our feet, he had not had a rise. The water was extremely low, and for several feet on the right-hand side of the pool (properly the left-hand bank, but on the right hand to one fishing upstream) large areas of the bed of the stream were entirely bare. There was left in the centre and on the left-hand side a run of fairly deep water, only a few feet in width. After comparing

The Dry-Fly's Allurements

notes with the down-stream angler, the author picked up his rod and approached the foot of the pool to see if the dry-fly might not prove more alluring to some of the trout that any fisherman would naturally suppose must live in such a pretty pool. At the head of the pool the stream came tumbling down in the form of a miniature water-fall through a narrow space between rocks. The accompanying diagram (Fig 5) gives a fair idea of this pool. In the shaded portions between the dotted lines and the banks the water was shallow, the fishable part of the pool being the channel between the dotted lines.

The method of fishing such a pool has been outlined in the description of our hypothetical pool, and the various casts are indicated in the diagram by the numerous letters *X*, each *X* indi-

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cating a spot where the fly was placed. The places indicated by the letters *O*, show the various positions taken by the angler as he moved up-stream. The first three casts were at the very beginning of the good water, and a rise was hardly expected. These might well be called preliminary casts. But hope began to rise in the angler's breast as the second series of casts was begun; and with reason, for as the fly touched the water at the second cast of this series (indicated by *A*), a rainbow trout of about ten inches rose to the fly and missed. The pool was then covered carefully by the series of casts shown in the diagram, and there was not another sign of a fish until the fly had reached the position *B*, where a twelve-inch brown trout was hooked, and before it had recovered from its astonishment had been rapidly and forcibly

Method of Fishing a Pool

led down to the water below the rock
M; for the angler naturally argued

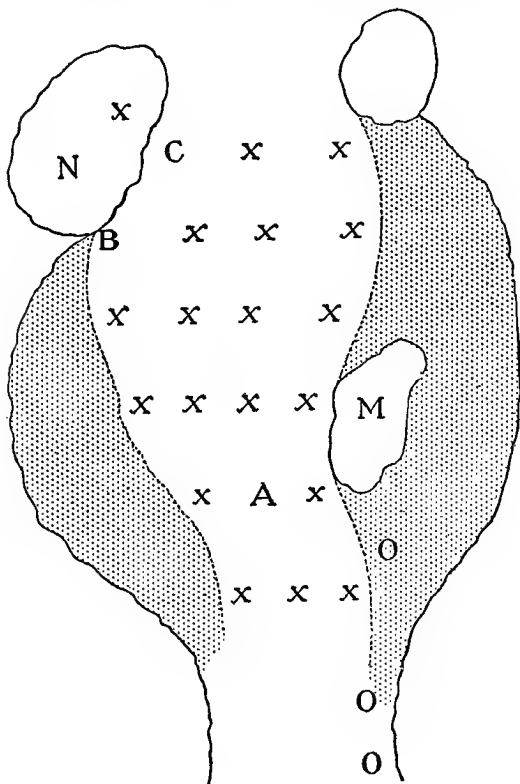


FIG. 5

Practical Dry-Fly Fishing

that if there was a twelve-inch fish at *B*, there might be a better one at the head of the pool, and it was advisable to "play" the fish hooked as far away from the upper part of the pool as possible. One side of the rock indicated by the letter *N* sloped gradually down to the surface of the stream. The fly was next cast upon the shelving side of this rock and allowed to slide downward until it fell from the rock to the surface of the water, lighting most gently, and with exactly the same action that a natural insect would have had in similar circumstances. As soon as it touched the surface of the stream at *C*, a brown trout of fourteen inches took the fly with a rush. The net results of a few minutes' fishing in this little pool were two trout landed and one missed.

It is perhaps unnecessary to add

A Convert to the Dry-Fly

that the wet fly angler, who had been an interested spectator, then and there became an enthusiast over the floating lure, and departed on his journey downstream the happy possessor of a dozen or two of the best English floating flies.

CHAPTER VIII

*How the Dry-fly May Be Used
on Rough Waters as Well as
on Placid Pools*

EVEN in fishing the little pool that we have just left we have violated the principles of some of the English dry-fly purists, and now that we are approaching swifter and rougher water to fish it with the dry-fly, we are about to make a still more radical departure from the English purist's methods. But, however much the British dry-fly fisherman might protest from a distance that he would not in any circumstances imitate American anglers in putting the floating fly to such uses, yet I am almost convinced that if he were to cast a fly

The Typical Chalk Stream

upon some of our American streams he would soon give up his idea of fishing only the rise, and would begin to fish the stream.

A study of many pictures of the well-known English chalk streams leads me to believe that it is the character of the streams themselves that makes his method feasible and also natural. To make a mental picture of a typical English chalk stream, recall in your mind one of our little country brooks, winding gently through a flat meadow, and then enlarge it several times. Many photographs of English chalk streams show long, broad stretches of smooth water. Within the purist's vision, as he stands upon the bank scanning carefully the stream, are sometimes many hundreds of feet of this placid water, and to one who has studied photographs of these streams,

Practical Dry-Fly Fishing

without having seen the streams themselves, one stretch of water looks about as good as another from an angler's stand-point, though of course they, too, have their particularly favorable spots.

In contrast with these wide, smooth chalk streams, imagine yourself on the bank of a typical Sullivan County trout stream and note the difference in the general conditions. It is true that at intervals there are long, smooth pools. But as the angler stands in almost any position on one of these streams, what appears before him as he looks up over the stream? Long stretches of swift water tumbling over a rocky bed, with here and there little surfaces of smooth water, above, below, or between rows of rocks, and at rather rare intervals a good pool. If one stationed himself on the banks of a stream like this, determined not to wet his line until he

Waiting Long for a Rise

had seen a rise, how long would he be compelled to wait before making his first cast? Perhaps not more than a minute, because rises sometimes occur. But, as a rule, the delay would be long and tedious. If a purist had stationed himself below the little pool described in the last chapter to wait for a rise at that spot, he would have had to depend upon this bit of water alone for the rise, for the pool was so situated that there was no other part of the stream within the vision of the waiting angler where there would be any likelihood of his seeing a rising fish. If the English purist had to depend entirely upon such water for his sport, would he not adopt our American method of fishing the stream rather than waiting for the rising fish? I am inclined to think so.

It also seems to the author that the

Practical Dry-Fly Fishing

English dry-fly angler's custom of fishing smooth water almost exclusively is responsible for the belief, extensively held, that the floating fly is not suitable for our American streams. But suppose that conditions were suddenly changed; imagine for a moment that the English chalk streams ceased to exist in their present form, and were replaced by the more turbulent American streams, presenting rare opportunities of seeing a rising fish. Would the English purist give up his favorite sport, or pass many days in looking for a rise that came not? Or would he make a study of the parts of the stream most likely to be the feeding places of trout, and begin casting over them, taking a chance of enticing a fish to his fly, though he had not previously seen a rise?

Granting, then, that it is not only

Fishing the Rough Waters

entirely proper, but advisable, for the American angler to fish the stream instead of fishing the rise, the proposition may be advanced confidently that the dry-fly is almost as tempting in luring trout from more or less swift, rough water, as it is in taking them from the pools. All who have been on trout streams can remember many places where there are barriers formed by a row or group of rocks in the centre of the stream, the tops of some of them rising above the surface, others entirely covered. The swift water comes rushing down upon one of these barriers, over the rocks, between them, and around them. Above and below the rocks are splendid lurking places for feeding fish. We approach one of these groups of rocks carefully from downstream, and cast our fly at one side of the rocks and below them, allowing it

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to float down as far as advisable before making another cast. One cast follows another across the stream until we have covered all the good water below the rocks. Whether successful or not in taking a fish from this water, we now begin casting about two or three feet above the rocks, first to the left of them, then directly above them, and then to the right of them, letting our fly float down past the rocks before lifting it from the water, endeavoring to tempt any trout that may be watching for food from any of these strongholds.

Now a short distance above these rocks there is a stretch of very swift water, more or less rough. We know that at certain times such water is the delight of the wet fly angler, but how about the dry-fly man? Let us wait and see. We are still near the right bank of the stream (the left as we look

A Dry-Fly Changes Its Rôle

up-stream), and so we first let our fly drop on this swift water, near the bank to our left. Bing! A fine rainbow trout rose at the first cast, but we missed it, either because we failed to see the quick flash of the fish under water, or because we did not strike quickly enough. For the dry-fly—what became of it? When it touched the surface it did its best to play its dignified part of a dry-fly, it skipped along over the turbulent stream for a moment, but the water was too rough and strong for it to keep afloat, it was sucked under, and, therefore, became the wet fly that we have been accustomed to use. Not exactly the same, perhaps, for this dry-fly, though now wet and sunken, still retains its character as an imitation of a natural insect. Having had some success with our very first cast in swift water, we will continue

Practical Dry-Fly Fishing

to fish every inch of these rapids, letting the fly go where it listeth, playing the part of the wet fly or the dry-fly, but always resembling the living insect which it so closely imitates.

It is somewhat astonishing at times to see over what rough water a dry-fly can float successfully. The inequalities of the surface of a stream, of course, depend upon the roughness of the bottom. Sometimes the water rushes down with its surface broken into what appear to be small waves, more or less regular in shape. It is a pretty sight to watch a dry-fly coming down over such water, apparently almost skipping from wave to wave; and the action of the fly at this time seems to be tremendously enticing to any fish that may see it.

If the angler uses his powers of observation he will notice that in almost

Casting on Glassy Glides

all stretches of rough water, however swift and turbulent, there are little smooth spots that might be properly called glassy glides.* Cast your fly at the top of one of these glides, and it will float perfectly until it is seized by a trout or reaches the turbulent water.

While the fly will often float successfully over a rough surface, yet, if it is sucked under, the angler is certainly in no worse position than the user of the sunken fly under his very best conditions. After having been through these swift waters, the fly may have a bedraggled appearance, and look like anything but the natty insect, with wings erect, that it was when first taken from the fly box. The angler should take an old handkerchief, or

* This idea of fishing these glassy glides with a dry-fly appeared in an article written in 1911 by Mr. Walter McGuckin, one of New York's best dry-fly anglers.

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rag, and squeeze the fly in its folds to get out some of the water that it has absorbed, and then, putting it close to his mouth, blow into its feathers and hackles. This will restore to the hackles their old "fluffy" appearance.

Next, he should straighten out the wings and coax them into shape with the fingers, finally oiling the fly again when approaching smooth water.

One of the beauties of fishing the rough stretches is the very near approach to the fish that may be made by the careful angler, and the advantages and possibilities of close fishing will form the subject of a little talk in a subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER IX

*That Cruel Thing, the "Drag,"
and How Its Evil Effects May
Be Overcome*

HAVING learned the great part that naturalness plays in dry-fly angling, and that the action of the fly upon the water must resemble in all ways the movements of a live insect similarly placed, we now come, in the regular course of events, to that bane of the dry-fly fisherman, the "drag." It is easy to say that the fly must at all times float downstream naturally with no other motion than that imparted by the current; but, while nothing impedes the life-like action of the living insect, we cannot overlook the fact that the little imi-

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tation fly labors under the disadvantage of having attached to it leader and line, and that these impediments to its freedom of movement often tax to the utmost the skill of the angler.

