

**ADVENTURES  
IN ANGLING**

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**VAN CAMPEN HEILNER**

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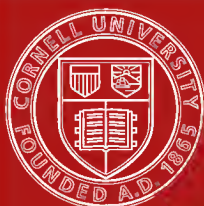
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ADVENTURES IN ANGLING







"Into the air he went with a rush, flinging the silvery spray in all directions." (See page 164.)



# ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

*A Book of Salt Water Fishing*

By

VAN CAMPEN HEILNER

Associate Editor "Field and Stream," Author of "The  
Call of the Surf," etc.

*Illustrated from paintings by Frank Stick  
Photographs by the Author*



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TO  
MY FATHER

WHOSE BELIEF AND ENCOURAGEMENT, SINCE  
MY CHILDHOOD, IN MY LOVE FOR THE GREAT  
OUTDOORS MADE THE WRITING OF THESE "AD-  
VENTURES" POSSIBLE, THIS VOLUME IS LOVINOLY

DEDICATED



## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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# ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

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## CHAPTER I

### IN TURQUOISE SEAS

IMAGINE water so clear that every object on the ocean floor is visible to the naked eye at a depth of sixty or more feet. Imagine those seas swarming with every variety of big game fish imaginable, fish that when they strike can actually snatch you out of the boat if you are not prepared, fish that weigh anywhere from one to one thousand pounds and are the living incarnation of savagery, strength, and gameness, fish that rival the rainbow and the sunsets themselves for colouring and make you wonder if such things really exist. Picture the bare, jagged rocks snarling in angry foam above the surface, moaning out their cry of loneliness and eternity to the ever-wheeling sea-birds; place in the distance the bending palms of a coral coastline and surround the whole with the clear blue Southern sky, and you have a faint conception of the Florida reefs.

· · · · ·  
Billy and I had been dreaming away the winter at Miami. It had been a beautiful winter, nothing unusual for Miami, but an exceptional one it had seemed to us. We had boated, swum, and played

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

tennis to our heart's content. We had loafed down the keys and after our wonderful experiences of the early winter in the Everglades had abstained for a while from fishing and hunting.

But there was something on Billy's mind. I could see it. He had said nothing to me, but still I felt all was not well with him.

"You know," he said, with a wave of his hand towards the passing throngs as we were seated one morning on the hotel piazza, "you know, all this is getting rather on my nerves."

"What's the matter, want to go home?" I inquired.

"No, not that exactly, but . . . hullo, there's some one looking for you."

A bellboy came up and handed me a telegram. I tore it open and read:

Long Key, Mar 8

Sailfish in stream in great schools Seven today Better come. Fred.

I passed the telegram on to Billy and with one accord we both rose.

"I'll get the grub," I said, "you overhaul the engine and straighten things up."

That little yellow message had been the spark that fanned to flame our long suppressed longings. We were off once more out under the fleecy clouds and the singing wind. We were headed southward.

The next morning we watched Miami fade astern, and sliding along through the shallow shoals of Biscayne Bay, by afternoon had picked up the first of the

## IN TORQUOISE SEAS

verdant isles that marks the great chain of keys stretching onward and outward to Key West.

The *Nepenthe* seemed to know she was once more outward bound and churned ahead, thrilling in every fiber at the idea.

That night saw us at Jewfish, where we amused ourselves by graining enough crawfish to make a delicious "after-the-theater" supper, Billy forever disgracing himself and his digestion by eating eleven of the succulent crustaceans.

The dawn found us under way and headed south through the twisting channels and banks. Soon the great white trestles of Channels #2 and #5, those famous tarpon grounds, loomed in the distance, and a little later we were passing the coral shore of Long Key.

From a quarter of a mile away I could distinguish Fred, standing on the dock waving his arms, and, as we landed, he jumped aboard to give us that welcome one always finds at the famous fishing camp.

The place was deserted, for everyone was out on the reefs, so we wandered up to the traps and amused ourselves until luncheon breaking the clay birds that skimmed so elusively out over the crystal waters.

We transgressed that day from our own cooking and indulged in a good meal at the camp, real fresh vegetables, milk, and fruit, with the ever-present music of the palms whispering outside the dining-room.

That afternoon we went in swimming, wading

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

along the shore, exploring the coral rocks for queer shells and beautiful sea fans which abounded in every crevice and shallow pool. I came across a family of sea-pigeons, gelatinous-like creatures which flapped slowly along the bottom and which, when touched, doubled themselves up into queer knots and sent forth a heavy purplish fluid, not unlike that emitted by the squid family. Another queer fish that I found seemed to be of the flying variety. It would lie perfectly motionless in a bunch of seaweed at my approach, but when I reached down to seize it, would skim across the surface and fall with a tiny splash into another shallow pool. It was all very interesting and wonderful and I never tired of it.

Billy was farther up the beach, shooting sharks with a .22. I could hear the frequent whine of his rifle and see a splash as a gray fin would go careening seaward. It was fascinating sport, harmless to both, for I doubt if the gray sea-tiger even felt the sting of the tiny ball.

Refreshed from our bath we went to sleep in a big cocoanut grove, lulled into dreamland by the murmuring of the great leaves and the lap, lap of the water on the shell-strewn sand.

We had made arrangements for the morrow with my old captain, Charlie Miller, who had piloted both Billy and myself through many adventurous days along the reefs in previous winters, and the gentle winds and cloudless skies gave us good reasons to hope that our luck of other days might be duplicated.



## IN TORQUOISE SEAS

The following morning was perfect and we set out for the reef with high hopes. We both were fishing with light tackle, and let me say right at the beginning, it is the *only* tackle. I have taken big game fish on a bass rod, but that is what may be termed as "stunt" fishing, to be attempted only when one becomes so filled with vanity that he wishes to do something no one else has ever done. Sometimes he succeeds; sometimes he does not.

But "light tackle," as it is interpreted at Long Key, at Catalina, and at other famous angling resorts, means that the rod shall be of wood, consisting of a butt and tip and to be not shorter than six feet over all, the butt to be not over fourteen inches in length, the tip to weigh not more than six ounces, and the line not to exceed the standard nine thread.

This is light tackle in every sense of the word, the highest type of sportsmanship wherein the angler and the fish stand practically an equal chance, the odds being in the fish's favor. And another point is this: release all the fish possible. Save only those which you are going to have mounted, or which you know are of such unusual weight that they will break a long-held record or win you exceptional honor.

The one great thing that the American sporting fraternity needs drilled into it, and it can be repeated none too often, is conservation, *Conservation!* If the reader has seen some of the sights I have seen: hundreds, yes, thousands of pounds of wonderful game fish brought into the docks, merely to be photographed and thrown away

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

for shark bait, he would say in the plain language of an old guide of mine, that the person who is guilty of such an act is no sportsman, but a "damn hog"!

But to get back to my story. The day *was* beautiful, and for fishing, thrice beautiful. Soon we both had our baits out, nice juicy half sides of mullet, and were chugging slowly along over the wonderful sea gardens of the reef, nerves tensed for that first smashing strike that would send the blood coursing and throbbing through our veins.

Billy was the lucky one. A big barracuda suddenly rose to the surface, made a dash at his bait, swerved off, came back, swimming rapidly close behind it, shied again, and suddenly seizing it in his great jaws, plunged off, throwing the water skyward in a thumping splash. The sport was on.

There is no gainsaying the barracuda. He is a fighter. Ask any of the great anglers, and see what they tell you. The barracuda is a living wonder when hooked on sportsman's tackle.

Onward and outward rushed the great sea-wolf, now leaping, now tearing hundreds of feet of line from Billy's reel, until at last, through utter exhaustion, he was brought near enough for the hook to be slipped from his jaws. With a flirt of his tail he was gone, and none of us was sorry.

About three o'clock that afternoon we struck a school of amber-jack on what is known as the Half Moon Reef, lying to the southeastward. It was a big school, and by constantly keeping fish in

## IN TORQUOISE SEAS

the water until the other fellow was fast, we managed to hold the fish back of the boat until fifteen had been brought to boat and released.

That is a peculiar trait of amber-jack. As soon as I would have a fish beaten, I would hold him back of the boat until Billy had dropped a live grunt into the ravenous jaws of another, and he in turn would keep his fish splashing at the stern until I was hooked into one. As long as there was something there to attract them, the school would remain; but had I unhooked my fish before Billy had fastened on to another one, they would all have left. Their curiosity is no doubt excited by the struggling captive which they follow around as he madly attempts to escape. A school of barracuda would tear the fish from your line, but not so with amber-jack. Like a great many humans who rush madly to the scene of an accident, they gather around to determine the cause of their companion's queer actions.

The late Mr. Eccles once took on Alligator Reef forty-two of the great fish within a few hours, merely by keeping a big school of them back of his boat through this "curiosity method."

During the amber-jack episode I happened to peer over the side and noticed what I thought was a very large grouper. After the amber-jack had gone I thought I would try and see if I could hook him, so putting on a fat wriggling grunt, I lowered him carefully over the side. The next moment I regretted my action, for a great form rose from off the bottom and took in my little grunt with one gulp. With a

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

cry of despair I saw that I had hooked a huge jewfish, possibly a four- or five-hundred-pounder.

There was nothing to do but cut the line, for I had no mind to exhaust myself over such a mammoth in such deep water. In the creeks and channels it might have been different, but the jewfish is not game, he is but a curiosity at the most, so it was with great relief that I saw him sink out of sight amongst the hazy rocks.

We decided to try that afternoon for kingfish on the inshore grounds. These fast game fellows of the mackerel tribe never failed to supply us with the maximum of sport and were doubly appreciated for their eating qualities. They would rush at the bait, very often missing it and come shooting into the air, turning like some graceful rocket to come darting down, rarely missing the bait as they hit the water. How these fish could turn in mid-air and almost invariably grab the bait on the downward plunge was a constant wonder to me.

"Great day! Look at that!" shouted Billy, as a long slender form went shooting skyward, propelled by a wonderful tail. Turning gracefully in mid-air, it shot downward straight as an arrow, striking the bait with a smashing splash.

Billy's rod bent nearly double and the slender line was whisked from the reel like the crack of a whip. This fish was a bird, but took much longer than usual, for some strange reason. The explanation was apparent when he came alongside. In falling upon the bait, he had missed, but the hook was caught

## IN TORQUOISE SEAS

in his cheek, holding him successfully by the gill-cover. We saw that he was a record fish, so lifted him carefully into the boat. Later, at camp, he weighed forty pounds and made a delicious meal for us all.

A fish greatly resembling the kingfish is the wahoo or peto. In fact, there is such a striking resemblance that it is almost impossible to tell them apart unless seen side by side.

I hooked a wahoo once. That was as far as it went, however. To be frank with you, it went so far in the other direction that I never saw my beautiful reef rig again, nor twelve hundred feet of the finest 9-thread line that was ever spun. I sat as in a daze nursing a badly blistered thumb and gazing stupidly at the spot where my line had vanished into the deep.

That afternoon we hooked in less than an hour eighteen kingfish, releasing fourteen.

We had not fished for sailfish that day on account of the lack of balao, their favorite bait. The balao is a small fish, resembling somewhat a gar, and may be put on the hook whole, making with its silvery sides, dark-green back, and orange fins, a most attractive lure indeed.

The following morning, however, there were plenty on hand and we sallied forth well supplied with balao. We passed over the reefs, their beautiful purple-green waters beckoning to us invitingly, but did not stop, for we were after greater game that day. Outward, ever eastward, Cap steered the boat,

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

until in the distance we could see the edge of that mighty river, which flows on forever, bearing on its crest warmth and perpetual summertime—the Gulf Stream.

The waters of the Gulf Stream are of the most beautiful color that one can imagine—a blending of all the blues in the world into one wonderful blue, deeper and more gorgeous than them all, clear as crystal, and yet, at the same time, suggestive of great depths.

We had not been in the Stream long before Cap saw a sailfish jump, way off to the left, about a mile away. We headed for the spot where the splash of white foam had appeared, and upon reaching it started trolling slowly along.

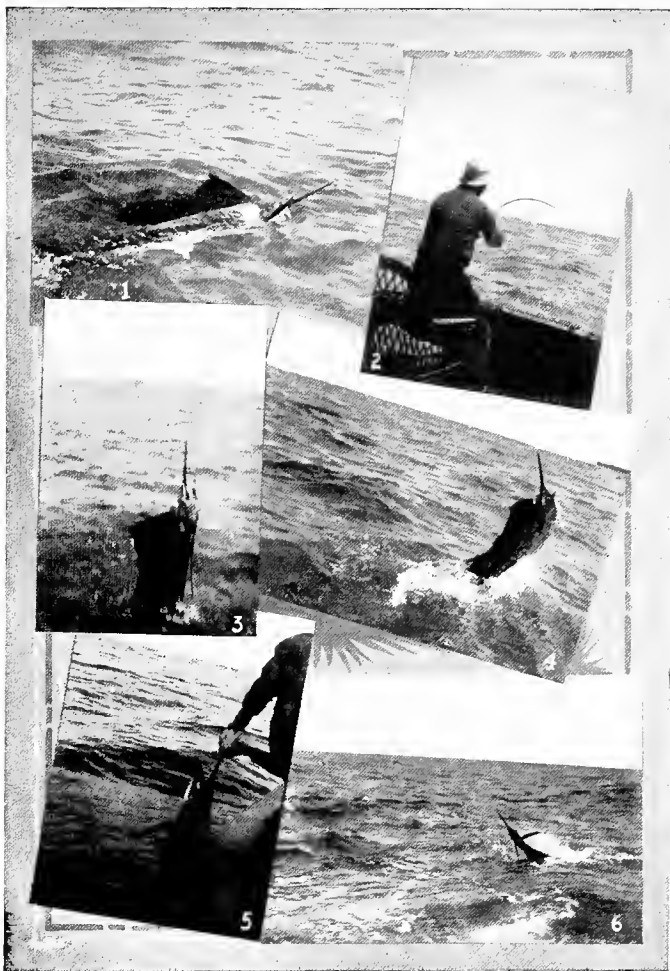
It seemed but a moment before Billy raised his hand as a signal that he had felt a tap and commenced to let back line. The next instant his rod buckled downward and he was hooked. The water boiled with an angry roar and off the fish sped, tearing yard after yard from the humming reel.