“But what a cruel thing is that which has been well named the ‘drag,’” exclaims Mr. Dewar. “Trout do not like even natural insects to play pranks on the water,” he says. “The drag is one of the greatest protections in rather fast running streams that Nature affords the trout against the dry-fly fishermen.”

Imagine for a moment a little live dun on the surface of a rapidly flowing stream. It is tiny, delicate in construction, as light as a piece of thistle-down, and to resist even the weakest current is as powerless as a small child would be if thrown into the Niagara whirlpool. It must go wherever the

A Frail Dun's Helplessness

currents, varying in swiftness and in direction, take it. Floating down over a swift run, it is now in an eddy, now in a swirling whirlpool. Like a little piece of buoyant cork, it follows only the motions of the current. Now let us imagine that instead of being absolutely free from all restraint, the insect had tied around its delicate neck a long leader, to whose other end was attached a somewhat heavy line. Suppose this line to be lying in a swifter current, or in a current having a different direction from the current urging on the fly. How long could the frail dun keep up the natural motion given to it by the eddy or whirlpool upon whose moving surface it temporarily found itself? The strong down-stream current would seize the line, and the action of the fly would depend, not upon the movements of the eddying

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water upon which it lay, but upon the force exerted by the current upon the line, and without power of resistance it would be dragged wherever the line happened to take it. The same thing would occur in the case of the imitation insect forming the angler's floating lure.

These unnatural motions given to the fly by the varying and conflicting forces exerted upon the fly and line give rise to what anglers call the drag. This drag may occur when the line is in swifter water than the fly, when it is in a slower current than the fly, or when there is a difference in the directions of the currents. The drag frequently makes itself evident when one casts across stream or up-stream and across. Near the opposite bank where the fly is placed the current may be sluggish, while in the centre of the

How the Drag Is Caused

stream it rushes along swiftly. The line falls on this fast running water; the fly, if unattached to a leader, would pursue its way leisurely down-stream, wherever the slowly flowing currents naturally took it, but the gentle force exerted upon the small insect is almost immediately overcome by the powerful pull of the line, and instead of following its own natural course a very evident drag sets in.

In Fig. 6, *O* represents the position of the angler, *A* the place where the fly lights, and *F* the spot where the strong midstream current exerts its greatest force upon the line. The natural direction of the fly would be as indicated by the line *A B*. But its actual direction is the resultant of the two forces acting upon fly and line, and it follows approximately a direction indicated by the dotted line *A C*. The

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arrow shows the direction of the current, and also the place where its greatest force is exerted.

It can be readily understood that no

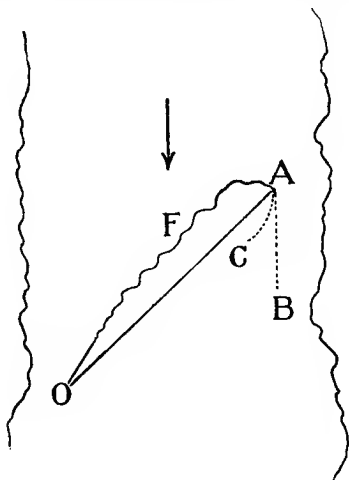


FIG. 6

live insect would go through any such unnatural performances, and that a trout seeing it would utterly refuse to take a fly acting in such a strange manner.

Another Type of Drag

Now let us take up another condition where the current is swift at the opposite bank and slow in the centre of the stream. The natural direction

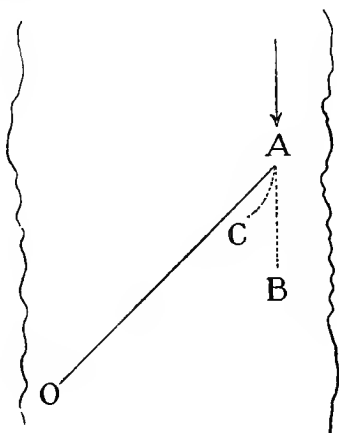


FIG. 7

of the fly (Fig. 7) would be from *A* to *B*, but the centre of the line would travel much more slowly, and again the fly would have a tendency to take a direction somewhat similar to the course shown by the dotted line *A C*;

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except that it must be borne in mind that in these diagrams it is not clearly shown that both line and fly are constantly moving, though at different speeds, and that as they go down-stream their relative positions would be ever changing. In Fig. 6 the centre of the line, the current in midstream being swifter, would have a constantly increasing downward curve, while in Fig. 7 the curve would be upward. But the positions of line and fly would be moving constantly down-stream. The diagrams have been drawn in this simple form to prevent the confusion that might result from complicated drawings attempting to show the always changing curves in the line.

The drag is again in evidence when one casts the fly up-stream on a comparatively smooth piece of water, while the line falls on a swifter current be-

The Drag Above the Rocks

tween the spot where the fly lights and the position of the angler.

In Fig. 8, the angler stands at *O* and casts the fly at the spot indicated

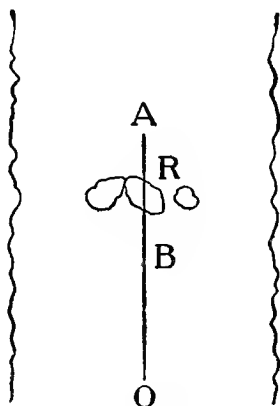


FIG. 8

by *A*, which is comparatively smooth water, above a group of rocks beneath the surface at *R*; below these rocks the water breaks into a rapid run, where, at *B*, it is very swift. The line is carried down by this swift run

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at such a speed that the fly at *A*, in a much more gentle current, has a pronounced unnatural drag over the surface.

Now, turning back to Fig. 6, let us imagine that instead of the water flowing in its natural down-stream direction there was an eddy at *A* moving upstream and across stream. The drag of the fly would be still more pronounced than in the conditions which this diagram is supposed to illustrate. So in all conceivable cases where the direction or swiftness of the water where the fly lights is different from that where the line falls, the drag sets in unless the angler takes some precautionary measure to prevent it.

The preventive measure generally most effective is the *slack-line cast*. In Fig. 6, the line *O A*, it will be noticed, is absolutely straight—that is,

Postponing the Drag

the shortest distance between the two points O and A ; and the line of the angler is represented as taut, without any slack and without a curve. The current will therefore seize it as soon as it reaches the water, and the beginning of the drag theoretically will be immediate. Let us not, then, cast an absolutely taut line, but endeavor to throw the line so that the drag will be postponed, if such a thing is possible. It is obvious that if the line were not so straight when it fell, the drag might not make itself evident until the current had straightened it out somewhat. So we will endeavor to make a slack-line cast, and instead of having it fall in a perfectly straight line, $O A$, will try to have it take a position on the water somewhat as represented by the irregularly curved line $O F A$. It will be noticed that the curve, or "belly,"

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of the line lies in an up-stream direction, and that before the current can carry the centre of the line far enough down-stream to produce a drag, the fly will have an opportunity to float down a short distance naturally. As the trout we are after may be only a few inches below *A*, the fly, let us hope, will float without drag until it is over the fish. So in all cases where a drag is imminent, cast a slack line. Under the conditions illustrated by Fig. 7, where the current in the centre of the stream is slow and where the fly lights swift, the "belly" in the line should naturally be down-stream. When casting directly up-stream, in order to prevent lining the trout—that is, having the leader fall directly over its head, endeavor to throw an up-stream curve in the leader so that the gut will float down behind the fly.

Making a Slack-Line Cast

We have already found that in order to make a fly "light like thistle-down," it is necessary to cast it not *at* the spot where you wish it to fall, but a short distance directly *over* the spot. In making the slack-line cast, the fly, as the line is lengthened, is cast in the air a few feet *beyond* the spot where the angler wishes it to alight as well as over it. When the line is nearly straight, and before the rod has reached its correct position at the end of the forward cast, the forward sweep of the rod is retarded and the motion of the imitation insect on its onward flight is checked; the tip of the rod is immediately lowered, and instead of the line falling taut it drops loosely upon the water in irregular waves or curves. If the result aimed at is successfully accomplished, the fly will have for a certain length of time a natural motion.

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The duration of this favorable condition of affairs will depend upon the varying strength of the currents and other causes.

CHAPTER X

Wilderness Fishing Different from Taking "Educated" Trout from Much-Fished Streams

INSTRUCTIONS for angling with the dry-fly often seem to present to the beginner difficulties that might have a tendency to discourage him. Yet the proper handling of the floating fly is practically as easy as the skilful management of the sunken fly, and an expert wet fly fisherman should have no difficulty in becoming proficient as a dry-fly angler in a comparatively short time. In the *London Field* a well-known angling writer has said recently: "Startling as the statement may sound, it is probably true that the really good wet fly fisherman

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is a greater rarity than the really good dry-fly man." And later, Mr. R. B. Marston, the veteran editor of the London *Fishing Gazette*, echoed this sentiment by saying: "A real expert with the wet fly is a much rarer bird than one with the dry."

In discussing the degrees of expertness of wet fly fishermen it is necessary, in America at least, to differentiate the conditions under which the fishing is done. It is well known that in many waters of the wilderness there are vast numbers of trout in keen competition for food, and that these fish see an angler and his feathered lures infrequently. Almost anything in the way of a small bunch of bright feathers and glittering tinsel tied to a hook seems often to prove an irresistible attraction to the trout, and the presentation of such flies need not be

Imitating a Trout's Fin

skilfully made at all times to meet with unqualified success. Hence it is that much of the advice written in this country for the benefit of wet fly fishermen may be traced to those whose principal fishing has been done in wilderness waters, and is intended for others who go far beyond the bounds of civilization for their piscatorial pleasure. Many of the most popular and killing wet flies imitate neither insect nor any other form of life. The Parmacheene belle, for instance, the most popular of all lures in Northern waters, was invented in the early eighties by Mr. H. P. Wells, to *imitate the belly-fin of a trout*. Why a belly-fin, so seldom seen by a fish detached from the body of its original owner, should be conceived to be a natural or a favorite food has not been explained. Yet the attractions of this fly in many lakes

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and streams cannot be overestimated. The author fished the wilderness waters of northern Maine for several years before the Parmacheene belle had come into existence, and in those days the grizzly king proved an irresistible lure, day in and day out; while at certain times the red ibis, or any other fly made of bright red feathers, seemed to be a *pièce de resistance* that no trout could forego the temptation of seizing. I trust that wet fly fishermen whose faith in the Parmacheene belle is deep-seated, will not think that I am speaking disparagingly of their favorite lure. Many times in recent years I have fished streams not so far north as Maine, where an angler would be practically sure of success if he had in his fly-book no other fly than this imitation of the trout's fin. But it has always been a question in my

Is This Really Fly-Fishing?

mind as to what kind of food the trout thought was being presented, when fished for with this lure. The question might naturally be asked, and not ill-naturedly, whether the use of the imitation of the belly-fin of a trout should be classed as fly-fishing or bait-fishing. Is it not possible that the trout may take this red, white, and yellow counterfeit for a minnow or some other small fish as it moves through the water as commonly manipulated by fly-fishermen using it? And may not the same question be asked when the silver doctor and other "fancy" favorites of the wilderness are used? It is certain that these flies are not made with the idea of imitating winged insects or the larvæ of winged insects; nor as a rule do wet fly fishermen present them in a way to make their movements re-

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semble the natural action of living flies.