“He’s off . . . No, I’ve got him . . . No, he’s gone!” and Billy dejectedly reeled in his line.

“Look out, Campen!”

Back of the bait I had idly been letting out, a long bronze form had suddenly appeared, giving my balao a quick rap with its long bill. By paying out line I gave as good an imitation of a wounded balao as I knew how, and was rewarded by the surging strike of the great swordsman.

Off he rushed, throwing the spray high, bounding



## SAILFISH

1. "his last slow circling, too tired out for leaping."
2. "my enjoyment comes from seeing the rod try to go double."
3. "hurtle skyward . . ."
4. "pirouetting in a wild barbaric dance."
5. "Cap seized him skillfully by the beak."
6. "Shadow wrestling."

*(Photos by Richard Henry Coke and William Barber Haynes)*





## IN TORQUOISE SEAS

away across the rolling blue, now under, now out—leaping, twisting, plunging, a wonderful example of deep-sea acrobatics. He was a surface fighter, pure and simple; they all are, and I thrilled in the glory and wondrous excitement of it all.

It took fifty-two minutes exactly, by the watch, for me to master the beautiful creature, and as he came slowly up to the boat on his side, and Cap seized him skillfully by the beak, I was only too glad to see the hook taken from his jaws and watch him swim away.

I wondered what his thoughts must be, if he had any, and if he would tell his companions of the terrible balao which had given him such a fearful struggle.

We were now both on the alert, for two sailfish together was a good indication of more in the neighbourhood. How soon would we again get a strike?

It wasn't long. I saw Billy stiffen suddenly in his chair, and at the same time my rod was jerked backward violently.

Amber-jack? We looked inquiringly at each other. For several minutes we were unable to ascertain the nature of our quarry, but then my fish came to the surface and we saw it was a dolphin.

Shall I ever forget that sight! It seemed like a ball of fire poised on the crest of the wave, a flash of colour so brilliant and multi-hued that it surpasses description.

We immediately exercised the utmost precaution in handling our fish, as the sight of such a burst of

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

glorious iridescence in a member of the finny tribe made us desirous of observing them at close range.

Soon we had them vanquished and the fish were brought up to the boat, doggedly contesting every foot of the way. We gazed down at one of the most beautiful sights it has ever been my good fortune to witness.

Imagine a long slender fish with the body the thickness of a sword blade; a curved, domed head; small, beautiful eyes; a wonderful dorsal fin stretching from head to tail; endow it with the colour of a thousand rainbows, and you will know something of what Billy and I saw that balmy morning, far out in the mysterious Gulf Stream.

Never have I seen such colour anywhere. To my mind came the recollection of the blue of the Mediterranean, the purple haze of distant mountain peaks, the colours of many wonderful sunsets; topaz, emerald, amethyst, azure, sapphire, cerulean, and a myriad others were throbbing and melting in these marvelous fish.

They were lifted aboard and laid on the deck, where, as they lay dying, we watched their brilliant hues fade and glow with waves of colour and beauty that benumbed the senses.

If such colour could only be preserved! But alas, when the dolphin is dead, it no longer resembles the living rainbow it has been.

As far as I am aware, no dolphin has ever been kept alive in captivity, but if such were the case,

## IN TORQUOISE SEAS

artists and lovers of the beautiful would come in multitudes to see it.

It is futile to attempt to describe it accurately; it is only doing it an injustice. To be appreciated it must be seen.

I could not help but think of that verse of Byron's:

“Parting day

Dies like the dolphin, whom each pang embues

With a new colour, as it gasps away.

The last still loveliest, till—'tis gone—and all is gray.”

Our experience with the dolphin practically ended our fishing for that day. We sighted another sail, cruising slowly along the surface, but though we trolled the bait back and forth across his track, he refused to notice it.

It is a much-mooted question among anglers as to whether surface fish will strike. I know when tarpon are rolling at the surface, it is a rare day indeed when you hook one, and with sailfish it is almost the same; they generally sink before striking.

We headed back towards camp, soon picking up the distant palms of the key and the long white line of the viaduct. It had been a great day for all.

The rest of that week we fished sailfish steadily, but for some unaccountable reason they became very scarce. We tried the edge of the Stream, the outer reef, and one day ran some twenty miles into the

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Stream, but all to no avail; the sailfish had apparently vanished into thin air (water, I should say).

At last Billy and I grew disgusted. We could have gone on the reef, or along the kingfish grounds, and taken a ton of fish, had we so desired, but sailfish was our ambition and sailfish we would have.

There came an afternoon, however, when Billy and I wandered down to the dock to see the boats come in. We watched them one after another buck the strong tide of the arches, swing through the viaduct, and come chugging in to the wharf. Kingfish, grouper, muttonfish, a few big barracuda—the usual run, and we were turning away when we saw one more boat come in sight. It was that of the famous forester, Gifford Pinchot, and as he came nearer, he mounted onto the side and held aloft in both arms a dark form.

“Here’s your fish!” he called across the sunset waters to Fred, who was standing looking on. “He’ll make a beautiful mount, and see that you do your best with him!”

It was a sailfish, a wonder, a seven-footer, and we all crowded around, examining the beautiful colours, the dark-spotted tail, the long pointed rapier.

The fever had seized us once more, and that night we stayed up late laying our plans for the morrow, selecting our tackle, and discussing the technicalities of the why’s and how’s of fishing for this elusive quarry.

The morning found us entering the edge of the Stream, scanning the dark-blue seas for the snowy

## IN TORQUOISE SEAS

splash of a leaping fish. Away to the north we could make out the form of one of the camp boats and we headed for her.

It was the *Bonefish*, and we could see that one of her party was fast in a sailfish. It was a big fish, and the captain shouted across to us that already it had been on over an hour. Suddenly it broke water and tore off across the waves, leaving a wide, white path of foam behind it. We called congratulations to the angler and sheered off just in time for Billy to have a violent strike. It was a sailfish, all right, but he had struck so hard that we had all been fooled into believing it something else.

For the next hour and a half I witnessed one of the most thrilling battles between an angler and a big fish I have ever seen. The sailfish was a huge one, a monster, and he fought with all the desperation and cunning of his tribe. Billy was cool as ice and hysterically excited by turns, but kept his wits and handled the game in a masterly fashion.

At one time there was a bare twenty-five yards left on the reel and we all watched anxiously. But it was the turning point of the struggle. The fish was beaten, and we knew it.

"Hurrah!" yelled Cap excitedly, doing a breakdown on the cabin roof. "He's yours! By golly," he added, "if we land this fellow we beat a record!"

Now the fish was coming up slowly, and as we saw his huge dimensions we gasped in astonishment. He was a whale, a mammoth. As in a haze I saw visions of cups, rods, medals, and trophies pass

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slowly in review; Billy's picture in all the papers, his name inscribed forever in the halls of fame. Then I dimly heard Cap's voice breaking into my dream.

"Just a little closer, Mr. Bill," he pleaded, "just a little closer . . . Oh Lord!"

The line snapped at the leader.

We sat speechless, watching the sailfish of a century fade slowly away out of sight through the dark blue waters.

"Hell!" screamed Billy in a wild rage, hurling his rod to the floor and striding up and down the cockpit. "That's what comes of being born in Jersey!"

Cap and I could only sympathize with him. We hadn't even the heart to say, "You should have done this, or, if you'd only have done that." It was hard luck in the worst form, and we recognized it.

This is a good place to end my story. Don't think for a moment that Billy's great piece of misfortune dimmed our ardour; quite the contrary; it stimulated it, and we kept at it until both of us had secured a splendid trophy, all that our hearts could wish.

The sailfish is a comparatively recent addition to the big-game angler's curriculum. A few years ago, when the first one was taken in Florida, no one could identify it. Now there are several clubs devoted exclusively to fishing for sailfish. He is the king of the outer reefs, and he reigns supreme.

As I sit in my study to-night, gazing into the

## IN TORQUOISE SEAS

dying embers, I suddenly seem to see a great bronze form, topped by an indigo sail, hurtle skyward through a mass of creamy foam, and go speeding away, plunging, diving, leaping, to melt in the far distance into the blue, blue waters of the marvelous Gulf Stream.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SEA HORSE

THIS is the tale of a horse—not the horse's tail of which Mark Twain so aptly wrote—but the story of a real, live, flesh-and-blood equine, who reigned supreme on a lonely island where the gray sand dunes faced the miles of roaring breakers, and the nesting sea-birds paid homage to his solitary court.

'Twas early summer, when the ocean was at its bluest, the beaches at their whitest, and the fishing coming into its glory, that we hauled anchor on the *Nepenthe* and set sail. Far southward over the sparkling reaches of old Barnegat, past lonely white-capped inlets, where the outgoing tide moaned a sad farewell, we sped on our way, our thoughts and time, for the present, devoted entirely to that one absorbing topic which all good surf fishermen should hold paramount to their business, home, and family—channel-bass.

As dusk rose out of the east and pressed close the dying sun, we came to anchor in the shelter of the fairest and loneliest of sandy islands that wards off the stern Atlantic along the coast of southern Jersey.

But another boat had preceded us, a boat we knew, one containing old friends, such as Sid, and



## THE SEA HORSE

Bill, and Harry, and Link, companions of many memories and of former glorious days along the shifting shoals.

On this barren sand spit stood a coast guard station, the only touch of humanity visible for many miles. Peopled by a bluff and hardy crew, who welcomed the infrequent visitor in a manner nothing less than royal, it was always, to us, an oasis, to which we repaired on lazy summer evenings, or on storm-swept autumn nights, when the wild nor'easters beat mercilessly down upon the desert coast.

We had a hasty supper on board, and made ready to hike across the dunes to the beach, for the tide would be high around two the next morning, and we must fish it up its entire length.

A heavy mist had set in from the sea when we left the boats. We trudged silently along, in two's and three's, the lanterns blinking and swinging like great goblin fireflies through the gray gloom.

Against the great curtain of fog our shadows appeared of Gargantuan proportions, now dwindling to little gnome-like figures, now suddenly shooting again to a height of thirty feet or more. It was weird. It was uncanny. And we spoke in whispers, as if perhaps we had provoked the spirits of the buccaneers who used to roam these shores, and who, perhaps, were accompanying us to guard against our finding their hidden riches.

The slough at last. And as we assembled our tackle, and one by one disappeared in the darkness,

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

the ghostly shadows went also—each shadow accompanying the man he was guarding.

As I left the cheery glow of the lantern, my shadow gradually melted into the mist, but I felt all the same that he was still out there in the void, watching and waiting lest I should approach too near the secret burial place.

I waded out on a long bar, over which in the semi-darkness I could see the white lines of surf rolling in frothy windrows. Making my cast, I stepped back and waited. For a long while—nothing. I could feel the slapping of the water against my legs. My feet sanded over and I shifted my position several times.

Then I became aware that something out there in the black pit ahead of me was fooling with my bait. Just a slight movement, hardly perceptible, but there just the same. Whether it was a channel-bass or a skate I could not tell. So I played safe and waited. Nothing happened and I reeled in to find my bait apparently untouched. But I could not have been mistaken. My nerves and senses were keyed up to the point where the slightest movement on the ocean floor made itself felt along the telegraphic communication of my line.

I cast again—and again waited. My heart beat with a slow throb against my breast. Out there might be—who knew? Perhaps the world's record bass. Such is the eternal hope of the fisherman.

As I stood there, scarcely daring to breathe, I became aware of *something* in the gloom off to my



## SURF SOLILOQUIES

1. "White Horses."
2. "The reincarnation of some dreadful sea monster."
3. Sunset by the sea.



## THE SEA HORSE

right, something which appeared to be emerging from the very sea itself. At first I ascribed it to my state of mind, the weird shadows of an hour previous, the tension of waiting for the unknown strike. But no, whatever it was seemed to be approaching in my direction, and as it grew closer, grew larger, until to my startled imagination it appeared at least forty feet high! With measured tread it came slowly on, splashing heavily through the shallows.

Just as I was debating with myself whether to stick it out or make a sprint for the others, I saw what it was. It was a horse—a tall, raw-boned animal, stalking gauntly along through the midnight surf. A short distance from me he stopped and eyed me with friendly interest.

“Hello, neighbour!” he appeared to say, “what takes you out at this time o’night?”

“What takes *you* out?” I felt like replying. “Of all the strange and wonderful . . .”