But while we have freely admitted the great killing powers of the popular Parmacheene belle, not only in wilderness streams, but in other waters not so far removed from civilization, there is little question that it is an absolutely useless lure in many of the well-known and much-fished streams of Sullivan County, New York, Pike County, Pennsylvania, and other similar waters. I make this statement not entirely from my own experience, but on the testimony of skillful anglers who have fished these streams for many years, and who have tried on them at various times nearly all known flies. Relying upon the trustworthiness of information gained from such long experience, I have seldom, if ever, taken on my trips to

Educated Trout Particular

these waters wet flies that had been favorites when used on less civilized streams.

Expert anglers who make a practice of visiting such streams as the Beaver-kill, Willowemoc, and Esopus, especially after the early weeks of spring, when the water has become low and clear, also seem to be unanimously of the opinion that even an imitation fly, tied to resemble as closely as possible an insect on which the trout are accustomed to feed, will not be taken by one of the "educated" fish of these streams, or similar streams, if when on or in the water it does not have the same *action* as the live insect; and that instead of attracting the fish the imitation fly will have an exactly contrary effect if it is pulled through or across the current in the manner commonly adopted by some users of the sunken fly.

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Is it not to the fact that many fly-fishermen have learned the art in the wilderness, where trout are not shy or over-particular as to how the artificial fly is presented to them, that the more or less general truth of the statement that “a real expert with the wet fly is a much rarer bird than one with the dry” is due? Is it not true that even a partially “educated” trout is liable to notice the unusual character of the movements of a weak, flying insect breasting heavy currents, and to become suspicious of them? The larvæ of some aquatic insects, hatched in the soil of the bed of the stream, or among aquatic plants, after having reached their full growth, seek the surface by climbing up on the plants, or by swimming; and when performing these acts are often taken by the trout greedily. But can it be denied that at any other

Up-Stream vs. Down-Stream

time the only way in which these larvæ can approach the trout without causing suspicion is by being carried downstream by the current, either on or beneath the surface of the stream? The dry-fly angler did not by any means invent the up-stream method of fishing, nor has it been confined to his cult. Arguments, apparently almost unanswerable, for fishing up-stream were made by Mr. W. C. Stewart in "The Practical Angler," published in 1857, while Mr. David Webster, in "The Angler and the Loop-Rod" (1885), may be said to have completely riddled many of the usual arguments in favor of down-stream methods. Mr. Webster's opinion is worthy of attention as he succeeded in making a living for many years by fly-fishing for trout in Scottish streams. The best argument ever written, in the judg-

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ment of the author, for the wet fly appears in Mr. G. E. M. Skues' "Minor Tactics of the Chalk Stream," published in 1908. Mr. Skues is as great a believer in the imitation theory as the members of the dry-fly school, uses imitation insects no larger than the tiny flies of the dry-fly angler, and casts the fly in exactly the same manner as the dry-fly fishermen, that is, up-stream; but his flies sink, and are borne down by the current beneath the surface. That they may not sink too deeply he oils the leader up to within a few inches of the fly so that all but one or two links of the gut will float upon the surface. In a debate held at a meeting of the Anglers' Club of New York in March, 1912, on the subject of the dry-fly versus the wet fly, the very strongest arguments used by those who spoke

The Trout Looks Up-Stream

for the sunken lure were that the *expert* wet fly angler used precisely the same tackle, including gossamer leaders and imitation flies, as the dry-fly fisherman, and presented his lures in the same way; that is, by casting up-stream and allowing the flies to be carried down naturally by the current.

We have learned that a trout always lies with its head up-stream, facing the current. Who would think of attempting to stalk, under usual conditions, an animal from any other position when it could be stalked just as easily from behind? The angler can approach much nearer to a trout when coming up from behind it, can hook it to better advantage, and can play it in water that has already been fished by him so that good unfished water will not be disturbed. And yet no less an authority than Dr. Henshall has

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comparatively recently, in a published work, expressed the opinion that dry-fly fishing will not find many adherents in this country, "for one reason, that the dry-fly must be cast up-stream, which will never be a favorite method with American anglers *for well-known reasons.*"

Can these "well-known reasons" existing in Dr. Henshall's mind be perhaps more potent than those advanced by Mr. Robert Blakey, who, in a book published in 1846, speaks of the "almost impossibility" of a trout seizing a fly cast up-stream, claiming that "even if he should take it the power is lost to retain him," and classifies up-stream fishing as among "the many crotchety and fanciful rules that often come to light in the progress of angling"?

Let the beginners, however, who

Skill in Handling Tackle

read this little work, fish up-stream exclusively, and if they will *learn to handle their tackle skilfully*, so that they will always have perfect control of fly, leader, and line as they are borne down toward them by the current, they will find it difficult to conjure up in their minds any *known* reason, or any *good* reason, why they should return to the old-fashioned method of down-stream fishing.

CHAPTER XI

Often Dry-Fly Anglers Like Conditions that Prove the Waterloo of the Wet Fly Man

NEARLY all dry-fly literature seems to carry with it a tale of success. Not, however, I think, that the user of the floating fly is an egotist, or is given to boasting; but in writing of angling matters it is natural to forget our days of hard luck and to remember only those particularly bright occasions when we have gone home in the evening with a cheerful heart.

There is no question that the wet fly angler can tell his tales of fortunate days on the streams as well as the dry-fly fisherman. If I were to argue the

Angling Art and Pleasure

question of dry-fly versus wet fly, I should ignore the comparative killing powers of both, and base the argument for the floating fly entirely upon the pleasure to be derived from its use. To me dry-fly angling is the most artistic, most fascinating, and most skilful of all out-door sports, though I freely accord to the wet fly angler the privilege of making any claim that he chooses for his favorite lure. We probably all believe the saying that "The ranks of anglers do not contain a large number of aggressive and intolerant folk," and agree with Mr. T. E. Pritt when he says that "One of the charms of angling is that it presents an endless field for argument, speculation, and experiment."

That the wet fly has been for many years a successful lure, and on many waters will remain so for years to come,

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there can be no doubt. It has been so successful in wilderness fishing that few American anglers have felt the need of any other lure. The user of the sunken fly is in his glory in swift-running streams and in rough water. In the early spring-time, when the streams are high, turbulent, and at times discolored, he goes forth with a feeling of the utmost confidence; moreover, he would consider all these conditions in his favor, and, if he were to make comparisons, would think that they were against the success of the dry-fly enthusiast. But later in the spring the streams become low, the water is of crystal clearness, and there are quiet pools and smooth runs where there is hardly a chance of the wet fly angler meeting with success.

“We have all heard tales,” says Mr. Dewar, “of men who can take trout,

The Faith of an Eccentric

and take them fairly, with a wet fly under any known conditions, or on any water where there are trout to take; but we have heard, too, of showers of fish from the clouds." And again this author says: "The man who swears by the sunk fly style under normal conditions on the Test or Itchen" (smooth, placid streams), "is an eccentric."

And yet the conditions that prove the Waterloo of the wet fly fisherman are frequently those most desired by the user of the floating fly. While often the greatest successes of the sunken fly are obtained in the early spring, before the waters have gone down to their summer conditions, it is seldom that the dry-fly angler is seen upon the streams until the warm weather has come and the water is naturally low and glass-like in its transparency. On

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this low water and on the still pools the one practical method of deceiving the trout is by means of the dry-fly.

Another mecca of the devotee of the floating fly is the stream that has been fished for years and that frequently has the reputation of having been "fished out." But many streams bear this reputation undeservedly. It has come to them on account of the frequent lack of success of anglers who fish them. In New York State there is a beautiful stream on whose banks and in whose bed many fly-fishermen may be seen throughout the season. In the summer of 1911 some twenty anglers were stopping at a comfortable inn near its banks. The weather and water conditions were very poor from their stand-point. Their "hard luck" had been really heart-rending. "Fished out" was a frequent cry as the discouraged fisher-

A Really Astonishing Rise

men returned to the inn at night. Indeed, it seemed so. But one afternoon toward sunset some of us saw on a large pool near the inn one of the most astonishing rises of trout that it had been our privilege to see in many years. There seemed to be trout everywhere, and most of them were large. How did this agree with the "fished-out" theory?

Evidently there were still fish in the stream, but why the almost total failure of these anglers to take them with a fly? Was it due to the lack of insect life, and had these trout become bottom feeders? Or had they been fished for so constantly that they could no longer be enticed by artificial flies as ordinarily presented?

If one visits a stream that has been fished constantly with wet flies, but on whose surface a dry-fly has seldom been

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seen, again in the judgment of the author the one best lure is the floating fly. One of my friends, whose name is a household word among men fond of the great out-doors, recently stated that a stream which flows through the lands on which his summer home is situated had been, in his opinion, practically "fished out" for several years. "Yet one day last summer," he said, "two dry-fly anglers came up from New York. I went to the stream to watch them. They were taking trout at almost every cast and returning them to the stream." I predict that ere long this gentleman will become a dry-fly enthusiast, if he has not already reached that stage.

Mr. Halford says in his "Dry-Fly Fishing in Theory and Practice": "In Derbyshire, a few years back, every one used two, and many three, four, or

Unjust Suspicions of Fraud

even more flies; every one fished downstream, and fished the water. Now hosts of anglers have invaded the district, the trout and grayling are as shy and wary as any in the country, and what is the result? Day after day, and year after year, more of the successful anglers in the district fish up-stream with floating flies and over rising fish only, and it is only on occasional blustering days that one of the old school succeeds in getting a moderate bag. The same tale can be told of all parts of the country, where the local anglers, taught from childhood to fish with sunk fly, laugh at the possibility of a bag being made with the dry-fly. An example of this: Not many years ago, in Dorchester, one of the best dry-fly fishermen of the day was seriously suspected, and even accused, of not fishing fair, because he succeeded in killing

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great numbers of the largest fish on days when the natives with wet fly could do no good at all. At length his proceedings were quietly but thoroughly watched by one of the local talent, with the result that he who went to discover a fraud found that he had been for years following a mistaken policy. . . . Ever after he forswore the wet fly, and himself was able in turn to teach and convert others to the more modern and more successful school of angling. From north and south, from east and west, in later times fly-fishermen came to Winchester, where they *saw, learned and conquered* the use of the floating fly . . . they carried the information all over the country, until at length the spread of dry-fly fishing has become something dreadful to contemplate, because in the rivers where it is practised the fish never get a rest,

Tempting Fish to Their Ruin

but day after day, week after week, and month after month, are continually and continuously tempted to their destruction.”

CHAPTER XII

Fine and Far-Off Casting and the Value of Close Fishing when Throwing a Fly Up-Stream

IT was Charles Cotton, I think, who first advised "fine and far-off" casting.