Having apparently satisfied himself that I was really fishing, and not in any way trespassing upon the rights of his sandy kingdom, he turned and strode back from whence he had come, his figure melting as mysteriously into the mist as it had appeared.

I returned to the lanterns and related my experience. It was not the first time I had heard of the four-footed monarch. In previous years I had often seen his hoofprints along the wash or back among the dunes. But it was my first personal encounter with him. Nor was mine the first midnight meeting.

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

It seems that a good and worthy doctor, an excellent angler, forsooth, had been fishing on just such a night, when the salt mist hung heavy over the beaches, and at short distances objects took on a terrifying size as they will do under such conditions.

Coming apparently out of the depths of the ocean, the horse appeared to the physicist's unbelieving eyes the reincarnation of some dreadful sea monster—an Ichthyosaurus, perhaps—and casting away his rod and reel, the good practitioner retreated at a great speed towards the base of supplies. The horse, believing it was a game in which he was invited to participate, followed after, and once or twice nearly caught up to the doctor. The latter, feeling the hot breath of the monster upon his neck, and the charging hoofs drawing nearer and nearer, believing his last hour was at hand, made a final spurt and reached the camp-fire where he fell prostrate onto the sand in a state of complete exhaustion.

I vowed I would know this strange wanderer of the beaches more intimately, and making a mental note I would do so in the near future, turned my thoughts to the fishing before me.

We fished throughout the entire night without success. A cold, gray morning found four of us still at our posts, tired but warmed by that everlasting spark of hope that never dies in the breast of the surfman. The rest had left us at various hours during the night; some to go to the coast guard station, others to their warm bunks on the boats. I had

## THE SEA HORSE

watched them leave, one by one, hoisting their packs onto their backs and staggering drunkenly away through the dark. One black figure lay on the damp sands not far from us, wrapped up in an old coat—though who it was there was no way of telling.

Sunrise—and with weary feet we trudged back to the boat, had some hot coffee, and turned in, sleeping until those of our companions who had retired at a somewhat earlier hour than we, awoke us with ribald laughter and coarse music which they were offering to the offended gods by means of ukuleles, mouth organs, banjos, and jew's-harps.

The tide made up later that day, so we beguiled the hours exploring the great colony of terns which were situated back in the dunes not far from the fishing grounds. It was a rare and beautiful sight.

For several miles the great expanse of beach had been occupied by thousands of beautiful terns (*Sterna hirundo*) who were busy rearing and feeding their uncountable numbers of offspring. At our approach the terns would rise in clouds, filling the sky with a fluttering Babel of hoarse cries. If perchance we trod unwittingly close to a nest of young, the parent birds would descend from the wheeling, screaming host with cries louder than the rest, and plunge recklessly for us, "zooming" down to within a foot of our heads, over which they would skim with angry screeching. It was a noble example of the bravery of wild things in defense of their young. Veritable giants we must have seemed to them, yet they did not hesitate to attack us, risk-

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

ing all, if only they might drive us from their young ones.

A careful survey of the surrounding beach would soon discover the nests, slight depressions in the sand, only discernible after a close scrutiny. The majority contained eggs, from two to three mottled brown-and-white spheroids resting in each nest. Many contained baby birds, dear little fluffy balls of down, mottled like their recent homes, who crouched, flattened against the beach in cunning emulation of their surroundings.

There were birds in all stages of growth; some four or five days old, others which had been out of the eggs but an hour. And many of the eggs were just picked through, and the thin peeping of the new arrival within was plainly audible. I found one youngster gamely striving to swallow a large white-bait (*Menidia*). He seemed to be having difficulty, but I thought nothing of it. An hour or so later I passed the spot again and discovered him senseless upon the sand. At first I was at a loss to account for the sudden tragedy. Then, bethinking me of the fish I had seen him endeavoring to swallow, I reached down his throat and found it stuck in his windpipe. Upon removing it, he recovered in quick order and was soon clamoring for more.

We saw that day a flock of about twenty-five black skimmers (*Rynchops nigra*), one of the rarest and most beautiful of birds. Flying in a compact flock, with strange cries that resembled nothing as much as the baying of a pack of hounds,



## THE SEA HORSE

they skimmed just above the surface of the sand and sea, their brilliant red, black, and gray colouring presenting a striking contrast to the white sand and blue water.

We wandered back to the slough, pondering over the mystery of life and things in general.

But the tide was right, and the bass were due, so we forgot our neighbours and terns for the present and turned once more to fishing.

Now, around the point, Billy raised his arm in signal, and we saw his rod bend and sway to the rush of a well-hooked bass. The photographers of the party sped to his side, while the others feverishly rebaited and cast out. I have seen it happen repeatedly that immediately after one bass is taken, some other angler receives a strike. But this time proved an exception, and the tide passed the crucial hour and fell lower and lower without any one else getting even a touch.

Billy's fish was a nice one, and he had handled it in a creditable manner. Added to the fact that I had recorded the whole battle on my motion-picture camera, we felt pretty well satisfied with the day's work.

On the marshes to the westward of where our boats lay at anchor was a large rookery of laughing gulls, and as we returned to the *Nepenthe*, we could hear their weird cries floating across the water toward us. Against a dying sun we could see their distant forms fluttering and dipping into the marshy background.

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As I lay in my berth that night my thoughts again reverted to the strange four-footed creature that wandered at will around the barren island. Why not make him serve some good purpose? Not eat him, of course, for as yet our provisions were holding out well, though many of us had acquired a taste for *le feurage* from our French cousins overseas. But his owners, the coast guards, used him but seldom—only for cutting salt hay, probably—and we had a daily use for him. Our packs and rods were all we could carry, as it was, and with the added weight of the motion-picture camera and its tripod, it took considerably more than the ordinary time to reach the beach.

I slept on the idea; and in the morning, after a brief conversation with one of the men from the station, the bargain was completed.

And thus, for the time being, the sea horse ceased his daily wanderings through the white-plumed surf and became subservient to man. Hitched to a two-wheeled beach cart he hauled our accoutrement across the dunes, casting reproachful glances in our direction, as if to say, "How could you!"

That day the big weakfish struck in. The first inkling I had of it was when I happened to look down to where Sid and Billy were seated on a box, some quarter of a mile distant. They were having a heated discussion over something, gesticulating and pointing now to the sea, now along the beach. Those were suspicious symptoms—symptoms that told me of the loss of a large fish. I carried the camera down

## THE SEA HORSE

to where they were and set up in back of them, so as not to miss any opportunity.

Sid scored first with a large weak, and Billy followed a close second with another, both fish weighing over five pounds. Then Billy had a swift rush from another which ceased before he could hook it.

"There he is again!" he called out as the line commenced to run off from beneath his thumb. He struck hard, and his rod nearly cracked with the strain.

"By the seven rings of Saturn! A monster weak!" he shouted.

"If that's a weak, it's a world's record," I rejoined. "Look at that fellow go!"

Then came a surprise for us all. The fish turned and swam parallel with the beach, and as he dashed through an incoming roller, we all gave a cry of surprise.

"A channel-bass!" "You lucky dog!" "Why not give some one else a chance, Bill!"

And as we joked with him and offered encouraging suggestions, which no true angler should ever pay the slightest heed to, he fought him down the glistening sand and finally beached him—thirty-three pounds of salt-sea resistance.

All the luck that day seemed to come to Billy. When the rest of us were around, the bewitching nymph who presided over Pa Neptune's household, and who doles out the fishes to all good surfmen, hid her face. But wherever Billy went, she blushing smiled upon him. Wearied with his strenuous ex-

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

ertions he had gone to sleep in the shade of a friendly barrel, his rod upright in his sandspike and his bait in the water. We had chided him about it, told him what a dastardly and unsportsmanlike thing it was, and though we wished him no misfortune, hoped he would hook a giant stingray which would abscond with his entire outfit.

“Boys, I’m tired,” he explained apologetically, and forthwith collapsed in slumber.

Now, what should his sea-nymph do but send a big channel-bass to devour his bait and speed swiftly away with it. Awakened by the scream of his click, just as the fish was crossing the outer bar, he managed to set the hook and in a dazed condition brought the bass within fifty feet of the beach, where he very gracefully lost it. And upon again offering his bait to the waters he drew forth a large and beautiful weakfish! It was an excellent example of that benison and anathema of all anglers—luck. We, who had fished steadily both night and day, caught nothing. He, who spent most of the days enjoying his favorite pastime “fatigue stuff,” stretched senseless upon the hot sands, caught them while asleep. But such is fishing.

The sea horse had behaved nobly. But he was suffering from his captivity. We could tell he was suffering by the way he looked at us.

“Boys, I don’t like it,” Link told us one afternoon. “That horse has goo-goo eyes, and that’s a bad sign. Whenever you see an animal with eyes like that the best thing to do with him is to have



## THE SAND DUNES OF SOUTH JERSEY

1. The *ultima thule* of surf fishing.
2. Channel-bass—the coppery warrior of the beaches.



## THE SEA HORSE

nothing to do with him. Let's give him his liberty."

It was true. Our friend had a soulful, pleading look in those big brown orbits of his that we could not resist. So we held a council of war and decided to set him free.

And we did. Back to the cruiser we slowly wended our way. "Like smoke wreaths rising from the funeral pyres of gods" we saw the "clouds high banked against the western sky," and over every dune and marshy islet a great peace had settled—the breathless solitude of night.

We unhitched Pegasus and turned him loose. He turned, and without so much as a glance in our direction strode off. The last we saw of him was as he topped the crest of a great shaggy dune, stood for a moment silhouetted against the distant skyline, and was gone.

Where but an instant before his distant form had been the only living thing, now nothing broke the vast solitude of the sandy waste but the far-off moan of the sea and the whisper of the wind through the dry sedge.

## CHAPTER III

### 'NEATH SOUTHERN SKIES

FAR, far to the southward, away at the end of distant Florida lies a wild, little-frequented and seldom-explored region, the great Ten Thousand Islands of the west coast. Sportsmen coming from the east coast occasionally reach Shark River, the most accessible spot of that whole country, or those on the west coast come down as far as Fort Myers, but the vast network of islands, bays, and swamps that lies between is a sealed book to the majority.

From the magic pen of the late Mr. A. W. Dimock, whose *Book of the Tarpon* is a world-wide authority, I first heard the luring call of the Ten Thousand Islands. But one day I picked up a portentous volume on Florida, and in idly scanning the pages came across the following paragraph:

"The Ten Thousand Islands is interesting ground for exploration. This is the one region, besides the Everglades, that is yet to be invaded by civilization. The fastnesses of this remote region have been a safe retreat for years for criminals and social outlaws, but the *sense of aloofness from all the rest of mankind* is what most impresses the person who chances upon that out-of-the-way corner of the world."



## 'NEATH SOUTHERN SKIES

I read no further. It was the spark that kindled the fire. I've always had the *wanderlust* and now it seemed to take a firmer hold on me than ever.

At that time my cruiser was at the builders nearing completion, and I made trips to Bayonne nearly every day in my anxiety to see that she was progressing with all possible speed.

At last she was done! I gazed rapturously at the vision of grace and loveliness as she floated for the first time on the waters, shining under her white paint and shimmering brass.

The summer glided by, filled with golden hours for Billy and me, who fished in the *Nepenthe* from Sandy Hook to Cape May and even along the Delaware shores.

Summer merged into fall and I betook myself to the North Woods on my annual deer hunt, and then, one bleak November morning, I returned to the shore. A wild nor'easter was beating down on the deserted coast and the surf was moaning of the winter to come, when I bade Billy good-bye at Seaside Park.

I watched him as he slowly passed out of sight down the bay, headed for the balmy land of sunshine and flowers.

For the next few weeks I was kept busy overhauling my outfit, purchasing new tackle, etc., etc., and making ready for my departure. Then one day a telegram arrived and I eagerly tore it open. It was dated Miami:

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

“ARRIVED SAFELY, MEET YOU LONG KEY SATURDAY” was what it said, and it was signed “Billy.”

I hardly slept that night nor the next, being continually haunted by droves of tarpon, panthers, deer, and sharks which pursued me for miles, and just when I escaped I would fall into the hands of a gang of murderers.

Thursday I left for New York in a blinding snow-storm, and the same afternoon saw me on the rear end of the observation train, gazing back through the mist of falling flakes at my last glimpse of the North for many a month to come.

The sun was very hot. Despite the fact that many of the windows were open, I was glad, upon looking out, to see the white slender shape of Alligator Light far out on the reef and know that Long Key was only a matter of minutes away and I would be able to get out of this stuffy Pullman.

My car stopped short of the platform, and in endeavoring to descend with all my luggage, I fell and rolled down the embankment, rods, suitcases, and whatnot following in my wake, all seeming to choose my body as their resting-place.

As I scrambled sheepishly to my feet amidst the howls of joy from my fellow-passengers, a great pair of sunburned arms flung themselves around me and I looked into the bronzed face of—Billy.

Gene Hamilton, with whom I had made arrangements some months before, was with him, and together we all carried my baggage down to the dock

## 'NEATH SOUTHERN SKIES

and deposited it in front of the *Nepenthe*. She looked the same, a trifle worn from her long journey, but to me she epitomized about everything in life just then.

Billy and Gene loaded up with ice and water while I strolled up to the camp, that mecca of all devout big-game anglers, and interviewed the hospitable Mr. Schutt, than whom as a genial host there is none better.