A fine and far-off cast is a good thing to use occasionally; and it is always of great value to anglers to possess the ability to make a long cast when necessary. Fishermen who have never stood upon a platform in a tournament are rather prone, at times, to belittle the attainments of a tournament caster, and to say emphatically that "tournament casting is not angling." That is right; it is not, but it is a legitimate and valuable part of the angling game,

Value of Tournament Work

and while all good anglers are not good tournament casters, yet nearly all the good tournament casters of to-day are good anglers. The very worst that can happen to an angler who goes upon a tournament platform, and is successful, is to learn how to cast a long line. What fly-fisherman would not like to possess the ability to make a long cast when he saw near the opposite bank of a stream a good rise which he could reach in no other way than by casting his fly seventy or eighty feet or more? The tournament casters also learn much that is not generally learned in other ways about tackle, about the action of rods, the good and poor qualities of various lines, and also learn to handle rod and line in the manner of an expert.

There is also another great advantage to the angler who is a proficient

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long-distance caster; a man of medium ability in handling a rod, by practice can learn to put out a line eighty or eighty-five feet with a five-ounce rod, and seventy-five to eighty feet with a four-ounce rod. For somewhat the same reason that an athlete who can lift a one-hundred-pound weight with one hand can easily juggle a weight of ten pounds and do almost anything he pleases with it, so an angler who can cast eighty or eight-five feet, makes the shorter casts necessary on the streams with remarkable ease and skill; casting these distances without effort, he can devote all his attention to placing his fly accurately and delicately. Ideas frequently held by those who are not accustomed to taking part in tournaments as to the "freak" tackle used by distance casters are generally erroneous. It is true that the typical

Fishing Conditions Copied

heavy single-handed rod used in the unlimited weight class is a very clumsy weapon, and, in the author's opinion, of little use, if any, in actual fishing. But the lighter tournament rods, five and three-fourth and four and three-fourth ounces in weight respectively, are usually the rods most liked by their owners for use on the streams; and in the case of the author, at least, who has had a somewhat limited experience in tournament work, the beautiful English lines used could not be better suited to fishing with the dry-fly. Each year the managers of tournaments are seeking more and more to copy actual fishing conditions, both in tackle and in holding accuracy and delicacy contests.

It is not the object of these remarks, however, to advocate long-distance casting on the streams. On the other hand, the writer is much in favor of

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the idea of fishing as near the trout as possible. This method has manifold advantages. First, if one is close to a trout he may use a short cast, and with little line out the fly may be placed on the water with the greatest accuracy and delicacy. It must not be forgotten that the up-stream fisherman makes much capital of the fact that he approaches the fish from behind, as trout always lie with their heads up-stream. Where a short cast is made the fly can be thrown without placing much of the line and leader on the water. The current is constantly bringing the floating fly in the direction of the angler. As it comes downstream the angler can take care of much of the slack by merely lifting the point of the rod; the remaining slack can be easily stripped in by the left hand. When the trout rises the an-

Using a Short-Line Cast

gler has perfect control of the line when fishing close, the fish is hooked more certainly than with a long line out, and the control over the fish is immediate. If the surface of the water is broken or ruffled, either by a breeze or because the stream is running swiftly over a rough bottom, an extremely short line should be used. As the water gets smoother and the current less powerful a longer cast may become necessary, and when fishing a pool with a smooth, placid surface the angler should keep much farther away from the fish. But in this case no unusual difficulties are presented, for the line moving slowly in the gentle current may be stripped in without difficulty, and be under the control of the angler at all times.

A most valuable lesson for a trout fisherman to learn is what we may call

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unobtrusiveness, and also deliberativeness of movement. A trout is frightened by any sudden, quick movements that may attract its eye or by unusual disturbances of the water. Every step up-stream, when in promising water, should be taken carefully and deliberately, and all motions made by the angler should be as gentle and inconspicuous as possible. I recognize the fact that there are many who visit the trout streams who believe that the proper way to fish is to go over as much of the length of the stream as possible in a day, neglecting all excepting particularly good spots, and making only a few casts over each of these. Sometimes several miles of stream are covered by them in a few hours. Is it not a better method to take one's time, fish all good spots carefully and thoroughly, and pay little attention to the

Hurrying a Fishing Fault

distance covered in the course of the day? The author agrees thoroughly with Mr. Dewar when he says that "there is no surer sign of an unaccomplished dry-fly fisherman than hurrying. A good fisherman will not hesitate to stay an hour if he sees a good chance of deceiving a heavy trout which is feeding well."

A short time ago the idea of fishing a pool in the manner suggested in Chapter VI was somewhat severely criticised by a veteran New York angler, who seemed to object to "laying out a trout pool as one would lay out a checker board." At the same time, I gained an impression from his remarks that he did not think that the dry-fly could be successful on American streams "because it was invented for use on the placid English chalk streams." A logical idea!

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As a matter of fact, the "mathematical pool" was used to express, in the simplest manner possible, two ideas: First, in pool fishing, to cover all good water carefully; second, always to cast so that the fly would fall in the water nearest to the angler first, one cast succeeding another in such a way that no good unfished water would be disturbed. It is a question whether the critic referred to objected to the idea of covering all good water, or to the measure suggested to prevent disturbing good unfished water; or possibly he did not grasp the idea of the mathematical pool at all. The question of the adaptability of the dry-fly to many American streams is beyond argument; for many years it has been used upon them with great success. The editor of the *Fishing Gazette*, of London, in speaking of the dry-fly on American

A Challenge to the Angler

waters, said last March: "The old stagers pooh-pooh it, as many still do here, but it makes way for itself because it appeals to, as well as challenges, the angler."

CHAPTER XIII

The Advantages of Stalking a Trout from Behind, and Examples of Good and Bad Generalship

AFTER streams have been fished for years, and the trout in them are apparently scarce, very shy, and extremely difficult to catch, it is customary, to refer to their inhabitants as "educated trout." In many of the well-known New York streams, for instance, the trout are supposed to be educated to a high degree. They can not be enticed by the ordinary methods of the wet fly fisherman, especially in the summer season, though it is in these very streams that the expert with the floating fly loves to match his skill

Position in Stream Tactics

against the cunning of the trout. The "education" theory has been accepted by nearly all angling writers, and few have questioned it. But can not this theory be used at times to "cover a multitude of sins" on the part of the angler, such as gross carelessness in showing himself to the fish, or presenting the fly in an unnatural or slovenly manner?

While meditating upon this subject one winter evening, there flashed across my mind the words "the point of vantage." Now, this is a very common expression, used almost daily, and it has probably been used times without number by fishermen. But the thought that came to me in this connection was that there is one "point of vantage" for the angler in the case of nearly every trout which he is endeavoring to raise to the fly, and that an angler

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making thorough and systematic study of the best possible position in each and every case would prove himself in the long run to be a fly-fisherman of a rare and superior type. In stream tactics what can be of more importance than the study of position? And yet how many times during the course of a day's fishing is even a fairly experienced angler or his shadow, or his rod or its shadow, plainly seen by the trout when he flatters himself that the fish is in complete ignorance of his presence? Or how often is an angler, even though his presence be unknown to the fish, in the very best possible position—the position that we have referred to as “the point of vantage”? It is plain that this point is the one spot where the angler is as near the trout as it is possible to be without coming within range of its keen sight.

Importance of Invisibility

As boys, we were all taught the great importance of keeping out of sight of the trout. When there were bushes beside the stream, we hid behind them as much as possible. When fishing the meadow brooks, we kept far away from the banks, many times crouching down or getting on our knees when casting bait or fly into the favorite hiding places of the trout. But now, as men, we are perhaps fishing on larger streams, and as we cast our floating fly up-stream we are wading. It is of the utmost importance not to be seen by the fish as we carefully approach it from behind, and yet it is essential that we should use no longer line than is absolutely necessary. The shorter the line the more accurately and delicately we can place the fly, and we have learned that there is more certainty of hooking the rising fish, and of control-

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ling it when hooked, with the shortest possible length of line out. What rare judgment would he have who always could place himself in that one spot that marked the limit of invisibility, and yet was the nearest possible to the fish!

While trout have other senses, yet the sense of sight is the only one to which it is necessary for the careful angler to give particular heed. Therefore, he must know something about the limit of a trout's vision before he can judge correctly as to whether the fish can see him. All trout lie with their heads up-stream, or at least facing the flow of the current; in the case of deflected currents, they face these currents. Drawing an imaginary circle around a trout, it can see objects within that portion of the circle in front and on either side, covering about

Angles of a Trout's Vision

300 degrees; this refers to objects on the horizontal plane of the eye of the fish. There will remain then an arc of invisibility behind the trout of about 60 degrees.

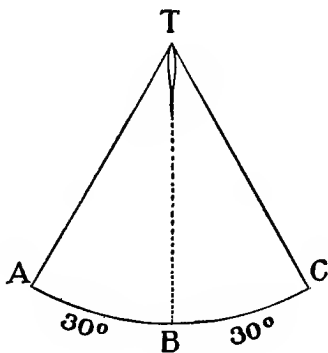


FIG. 9

The eyes of the trout are at *T*; *ATB* and *BTC* are angles of 30 degrees each. *ABC* is an arc of 60 degrees and is the zone of invisibility of objects on the same horizontal plane as the trout.

When the angler is wading, naturally his rod and the upper part of his body are above the horizontal plane of the trout, and they may come within the vision of the fish at a certain point

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above and behind it. In discussing these questions, however, the laws of refraction would have to be gone into far beyond the limits of this work. When the surface of the water is naturally rough, or is ruffled by a breeze, the angler need not concern himself so much about keeping out of sight; when behind the fish under these conditions a short line may be used, and the "fine and far off" casting be left for the still, clear pools with glassy surface.

What a never-ending study does this question of exact position—the one point of vantage—under ever-varying conditions, offer to the thoughtful dry-fly angler!

This thought has become inseparably connected in my mind with many angling failures of the past—days of disappointment because at times splendid pools had failed to produce antici-

Angling Failures Explained

pated results, though most carefully fished, as I thought at the time. In my imagination I have gone back to some of these pools and fished them over again. How often in the days of the past had failures been due, not so much to lack of knowledge of trout habits, not to bungling casting, but to poor generalship in choosing position? There are times when there are obstacles in the way that make it impossible to place one's self in the best tactical position; but there are others when this position is not taken simply through ignorance, lack of study of the situation, carelessness of methods, indifference, or—let us not deceive ourselves—sheer indolence or lack of ambition.

Here is a case in point: One day in the last week in May, not many years ago, I was wading a stream in Sullivan

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County not generally known by New York anglers, when I came to a smooth, flat pool, generally shallow, and not promising any favorable results, except possibly in one spot. A little more than half-way up the pool near the bank to my right, was a fairly large rock, and the water in front of it was at least three or four feet deep. Not wishing to waste any time on the unpromising water, I immediately waded to the point *O*, in Fig. 10, which is a very correct diagram of this pool. My position was about twenty-five feet below the rock *R*, where I thought a trout should be. The little whirling dun lighted gently, with wings upright at *C*. When it had floated down to a point opposite the centre of the rock, I was not much surprised to see a very fair trout rise to the fly. The fish missed and was frightened, so I went

A Good Tactical Position

on up-stream, marking the spot, however, for another try in the afternoon. The tactical position *O* was perfect.