When I returned, everything was in readiness, and we lost no time in getting off. The waters of the Bay of Florida lay like glass under the broiling heat of the sun, and the bow of the *Nepenthe* rolled back a wave that gurgled and splashed with a delightful, cooling sound as we sped on our way.

Being familiar with the route as far as Cape Sable, I took the wheel while Gene and Billy prepared lunch.

Several hours after, looming up through the haze, were the outlining sentinels of that vast island region of Cape Sable, and just as dusk settled down, after picking our way through tortuous channels and banks where even the shallow draught of the *Nepenthe* was sometimes too much, we dropped anchor in a place known only to perhaps ten sportsmen who have ever visited Florida—Conkey Bay.

This wonderful bay was discovered a few years ago by the Thompson boys of Miami, who named it in honor of the gentleman whom they were guiding at the time. Should Mr. Conkey by chance read these words, let him have no fears in regard to his

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

fishermen's paradise being fished out; neither I nor Billy shall ever disclose its location, and as Jeffy and Jimmy Thompson are the only guides in Florida who know, and since their services are commandeered a year ahead, and furthermore, as the majority of the anglers prefer the east coast and would not wish to undertake such a long and distant trip, Conkey Bay will remain known to only the "chosen few."

In the first place the entrance to the bay is so narrow that a boat passing within a quarter of a mile of it would not be aware that there was any bay there at all. Secondly, the deepest water in the bay is five feet, while the average is between three and a half to four, so a cruiser of extreme light draught is absolutely essential. Although the *Nepenthe* draws only twenty-seven inches we have forced her over eighteen, and she is the ideal boat for Conkey Bay.

When once in this El Dorado of fishes, the sportsman may practically take his pick. The bay seems to be the natural feeding ground of thousands of porpoises, sawfish, tarpon, jacks, sea trout, redfish, sheepshead, ladyfish, barracuda, robalo, turtles, stingrays, etc., to say nothing of several rookeries of cormorants, pelicans, herons, and no end of wild ducks. The above are the only fish I have seen in this country. If there are others, I have never caught nor observed them. Billy and I spent a month there one winter and we—but I just remembered, we are bound for the Ten Thousand Islands, and Conkey Bay is another story.

## 'NEATH SOUTHERN SKIES

For the next few days we spent our time in the bay, harpooning. For this sport we were in an ideal location, and to say that we got our share would be putting it mildly. One day I harpooned so many sharks I was forced to stop out of utter exhaustion. The fatiguing strain on my arms, to say nothing of the terrible excitement coincident with the fish charging the boat, and one thing and another, was too much; I collapsed in the cockpit. They took me back to the *Nepenthe* and I slept for fourteen hours straight.

Deciding that we had had our fill of harpooning, we started one morning on our journey around the capes. There are three in number: East Cape, Middle Cape, and Northwest Cape. From East to Middle Cape stretches the largest cocoanut grove I have ever seen. It comprises about ninety thousand trees, and the cocoanuts are left to rot on the ground. Either the owner is dead, or transportation facilities are too difficult. I am inclined to favor the latter theory, as the railroad is around on the east coast and shipping the cocoanuts away by boat would be rather a slow operation, I imagine.

It looked rough around the capes, so we went ashore at East Cape to reconnoiter. The beach here is about the most curious that I have ever seen. Expeditions sent by the Government report the shells here to be the most interesting collection in America. I don't doubt it for a moment, for I saw more strange and fantastic-looking shells there than I've seen in most any museum.

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Billy wandered up the beach while I amused myself by shooting sharks. The water was deep right up to the shore and the big fellows swam along within a foot of the sand, their gray dorsals cutting smoothly through the water, their tails swinging from side to side. A huge one came wallowing up almost on the bank. The water was milky and he didn't see me. I held my revolver down to within a foot of his head and fired. He tore out of there like a stampede, throwing water all over me. Gene was out casting for mullet. We wanted some for dinner.

Billy hailed me from up the beach and I went to him. He was standing back some distance from the sand underneath the rustling palms, . . . the palms that always sound like the gentle fall of rain. "Come here!" he called, "I want to show you something."

It was a grave. Surmounting it was a small stone, upon which was a tablet with the following inscription:

GUY M. BRADLEY  
1870—1905  
AS GAME WARDEN OF MONROE COUNTY  
HE GAVE HIS LIFE FOR THE CAUSE  
TO WHICH HE WAS PLEDGED  
ERECTED BY THE FLORIDA AUDUBON  
SOCIETY.

We took off our hats in memory of one who had died in an effort to bring law and order to this frontier country.

## 'NEATH SOUTHERN SKIES

I knew his story. I had long known his relatives and friends, and how he met his death was no news to me.

Bradley had been appointed game warden of that section. The famous Cuthbert Rookery lay to the east of Cape Sable; and on the Oyster Keys, near the small settlement of Flamingo were several rookeries of the lesser herons. One Smith was residing at Flamingo at the time, and Bradley, believing that Smith was going to Cuthbert Rookery, and also that he was molesting the heron rookeries on the Oyster Keys, went out one afternoon to investigate the latter's sloop, which lay near one of the islands. He failed to return that night. The next afternoon Gene Roberts, while out fishing, was attracted by a large flock of buzzards sitting on the mangrove bushes of the keys. Going over he found Bradley's skiff, and in it the owner, face down in a pool of blood, a bullet through his forehead.

Smith was tried in Key West. He claimed that Bradley shot first, and he showed a hole in the mast of his skiff to prove where the bullet went wide of its mark. He was exonerated. What my personal opinion of the matter is, I will not say. There was a bad feud at Flamingo for several years over the matter, and I do not wish to create any more trouble.

We rounded the capes in a living gale. We were obliged to put the side curtains down, for with every plunge, great sheets of green water came hissing over the deck, running under the curtains and down into the cockpit in little rivulets. We ate no lunch

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

that day. Gene, wrapped in his sou'wester, hand on the wheel, stared out through the dim glass, his eyes fixed on the heaving waste of waters. I gnawed on a hard crust of bread. Billy smoked. Now and again something would go crashing down in the cabin and I would go staggering down the steps to investigate, clutching for support at all available objects. The cabin was warm and cozy and I lay down for a short nap. The old Gulf certainly was peeved, I thought, as I drifted away into the land of dreams.

I awoke several hours later. All was dark outside and we were in calm water. I went up on deck and found them using the "search." Billy clapped me on the back. "The Ten Thousands at last, old boy!" he cried. "There's Shark River ahead. Shake!"

The flare of the light showed the delta'd mouth of a river, up one branch of which Gene steered the boat.