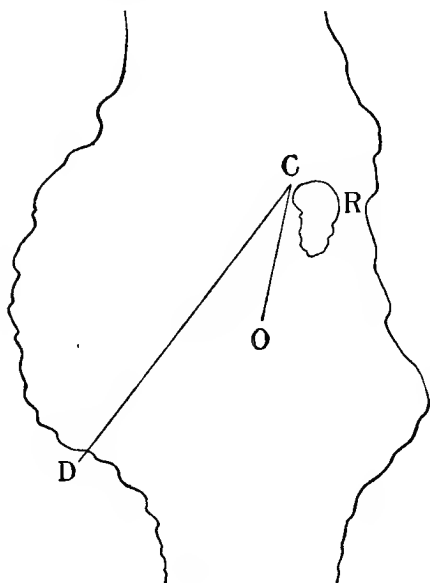


Fig. 10

When on my way homeward this pool was reached as the evening shadows were falling. I had sufficient in-

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telligence to know that if I wanted this fish badly I should go below the tail of the pool and wade carefully up to the point *O*, from which I had cast in the morning. But, instead, I contented myself by walking down the other side of the pool, at a good distance from the bank, and took a position at *D*. There was not a bright sky behind me, the sun had set, daylight was fast disappearing, and I was fully sixty feet from the fish. But when the rod was raised for the first false cast, away went the trout like a scared cat. This incident shows at what an angle, and at what a distance, even in a failing light, a trout is able to see an angler or his rod.

Now will be related an example of bad judgment, aided by a penchant possessed by the author at times to do things with the least amount of labor

Some Angling Anticipations

possible, as I discovered many months afterward through the kind offices of Mr. La Branche. On August 29, 1911, I was fishing on that delightful stream, the Willowemoc, having gone to De Bruce to put in the last three days of the season. In the afternoon I came to a very beautiful pool—beautiful in every way, but especially so from the angler's view-point. The water was dark and deep, and on the eastern shore flowed rather swiftly by the edge of a large rock on the bank. "Here is where I am sure to take a trout worth having," I thought, as I began to dry my favorite whirling dun. All angling instincts, natural and acquired, told me that there should be large trout in this pool. The place where I expected fully to see the record trout rise was in the neighborhood of the spot indicated by the letter *A*, opposite the large rock

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at the right in Fig. 11. I happened to be in fine form that day, and from early morning my nerves had seemed to be at just the right tension to enable me to place the fly accurately and delicately, while in difficult places I had been fortunate enough to make many skilful casts that had done away almost completely with that bane of all dry-fly anglers, the drag. The water was so deep at the lower end of the pool and up to within a few feet of the left bank, that in the various positions indicated by *O* I had entered the pool as far as the length of my waders would allow me to go, while before reaching these positions I had fished thoroughly other portions of the pool below; yet I regarded that portion of the pool indicated in a general way by *C, C, C, C*, as the very cream of the water. The casts were unusually long,

Good Casting—Poor Fishing

but nearly always the fly performed admirably; as an exhibition of casting I could not find much room for criticism,

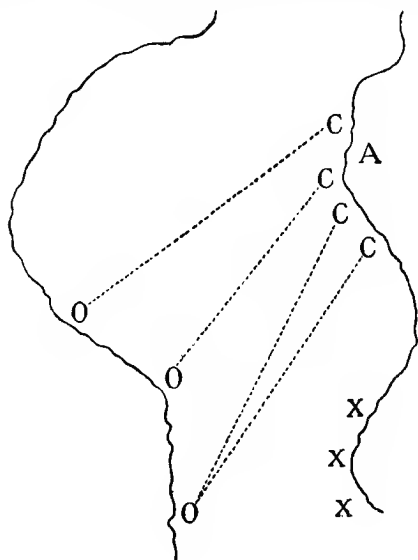


Fig. 11

but I now look back upon it as a poor exhibition of fishing.

Soon another angler appeared, and, much to my surprise, told me that it

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was useless to “waste time on this pool,” as trout were never caught there. Wet fly fishermen often say this of good pools.

However, I did not believe him, and the whirling dun continued floating down most enticingly.

Then another angler came along, and, stopping to tell me the same thing, hurried up-stream.

Some time afterward, completely baffled, I followed in the steps of the others, and left this most promising looking pool a sadder but *not* a wiser man. Not a sign of good fish had I seen. There were tall trees behind me, and heavy clouds in the sky, and both weather and water conditions were such that it did not once occur to me that I or my rod might possibly have been seen by fish feeding by the opposite bank. Nor did a realization, or

Help in Solving a Problem

even a suspicion, of this come to my mind until early in the following February. All anglers have a habit of thinking over during the winter months successes and defeats of the previous season or seasons. Many times my imagination had taken me back to this pool, and sometimes I had exclaimed: "Can it be possible that the other anglers were right when they said that there were no fish there? If so, why should trout shun so beautiful a pool?"

One morning, months after, I happened to be on a train with Mr. La Branche, who has spent many days on the Willowemoc, and as always when we meet, we began "talking fish." I told him of the experience related above, described the pool, drew a diagram of it, learned that he was thoroughly familiar with every inch of this

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water, and, furthermore, that he had taken several large trout from the exact places that I had been casting over with so much care, zeal, and expectancy.

But his points of vantage had been the places marked *X*, *X*, *X* in the diagram, almost directly below the fish and near the other bank.

“Why did you not fish from there?” he asked.

“Because, on account of the depth of the water and the strength of the current below the pool, I did not think one could get there.”

“No,” he replied, “it was because you wanted to take things too easily.”

“Then,” I said, “I believe there is no question but that at my position *O* I may have been seen by the fish on the other side of the stream.”

And that may be the complete ex-

Reasoning, Right and Wrong

planation of the apparent mystery; for it was a mystery that I could not get a rise. I had been entirely right about its being a splendid trout pool, and the other men had been wrong, and I had *thought* that my position was good. But this thought was possibly an error fatal to success. There is little doubt that if it had been good, easy going across the stream at the lower end of the pool I should naturally at first have taken a position near the right bank and below the trout; but to have gotten over to the proper place from which to cast would have meant a considerable walk down-stream, followed by wading over difficult places up-stream.

Whether or not I should have been more successful in this other position, the incident illustrates the great importance of taking very particular

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pains to select carefully the best possible point of vantage from which to cast, even if it takes some extra effort to do so.

CHAPTER XIV

*Two Old Trout of the Pools, and
the Little Dry-Fly that Fi-
nally Accomplished Their Ruin*

THE author's early experiences with the floating fly were neither fruitful nor encouraging; but he fully realizes that this lack of success was entirely his own fault, and was due both to a lack of knowledge of dry-fly methods and to an insufficiently aroused interest in them. One day several years ago he saw in a tackle shop some flies different from any in his fly-books, and having been told that they were the English floating flies, laid in a small stock of them, while the tackle-dealer briefly explained how they were used. After-

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ward these flies were taken on several trips, but were unthought of and unused. One day he met an angler who had used the dry-fly method of fishing and who seemed to be enthusiastic about it. The author made up his mind that he would try the floating fly at the very next opportunity that presented itself. But it must be remembered that he had been a confirmed wet fly fisherman for more than thirty years, and while he had advanced in the wet fly art so far as to use only a single small fly, and leaders fully as fine as those made for dry-fly angling, yet when he reached a stream it was natural for him to think of the lures that had been his companions since boyhood and not to attempt to branch out into new fields.

But one May day, four or five years ago, when on a week's end fishing trip,

A Contumacious Old Trout

he was driven to a point verging upon exasperation by a large trout which persisted in rising leisurely from a hole beside an old stump in a pool that had been a favorite of the author's for several years. When its first rise was seen the angler placed over it one of his most attractive wet flies with a feeling of confidence that the trout could not resist it. But resist it he did, not only on the first cast, but on succeeding casts. Then the pool was rested, and another favorite fly was tried with the same result. The trout was still rising occasionally, but paid no attention to the artificial lure; once it arose just as the imitation touched the water and within a few inches of it, apparently entirely unconcerned about the wiles of the angler attempting to lure it to destruction. Again the pool was rested and the trout

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soon attacked with another pattern. It happened that this was not the first day that the same tactics had been tried both by the writer and his friends, and this particular trout had gained a well-deserved reputation. To make the matter worse, the author, in a fit of vainglorious boasting, had made arrangements at the inn that morning to have this fish cooked for his dinner that very evening.

Finally, having reached a point bordering upon total discouragement, the angler sat down to take a rest and to think things over. In a few minutes there was a "plop," and another big swirl by the stump; the trout was still doing business at the same old stand, but the angler had apparently closed up shop and ceased to take interest in the affairs going on about him.

But in a moment he sat erect, with

Floating Deception Wins

the appearance of a man who had solved a great and weighty problem. An idea had suddenly flashed through his mind! A tiny japanned vest-pocket eyed-fly box lay open before him, and he was gazing intently at its long neglected contents. There were within this box little whirling duns, Wickham's fancies, Jenny spinners, black gnats and coachmen—all beautifully tied English floating flies. He selected a whirling dun, which has ever since been one of his favorite lures. It was carefully knotted to the filmy leader, and a moment after the next rise of the fish it was floating in the centre of the swirl with wings erect. Then something took place that had not happened before in this spot that season, so far as records showed; the old trout had sucked in the little dun, apparently without the slightest suspicion that it

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was not a natural insect, and the hook was firmly imbedded in its mouth.

This should have been a lesson to me, but I must confess that it was not. True, I often thought of this episode and admitted that the dry-fly on that occasion had saved the day; furthermore, I listened more attentively when anglers spoke of the floating lure; but the microbe of enthusiasm had not as yet reached its mark.

The following spring I went to the same stream and fully intended to give the dry-fly a thorough try-out. But when the opening day of the season dawned, the morning after my arrival, the habits of a lifetime had full possession of me, and the dry-flies were forgotten. This was in the middle of April. After returning from this trip, there came a feeling of regret that I had not spent at least a part of the

Fooling Another Foxy Fish

time fishing with the floating lure, and so I hurried back to the stream early in May, fully intending that this trip should be devoted exclusively to practice with the dry-fly. The results were neither good nor bad; the fishing seemed to be poor that week, and I used the wet fly and the dry-fly alternately, fortune favoring one about as much as the other. I performed one surprising feat, however, with the floating fly that I have always attributed to amazing good luck rather than to particularly good management. It was well known to local and visiting anglers that a large trout occupied an almost impregnable position in the upper part of a long pool above a dam, and it had been considered impossible to reach it with any known lure, without giving it previous warning of danger. It could not be cast for from

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below, and rocks and bushes made it impossible to assail it from either side; while above, a barrier of rocks was made higher by an old pine tree that had fallen across the stream. Many anglers had schemed to take this trout, but none had succeeded in making even a good attempt at doing so. To make a long story short, I cast a fly from above the fallen pine tree and over it, without even seeing the water in which the fish lay. The floating fly was so cast that it must have drifted down over the trout; in an instant I either heard, or imagined that I heard the "plop" of a rising fish, and we were at once engaged in a struggle, neither of us in sight of the other. How it was possible from that position to "play" this trout to a standstill without getting hopelessly tangled I did not know; but in a short

Fast-Growing Enthusiasm

time it showed signs of weakening, and I laid my rod on the top of the barrier formed by the rocks and the pine tree, clambered over as fast as I could, picked up the rod again, and the fish was soon in the net.

By this time I had begun to be somewhat accustomed to the use of the dry-fly, but still lacked the confidence in myself necessary to handle it to the best advantage. The following winter I most fortunately came across Mr. Halford's early books and read them greedily. The naturalness of dry-fly methods as described by him was absolutely convincing, and I became enthusiastic over what I then began to consider the most artistic and beautiful of all methods of angling. Afterward I had the great good fortune to meet some of our dry-fly experts, and now feel competent to go upon the

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streams alone and—at least *learn* new things about this delightful art.

The incidents related have not been written so much with the idea of entertaining the reader, as with the hope that they will point a moral to the beginner with the dry-fly, with the result that he will start in at once to *master* dry-fly fishing instead of drifting along aimlessly until a chance happening compels him to realize the desirability of becoming a skilful dry-fly angler.

At first, if an angler has been a wet fly fisherman all his life, the dry-fly and the methods of its use may seem somewhat strange to him when he takes them up; in other words, he is apt to lack that confidence in himself and the dry-fly that he has when casting the wet fly, to the handling of which he has become thoroughly ac-

Imaginary Difficulties

customed. Many are wont to imagine, at first, that there is something more difficult about dry-fly angling than fishing with the sunken lure. This, I think, is not so when one has acquired the knack of it. It may be possible for a bungling fisherman to meet with success in some wilderness waters, or at times in streams nearer civilization when they are high and discolored. But to be a finished wet fly angler one must possess as much skill as the dry-fly fisherman. Nothing but experience can teach a man where the trout lie in the streams; if one starts right, and is shown how, it is comparatively easy to cast a fly skilfully. There are no insurmountable obstacles in the way of becoming a successful dry-fly angler that do not confront the user of the sunken fly.

But *give the dry-fly a chance*; one

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without previous practice cannot go upon a stream for one day, and meeting with no success rightfully condemn the dry-fly, as has been done the past year by several friends and acquaintances of the author. How many times have not one but many anglers spent an entire week fishing with wet flies on some well-known trout stream, without taking altogether more than a few small fish? My advice to the beginner with the dry-fly is to go ahead and *make* a success of it, without being discouraged by real or fancied obstacles. The first rise to the imitation insect, as it floats down the stream in plain sight of the angler, will give the beginner a thrill he has seldom had when he has felt the tug of a trout taking the sunken fly. The dry-fly game is *worth while*, and no one should hesitate to make any efforts necessary

A Plea for Sportsmanship

to overcome what may appear to him to be difficulties in the way of becoming an accomplished dry-fly fisherman.

The author is intensely interested in seeing the use of the dry-fly spread in America for several reasons, of which the principal one is, perhaps, that it will give a greatly added pleasure to our anglers. It is a delicate and artistic method of taking trout, and I have found almost without exception that dry-fly experts have such a great love of the game, that a heavy creel at the end of the day is not the principal desideratum. In these days of depleted streams it is most necessary that the doctrine should be spread broadcast that the one pleasure of trout fishing, apart from the joy of being close to nature, is the matching of one's wits against the cunning of the trout. He alone deserves the title of sportsman

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who returns carefully to the water all trout that he does not need for food; as soon as the fish is taken into the net, all the sport to be had with that particular fish is over, and when killed and put into the creel it has become simply *meat*.

I apprehend that one of the discouragements with which the dry-fly beginner is liable to meet for some time to come will be improper tackle, foisted upon him, unintentionally, perhaps, by dealers who themselves are not familiar with the flies and leaders used by dry-fly experts, and who think that they have made their best efforts to secure a supply of proper tackle. Some friends have complained that dry-flies used by them last season could not be made to float; while I have heard certain dealers recommend leaders almost strong enough for sal-

Care in Purchasing Tackle

mon fishing, and yet they did it without intent to deceive. Therefore, whenever he can do so, it will be advisable for the beginner to consult some expert dry-fly angler before purchasing tackle, especially flies and leaders. If the enthusiasm over this method of fishing becomes general among fly-fishermen, as it now bids fair to do, it will be only a short time before all our best tackle dealers have a full and proper equipment of dry-fly necessities.

CHAPTER XV

Artificial Dry-Flies and a Few Words About the Living Eph- emeridæ

IT seems reasonable to suppose that almost any one with an analytical mind, whether a fisherman or not, would assent readily to the proposition that a trout, when in a mood to feed on insects, would be more inclined to take an artificial fly closely resembling the natural insects upon which it has been accustomed to feed, than a lure bearing no resemblance to any living thing. Those who pretend to believe in a contrary theory sometimes endeavor to clinch their argument triumphantly by saying that “a trout is not an *entomologist*”! How absurd to

Trout Carefully Selective

claim that it would have to be to select the food it likes best. It must not be forgotten that a trout from its earliest infancy has but two principal occupations—to exercise a constant watchfulness lest it fall into the clutches of its enemies and to secure its food entirely unaided. From almost the time it is hatched the little trout fry has no one to show it what to eat; it must make its own selection of food. Must it be an entomologist to be able to do this? Who that has passed many days on the streams, and has performed autopsies on the fish, can doubt that at times, at least, the trout is most carefully selective in its food? What angler is there who has not seen in a trout's stomach the black mass made up of thousands of little gnats, all of one species, and failed to find a single specimen of another insect, though

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several varieties of flies, at other times greedily taken by the fish, may have been on the water at the time this fish was feeding? Does this selection on the part of the trout indicate that it must necessarily be an entomologist?

While in wet fly fishing it is possible and even probable that frequently the trout takes a lure resembling in no way any living creature, so far as man can judge, simply because it looks as if it possibly might be something good to eat, yet there seems to be every reason to believe that the trout takes the dry-fly floating upon the surface of the water for a winged insect, and for nothing else. Therefore, dry-fly angling may be said to be based upon the imitation theory. It is true that while the hands of the most skilful of fly-tiers cannot fashion of the materials at his command an *exact* imitation of a

Good Imitations Necessary

living fly, yet it is undoubtedly possible to make such good imitations of natural flies that they deceive the trout at least momentarily. It seems apparent that if human skill cannot fashion an imitation of a living insect so that its comparative crudity is not apparent, *the very best imitations possible* should be the aim of the fly-tier and of the angler. In the face of the great mass of evidence that exists in the writings of expert anglers, it would seem impossible that a man with an unprejudiced mind could fail to believe that trout take many varieties of floating flies thinking them to be the live insects that they are intended to represent. Further, it is not doubted by many intelligent and experienced anglers that the trout can distinguish the minute differences between the males and females of these various species.

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If, then, the dry-fly angler seems prepared to prove by experience the theory that the trout mistakes his lures for actual living insects, it may be asked: How is it that at times he is successful with floating flies that do not resemble, at least in color, any known insect? For the dry-fly, as well as the wet, has its list of nondescripts or fancy flies. The simplest explanation may be that of the late H. G. McClelland, who believed it unnecessary to hunt for any complicated scientific theory. Why not merely say that the trout, with its predatory instincts, sees this small weak thing floating above it, and, not fearing it, seizes it at a venture? But there occurs to me fully as simple a theory and one that appears at least as reasonable. Even the fancy flies of the dry-fly angler are generally the same size and shape as the living

Fancy Flies, Wet and Dry

ephemeridæ. Slight differences in color are not liable to startle the fish, perhaps, especially when it has only a momentary glimpse of the flies as they float over it. If the color of the body—a body wrapped with gold tinsel, for instance—marks the prominent point of difference, it may be that this variation in color will serve merely to attract the attention of the fish after it has been sated with food of more sombre coloring, without having a tendency to startle it. It has many times been observed by dry-fly anglers that after they had tried without success many of their reliable patterns that were exact imitations, a fancy pattern would succeed in bringing about the desired result of raising the trout. But even so, it seems to me that there is a vast difference between the possible explanations of the success of fancy pat-

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terns of wet flies and of dry-flies, for as a rule the latter usually resemble the favorite duns in size, shape, and action, while the wet flies are admitted, even by devotees of the sunken fly, to resemble no living thing.

A vast majority of the dry-flies used by anglers are tied in imitation of small ephemeral insects called *duns*. These ephemeridæ exist in large numbers and there are many varieties, though the described species may be not more than two hundred. A few of them are large, such as the May-fly, March brown, and August dun, but most of them are very small. Changes in color take place in this species of ephemeridæ as they advance from spring to summer, and as they retrograde again toward autumn. In the summer months their hues are warmer and lighter. Species after species arrives, one after the other

Duns Both Gay and Sombre

in never-ending succession, the individual life of each insect, in its winged state, being only a few hours, or at most a few days. There is a wide difference in many species between the male and the female, and Mr. Halford's



Iron-blue dun



Jenny spinner



Pale evening dun

latest patterns are tied in imitation both of male and female. While there are summer duns of brilliant hues—yellow, orange, red, and cinnamon—the prevailing color of duns may be said to be a bluish-gray. Their life in the winged state is short, but in their aquatic form they live sometimes two or even three years. All ephemeridæ are aquatic in their earlier stages of existence. The eggs

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are dropped into the water in large numbers by the females. They have three or four modes of life when in the larval state; some form tubes in the mud or clay in which they live, some live beneath stones, while others swim and crawl among the water plants. They are carnivorous and also feed upon vegetable life. When the insect has reached full growth in its aquatic form, after from six months to three years of existence, it seeks the surface of the water. Its thorax splits down the back, and it appears in its winged shape. It is not as yet perfect, though it has the form of a perfect insect and can fly. In this stage it is called pseud-imago, sub-imago, or pro-imago. But there remains a pellicle, or case, completely covering it which has yet to be shed. Soon after the insect has appeared in this winged form it finds a

Imitations of Many Species

resting place, its pellicle splits down the back, and there comes forth the perfect insect, differing much from its previous form in color and in markings, while its shape is entirely different from that of its aquatic state. Its wings, of which it has two pairs—the anterior pair large, the posterior pair much smaller—stand erect upon the body.

To one who has made a study of angling books and of English angling catalogues it would appear that nearly all the described species of duns must have at some time been imitated in trout flies. In 1886, Mr. Halford, in “Floating Flies and How to Dress Them,” gave a list of ninety patterns of dry-flies, most of which, though not all, belonged to the ephemeridæ family, and in his “Dry-Fly Entomology” (1897) he named one hundred patterns. The study of English flies is a necessity

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to American anglers, as at present we have no fly-fisher's entomology of our own, and, as has been stated, there seems to be no doubt that many species of duns are common to both English and American streams. The entomological experiences of the author have no scientific value, but, in the spring of 1911, in a few days he examined approximately two hundred insects of the ephemeridæ family caught upon American waters. Unfortunately, he had no English entomology with him; but so far as he could carry in his mind the color and forms of the insects shown in British plates, the ephemeridæ examined seemed in no way different from those hatched in English streams.

As time has gone on it has become customary for expert angler-entomologists to reduce the number of patterns of floating flies considered necessary in

Mr. Halford's List of Flies

dry-fly fishing. Mr. Halford in his latest work, "The Modern Development of the Dry-Fly," published in 1911, reduced his number of patterns to thirty-three, as follows: Male and female patterns each of the green May-fly, brown May-fly, spent gnat, olive dun, dark olive dun, olive spinner, pale watery dun, pale watery spinner, iron-blue dun, iron-blue spinner, blue-winged olive, sherry spinner, black gnat, Welshman's button, and the olive (red) spinner (female), brown ant, small dark sedge, medium sedge, and cinnamon sedge.

Mr. G. A. B. Dewar, in "The Book of the Dry-Fly," 1896 edition, says: "The tendency of dry-fly fishing is toward restricting the number of flies and patterns, therefore simplifying the most complex and confusing branch of angling. . . . The principle of dry-fly

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fishing being to imitate nature as closely as possible, the angler is naturally inclined to limit his choice of artificial flies to the imitation of those kinds of insects which are seen on the water in numbers. Such insects on dry-fly waters can almost be reckoned upon the fingers of both hands, and this list will, I think, be found to exclude no fly of importance to the angler: Olive and blue duns and the red spinner; iron-blue dun and sherry spinner; March brown and the great red spinner; yellow dun, red quill, May-fly, and spent gnat; alder, sedge, and the grannom. The list, for ordinary purposes, might be reduced to include only these flies: The olive dun and blue duns and their imago, the red spinner, the iron-blue dun, the March brown, the yellow dun, red quill, May-fly and its imago, the spent gnat, alder, sedge.”

Mr. Dewar's Reduced List

In 1910, Mr. Dewar further reduces his list, saying: "To-day my list would probably be olive dun, Wickham, hare's ear, iron-blue dun, red quill, sedge, alder and May-fly," while he calls the olive dun the "chief fly in this style of angling."

In America, for the reason already given, namely, that we have no American fly-fisher's entomology, anglers have been compelled to select patterns from the lists of Mr. Halford or other English writers, or depend at first upon advice from friends who have had experience in dry-fly angling and have discovered patterns which they have found successful upon our streams. The following list of flies recommended by the author for American streams was published in 1911, and will, I think, prove useful: Whirling dun, pale evening dun, Wickham's fancy,

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Jenny spinner, willow-fly, orange fish-hawk, soldier palmer, white miller, coachman, black gnat. I am firmly of the opinion that a skilful angler will have all the patterns of flies absolutely needed on at least many of our Eastern streams, if he uses this list. Of these, in my experience, limited indeed compared with that of various experts quoted in this book, I have found the whirling dun and Wickham's fancy to be all-around dependable lures. Toward evening, when daylight is disappearing, a fly of lighter hue is recommended, so that the angler may be able to see the insect plainly both when it is in the air and on the water. At this time a valuable fly is the pale evening dun, the willow-fly, or the Jenny spinner, while the favorite fly of many at this time of the day—in fact, of some anglers all through the

The Favorite Old Coachman

day—is the well-known old favorite, the coachman, “tied dry,” of course. Since my last trip to the trout streams, in the summer of 1911, I have received a complete set of the latest Halford patterns, and hope to try many of them in the season of 1912. I have no doubt that no American angler need hesitate to go upon our streams with these imitations and no others.

CHAPTER XVI

The History of the Floating Fly and Some of Its Interesting Literature

WHO invented the artificial floating fly and the methods of using it?

During the winter months of 1910-11, the author read in the neighborhood of one hundred and fifty angling books, or at least looked carefully over their pages, having in mind, incidentally, the idea of discovering, if possible, the first mention of the dry-fly in angling literature. In one old book, published about a century ago, he found a story of a French angler living in Scotland who tied his imitation flies in what the author called "a peculiar

The Dry-Fly in Its Infancy

way," so that they "floated longer on the surface of the water after being cast than the ordinary wet fly." But in reading Mr. G. P. R. Pulman's "Vade-Mecum of Fly-Fishing for Trout," published in 1851, I came across what seemed to be a description of our present-day theory of the dry-fly. This subject, I have since learned, was mentioned in a much smaller edition of Mr. Pulman's work, published in 1846. In the summer of 1911, I wrote to Mr. R. B. Marston, of London, asking for information about the early history of the dry-fly in England, and he in turn consulted Mr. William Senior, the well-known "Red Spinner" of angling literature. Mr. Senior referred to Mr. Pulman's book as containing the first mention of the dry-fly of which he was aware, but added: "I am now away from all my

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books and papers and cannot give you a definite reply to your question." Mr. Marston, in sending to me Mr. Senior's letter, said: "I feel sure it was in Pulman's 'Vade-Mecum,' 1846, that Mr. Senior discovered one of the first references to dry-fly fishing, though in earlier works there have been remarks which make one feel pretty certain it was not an unknown art."

Feeling sure that all who are interested in the floating fly will find entertainment in reading Mr. Pulman's early description of it, I quote from his book at some length: "It is impossible to give infallible directions for the use of particular flies at every particular time, although we shall elsewhere do all we consider necessary. Much must be left to the angler's own judgment; but we advise him to be careful of falling into the error of con-

Mr. Pulman's Theories

stantly changing his flies when fishing, thereby perplexing himself, and, generally speaking, wasting time. Fish are proverbially capricious, and many of their habits, in regard to feeding and otherwise, depend on circumstances which, with all our knowledge of natural history, are not understood. The angler, therefore, must not be too ready to attribute his want of success at any time to a mistake in the selection of his fly. There are many circumstances to which it may with greater justice be traced. For instance, a certain fly is often thoughtlessly said to be refused by fish on the sole account of its dissimilarity to some supposed favorite species, when a little observation would lead to another conclusion—a conclusion perhaps very different from the probably correct one, in many cases, of the unskilfulness of the

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angler. But supposing this to be otherwise—supposing even the angler to be expert, and to have a good imitation of the fly at which the fish are rising well—say a fly of the dun tribe, prevalent on every water. He makes his casts admirably. In the gentle stickle which hugs the opposite bank, a line of trout are rising gloriously, but not one of them is attracted by his well-presented lure. He throws, and throws, and throws again, but still with the same result. He is at a loss to account for the cause, except that it must be evidently something or other wrong in his fly. No such thing. We admit the fly to be a good imitation, to be nicely cast over rising fish repeatedly, time after time, and yet with not a rise is poor Piscator favored. Well, how is this? Piscator does not see—he is so wrapped up in the make of his

Feeding Fish Fastidious

fly—that something more than make is necessary; that under certain circumstances an imitation of the *action* of the natural fly is indispensable, and that when that action is not supplied, as in the present case, success cannot be had. But Piscator should reflect, and the seeming mystery would be unfolded thus: The fish are feeding, as they delight to do, upon flies ephemeral, and have, perhaps, as the season advanced, become somewhat fastidious in their selection of particular species. Well, at the time in question, the line of fish in the stickle under the opposite bank aforesaid are gastronomically moved toward a certain species of the class of flies referred to, every one of which is characterized by the habit of *floating upon the surface of the water* in reverse of the phryganidæ, which generally hover above it and flit about

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the banks. Impelled by some peculiarity of the atmosphere, or by some other cause which we cannot, and need not if we could, explain, the fish have come close to the surface to watch for their prey, which can thus be easily seized as the victims float along without further trouble on the part of the fish than gently lifting their mouths above the water. Now, the angler's fly is wet and heavy, and, thrown from the other side, has a certain weight of line in addition. So, as it is not in the nature of things that this soaked artificial fly can swim upon the surface as the natural ones do, it follows the alternative and sinks *below* the rising fish, the notice of which it entirely escapes, because they happen just then to be looking *upward* for the materials of their meal. Let a dry-fly be substituted for the wet one, the line

Heavy Odds Against a Trout

switched a few times through the air to throw off its superabundant moisture, a judicious cast made just above the rising fish, and the fly allowed to float toward and over them, and the chances are ten to one that it will be seized as readily as a living insect. This dry-fly, we must remark, should be an imitation of the natural fly on which the trout are feeding, because if widely different the fish, instead of being allured, would most likely be *surprised* and *startled* at the novelty presented, and would suspend feeding until the appearance of their favorite and familiar prey.

“We mention this as an illustration of the importance of imitating *action*, and must not be understood to recommend the constantly substituting of a dry-fly for a wet one, over every rising fish. Better, as a general rule, when

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the angler, after a few casts, finds the fish over which he throws unwilling to be tempted, pass on in search of a more willing victim. This caution is the more necessary, because anglers too often expect to take *every* rising fish over which they throw; whereas it is really only under particular circumstances, and in favorable situations, that the motions of the natural insect can be so imitated as to prove successful, unless the fish are ravenous and seize everything presented to them—a state of things not often experienced.

“There is much common sense in the following remarks by a writer in the *Sporting Review*: ‘A fish, as may be witnessed from a bank, when on the feed, lies with his nose peering over a shore or ledge of rock, and pointed up the stream, ready to take

Duns Numerous and Popular

the flies as they float downward, provided there be nothing obtrusive in their appearance to awaken his suspicions and restrain his appetite until the fly is past. The object is not so much to awaken his appetite by a fly more attractive than the natural one, which you can hardly expect to achieve, as to avoid startling the fish when he has seen your fly and would take it, among others, if there were nothing obtrusive in its appearance.'

“For this reason we recommend imitations of the duns as standard flies. There is not a river in the kingdom on which some species of this beautiful tribe of ephemeral flies is not to be found daily throughout the fishing season, and generally more numerous than any other fly. The fish are familiar with and fond of them, and their varieties are extremely numerous. We

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have for many years fished with hardly any other flies than the red palmer and some shades of the duns, lighter or darker, larger or smaller, according to the particular states of the water and atmosphere, and the result is, our full concurrence in the remark of Mr. Ronalds, that 'the duns form the sheet-anchor of the fly-fisher's practice.'"

As Mr. Frederic M. Halford has been referred to frequently as the greatest of writers on the dry-fly, a subject so fascinating to an angler, a list of his books, in the order in which they appeared, is given: "Floating Flies and How to Dress Them," 1886; "Dry-Fly Fishing in Theory and Practice," 1889; "Making a Fishery," 1895; "Dry-Fly Entomology," 1897; "An Angler's Autobiography," 1903; "The Modern Development of the Dry-Fly," 1910. Another book is now on the

Interesting Dry-Fly Books

press, "The Dry-Fly Man's Handbook." Among other English books interesting to the dry-fly angler may be mentioned: "The Book of the Dry-Fly," G. A. B. Dewar, 1896; "The Science of Dry-Fly Fishing and Salmon-Fly Casting," Fred. G. Shaw, 1907, and "Dry-Fly Fishing for Trout and Grayling," by "Red Quill" (James Englefield), 1908.

Angling history does not inform us how long the dry-fly has been used, in its very limited way, upon American streams. The author has read many American works on angling, and the first reference to genuine dry-fly fishing that he has so far discovered in an American book is a short description of English chalk stream methods in Dr. Edward Breck's "The Way of the Woods," published in 1908.

Mr. Thad. Norris, known in his day

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as "the dean of American anglers," approached very closely to the theories of the dry-fly angler of to-day, when, in his interesting work, "The American Angler's Book," published in 1864, he advised wetting the line occasionally to make it heavier, saying: "The weight of the line thus increased helps the cast. If it could be accomplished, the great desideratum would be to keep the *line wet* and the *flies dry*. I have seen anglers succeed so well in their efforts to do this by the means just mentioned, and by whipping the moisture from their flies, that the stretcher and dropper would fall so lightly, and remain so long on the surface, that a fish would rise and take the fly before it sank."

In the same chapter Mr. Norris gives a specific instance of this style of fishing: "It occurred at a pool beneath

A Veteran Learns a Lesson

the fall of a dam on the Willowemoc, at a low stage of water—none running over. The fish were shy and refused every fly I offered them, when my friend put on a grannom for a stretcher and a Jenny spinner for a dropper. His leader was of the finest gut and his flies fresh, and by cracking the moisture from them between each throw, he would lay them so lightly on the glassy surface that a brace of trout would take them at almost every cast and before they sank or were drawn away. He had tied these flies and made his whip especially for his evening cast on this pool, and as the fish would not notice mine I was obliged to content myself with landing his fish, which in a half hour counted several dozen. Here was an exemplification of the advantage of *keeping one's flies dry.*”

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Mr. Genio C. Scott, another one of the best-known American angling writers of his day, relates an incident in his "Fishing in American Waters" (1869), that seems to show that a knowledge of our present day dry-fly methods would have been almost as valuable to him in fishing *wilderness waters* as it has been claimed by the author to be when used to-day on our much-fished streams. He was at the celebrated Middle Dam Camp, at the foot of Mollychunkemunk Lake, Me. He says: "It is here that I met a new experience in the character of trout, and think it worth relating for the benefit of anglers. While I believe that trout are not generally so discriminating in the selection of artificial flies as to evince acuteness of vision, yet I have experienced that at certain waters, when the streams are low and clear, a

Facetious Anglers Pleased

copy of the living fly is more or less necessary to success. This is the case at the pool and rapids at the middle dam at the head of Rapid River, where a large shoal of apparently educated trout keep leaping and tumbling so that fifty to one hundred speckled beauties of from two to five pounds weight are always in sight. But it used to be said that they would not take an artificial fly; so, schoolboy-like, the guests at the camp sent every angler on his arrival 'to try below the dam,' as a sell. It pleased them to see a fresh man's face glow at the first sight of those sportive beauties, which acted as if half in coquetry and half in defiance of anglers. I felt thankful when witnessing the self-denying hospitality which prompted several anglers, who were entire strangers to me, to cease angling opposite the camp for

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the sole purpose of showing me a pool full of very anxious trout." Mr. Scott tried many casts, "rested the pool" frequently, and devoted two days to furnishing in this manner amusement to the anglers of the camp, and doubtless to the fish as well. After having exhausted the entire stock of flies in his book, the next day he sat on the dam and watched the rising fish to discover what they were feeding on. Soon he saw a trout rise gracefully and swallow an ash-colored midge which had floated down from the dam. "On looking around me," he continued, "I saw a cloud of drab ephemera rather larger than mosquitoes, swarming over the dry timber dam, and ever and anon as one fell on the water, a trout rose very gracefully and swallowed it." He soon found in his fly-book an ash-midge, closely resembling

Mr. Scott Turns the Laugh

the real insect, and immediately began taking the big fish, at last turning the laugh upon the guests who had sent him to this pool as a huge joke.

As Mr. Scott, completely foiled after two days' hard work, sat on the dam and discovered not only that the trout were taking an ash-midge, but that they took it as it *floated* to them, who can doubt that this contemplative angler, with a vast knowledge of fish and fishing, presented his imitation in the same manner as the original insect had been offered to the trout, namely, by *floating it down?*

Does it not strike the reader as somewhat curious that both these skilful and experienced anglers, Mr. Norris and Mr. Scott, having had presented to them in such a forceful manner the great advantage of using, at least under certain conditions, a floating imitation

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of a natural insect, apparently did not pursue the subject further than the incidental mention, as quoted above, of this method of angling?

For many years a comparatively small number of enthusiastic American anglers have fished certain well-known Eastern streams with the dry-fly. For several seasons it has been the favorite lure, in the fall, of ouananiche anglers on some of the Maine streams. A few of the devotees of the floating fly have become so fascinated by dry-fly methods that they will use no other lure in fishing for trout. Their success has been so great in taking trout in summer from some of the low, clear streams of New York, that others frequenting these waters have eagerly adopted their method. But at present it cannot be said that the use of the dry-fly has become at all general

The Dry-Fly Winning Its Way

in America. No longer ago than the spring of 1911, one of the largest New York dealers in fishing tackle—one of the few who have carried a stock of floating flies for a number of years—told the author that in his opinion there were not more than one hundred real dry-fly fishermen in the United States. During the past year, however, interest in this method of angling has been increasing rapidly, and the dry-fly bids fair to occupy as important a place in America as it now occupies in England. Heretofore it has not fought for recognition; it has been almost totally neglected by American angling writers, and has been lightly tossed aside by many anglers as an English fad. As it becomes better known the beauties of its methods cannot help appealing to expert fly-fishermen and winning a way to their hearts.

APPENDIX

THE PROPER EQUIPMENT FOR A DRY-FLY ANGLER DESCRIBED BRIEFLY

Clothing.—Optional with wearer, but inconspicuous clothes of some dark color are strongly recommended.

For Wading.—Light wading stockings or trousers desirable, with heavy-soled brogues, hob-nailed; always wear heavy woollen socks between waders and brogues to prevent the wading stockings from being injured by sand and gravel.

Rod.—Split-bamboo with good backbone, from nine to ten feet long; weight, from four and one-half to six ounces. Perhaps the best all-around rod is one nine and one-half feet long, weighing about five and one-half ounces.

Line.—English enameled and water-proofed, tapered; weight to fit the rod,

Appendix

but as a general rule E is the proper size.

Reel.—Single click, of a weight that balances rod properly.

Leader.—Standard dry-fly leader is nine feet long, tapered from heavy gut at the line end to finest undrawn at the fly end. When casting against a strong wind a leader of six feet is more easily managed.

Fly Boxes.—Several kinds of boxes made to hold eyed-flies may be found in the leading tackle stores. One good pattern is a box having twelve or fifteen compartments for dry-flies, with transparent covers. Another is a box with patent clips, holding the hook by the bend.

Landing Net.—Almost any good net will do, so long as the handle is not too long. There are several styles of folding nets that are very convenient for stream fishing. Do not choose one of the smallest nets made, as trouble may follow when a large fish is hooked.

Appendix

Creel.—Any one of the various styles of willow baskets. Canvas creels are convenient, but do not keep the fish in such good condition as those made of willow.

Oil.—One of the several preparations made for oiling dry-flies, or white odorless, stainless paraffin oil, sold by dealers in oil and paint.

Oiler.—A bottle of glass or metal having a small brush in the stopper. Various kinds of oilers, made especially for the purpose, are kept in stock by dealers.

Scissors and Tweezers.—A small pair of scissors, vest-pocket size, or a combination gut cutter and tweezers, for cutting off superfluous ends of gut.

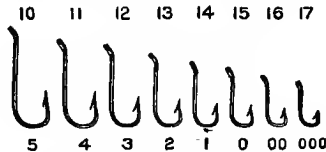
Deer Fat.—A small can of deer fat for greasing lines; this keeps the line in good condition and makes it float.

Leader Book.—Convenient and necessary for carrying leaders. A book with chamois pockets keeps leaders in good condition.

Appendix

Leader Box.—Contains felt pads for keeping leaders moist. Put leaders in box at least an hour before using, but be sure and remove them at the end of the day.

Flies.—The following list of flies is recommended by the author for use on American streams. To give a *complete*



list of all flies that might be used at times to advantage, would be undesirable and confusing, as their name is legion. For American waters flies tied on larger hooks than those commonly used on the English chalk streams are strongly recommended. Many expert American anglers use dry-flies tied on No. 12 and No. 14 hooks. In the accompanying plate, showing hooks of various sizes, the English way of num-

Appendix

bering them (called the "new style") is shown by the figures below the hooks, while the "old style" commonly used in America is shown by the figures above the hooks:

WHIRLING DUN

Wings.—Medium starling.

Body.—Water rat's fur, tinged with yellow.

Hackle.—Ginger cock.

Whisk.—Red cock's hackle.

WICKHAM'S FANCY

Wings.—Medium, or light starling.

Body.—Flat gold, ribbed with fine gold wire.

Hackle.—Red cock's, run down body.

PALE EVENING DUN

Wings.—Light starling.

Body.—Pale fawn-colored wool; or yellow marten's fur spun on pale fawn-colored silk thread.

Hackle.—Pale dun.

Whisk.—Pale dun hackle.

JENNY SPINNER (HACKLE FLY)

Body.—White floss silk, tied at thorax and tail with four or five turns of deep red-brown silk.

Appendix

Hackle.—Very light dun.

Whisk.—Very light dun hackle.

WILLOW FLY (HACKLE FLY)

Body.—Water rat's or mole's fur, ribbed with yellow silk thread.

Hackle.—Light blue dun.

Whisk.—Blue dun cock's hackle.

ORANGE FISH HAWK (HACKLE FLY)

Body.—Orange silk, ribbed with gold.

Hackle.—Gray.

OLIVE DUN

Wings.—Starling.

Body.—Dyed olive quill.

Hackle.—Dyed yellow olive.

Whisk.—Olive dun cock's hackle.

SOLDIER PALMER (HACKLE FLY)

Body.—Red wool, ribbed with gold.

Hackle.—Red cock's from head to tail.

SILVER SEDGE

Wings.—Landrail.

Body.—White floss (or white condor quill), ribbed with fine silver wire.

Hackle.—Pale sandy ginger cock, from head to tail.

(The well-known Beaverkill is patterned after this fly.)

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RED SPINNER

Wings.—Pale starling.

Body.—Red floss, ribbed with silver gimp or thread; or white horse-hair dyed brown-red.

Hackle.—Red game cock.

Whisk.—Red cock's hackle.

WHITE MILLER

Wings.—Pure white.

Body.—White silk, ribbed with gold.

Hackle.—White.

COACHMAN

Wings.—White.

Body.—Peacock Herl.

Hackle.—Red cock's.

BLACK GNAT

Wings.—Pale starling.

Body.—Peacock quill, dyed black.

Hackle.—Black starling.

MR. HALFORD'S LATEST PATTERNS

Green May-fly, male and female.

Brown May-fly, male and female.

Spent gnat, male and female.

Olive dun, male and female.

Dark olive dun, male and female.

Olive spinner, male and female.

Pale watery dun, male and female.

Appendix

Pale watery spinner, male and female.

Iron-blue dun, male and female.

Iron-blue spinner, male and female.

Blue winged olive, male and female.

Sherry spinner, male and female.

Black gnat, male and female.

Welshman's button, male and female.

Olive (red) spinner, female.

Brown ant.

Small dark sedge.

Medium sedge.

Cinnamon sedge.