"Let her go!" he yelled to me, and I released the anchor with a splash into the black depths. It had been a long hard day and we were all tired—not too tired, though, to partake of a delicious roast duck which Billy had prepared in our Dutch oven in a tantalizing manner. As I climbed into my berth and switched off the lights, something kept whispering to me even on into my sleep, "The Ten Thousand Islands at last! The land of fish and game, of mystery—of romance!"

Dawn . . . dawn in that vast island region of the tropics came quickly and silently. I looked





## THE TEN THOUSAND ISLANDS

1. Lossmans River.
2. "The swamps were full of raccoons."
3. "A dark-skinned individual in a gaudily coloured shirt."
4. Billy gives Tommy Tiger a present.



## 'NEATH SOUTHERN SKIES

out through the porthole at the river, dimpling and eddying its way silently to the Gulf. Mist hung low over the surface of the water, rising slowly to meet the oncoming sun.

Billy and Gene were still sleeping. I went out on deck. A big tarpon broke water close to the stern, its scales shimmering brightly in the pink light. A flock of curlews came flying overhead, bound outward from the rookery to the feeding grounds. The heavy scent of tropical vegetation floated across to me, wafted by a gentle breeze which was just stirring.

It was all very beautiful and very wonderful, but I must be going below and rousing the others. We had a long journey ahead of us, for we were striking for the head of Harney's, into which Shark River branched, and the Everglades.

Breakfast was soon over and we headed up river. It was a long drag. The river narrowed, then widened; sometimes we went through creeks so narrow that the mangroves almost scraped the sides of the boat; at other times we would be traversing a chain of bays, dotted in places with great flocks of ducks. Tarpon rolled frequently, water turkeys fell headlong from overhanging branches at our approach and disappeared into the river, appearing shortly after with only their long snaky necks darting here and there above the surface. These birds were always a source of wonder and amusement to us. Black, with brown neck, and gray streakings on the backs of the older birds, a long, thin neck

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

which they poked hither and yon when swimming, easily made one see why they are called "snake birds." How a water turkey can swim with his entire body submerged and his head and neck above the water is a mystery to me and ever will remain so.

The current was against us, flowing silently, steadily to the Gulf, so we did not make the time we should have in quiet water.

At last the branch of Shark River we were traversing came to an end and we entered a long, wide bay, our first sight of Harney's River. At the far end stood the Tussock, a small island made famous in A. W. Dimock's *Florida Enchantments*.

We anchored the *Nepenthe* near the Tussock and after a hasty lunch set out in Gene's launch to do some bass fishing near the head of the river. We had barely passed out of sight of the boat when Gene with a sudden, "There he is! Quick! on your left!" shut off the motor and turned the launch toward shore.

As we drifted near the mangroves I made out, lying on the bank, our first alligator. He was a little fellow but still he would make a nice skin, so I dispatched him with the .22.

We then proceeded on our way. Bird-life became extremely plentiful. Several flocks of curlew, or White Ibis, passed swiftly over our heads, their pink feet and long curved bills making a striking contrast with their snow-white plumage. These must have been roosting birds, for we passed the great deserted Harney's River rookery shortly after, which a few months later would be one great chattering,

## 'NEATH SOUTHERN SKIES

screaming bird city of beautiful white ibis, stretching for a mile along the river.

"We are nearly to the bass grounds now," said Gene, "you ought to . . ."

"Holy smoke! What's that ahead?" cried Billy. About a hundred yards upstream two black blotches were moving across the surface of the river. "'Gator! And a monster!" whispered Gene. "Easy now and we'll get him."

But the old bull was wise and he suddenly sank from view. We stopped the launch and Gene grunted, a peculiar whining sound, something like the boom of a big bullfrog, and very hard on the throat. As a rule it always brings a 'gator to the surface, but in this instance it failed and we were forced to give up. "Never mind, old fellow!" Billy called into the depths. "Some day we'll get you!" It was prophetic—and another story.

A short time after we were on the bass grounds, Gene told us ("trout" he called them). I cast from the running launch in order to wet my line.

"Stop! Stop!" I shouted. Something had seized my Baby Crab and was doing gymnastics on the other end of the line. It was a large-mouth, a three-pound beauty.

Billy and I got into the skiff and drifted along the bushes, casting under all the likely branches and into all the inviting holes. I shall never forget that afternoon. Those bass had probably never before seen a plug nor known what rod and reel meant. Certainly they didn't show it. They literally

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

fought for the bait, rushing through the water like torpedoes, ravenous, wild. Billy was using a pet bait of his, a Wilson's Fluted Wobbler. I used a Baby Crab and we averaged about even. We caught thirty-two black bass that afternoon. We kept none of them. Why should we? We had a plentifully stocked larder on board the *Nepenthe* and this was the last day of the year; we could afford to be generous.

"Hullo!" observed Billy, reeling in a nice two-pounder, "we have visitors, I see."

I glanced up the river and saw a small narrow craft, in the bow of which stood a dark-skinned individual in a gaudily coloured shirt which reached nearly to his ankles. In his hands he held that with which he propelled the dugout, a pole, on one end of which was a wooden fin used in pushing and paddling, and on the other end a sharp spike used in spearing turtles and garfish. Gene spoke a few words in a guttural tongue to him, and he replied briefly.

"He says he has seventy-nine otter skins at camp," said Gene. "That's Tommy Tiger." The Indian nodded vociferously. "Otter, me got 'em *ojus*," he affirmed.

Billy was about to release his bass when he thought better of it and handed it to Tommy Tiger. A little red-skinned pickaninny occupied the stern of the dugout. I proffered him a Uneeda biscuit. He took the whole box. Finally Tommy Tiger informed us that he thought he'd kill an *eecho* (deer)

## 'NEATH SOUTHERN SKIES

before dark, and picking up his pole soon disappeared around a bend of the river.

It was nearly sundown, and tired but happy over some of the greatest black bass fishing we had ever experienced, we started back down the river, arriving at the *Nepenthe* just at dark.

It was New Year's Eve and Billy sprang the surprise of the trip by producing a delicious milk-fed chicken which he had smuggled into the ice box at Miami unbeknown to us. We had it roasted, stuffed with celery and onions, and surrounded by browned sweet potatoes and strips of bacon. I am ashamed to say I made a hog out of myself that night, but I shan't regret it.

After supper, pipes were filled and we sat up telling stories and planning the future. The witching hour of midnight was not far distant when Billy produced the cold remains of the chicken and some sliced tomatoes reposing amongst some lettuce. Billy was always surprising us that way.

The best surprise of all, however, was left to me. I repaired to the back cabin and returned with a bottle of champagne, a bottle which I had closely guarded between shirts all the way from New York.

Suddenly our little alarm commenced to ring, and lifting our glasses we drank to the New Year. Gene had never before tasted champagne and he drank three glasses down in short order, saying it was "a little weak but very good." Gallons of corn whisky had inured his stomach to nothing less than carbolic acid.

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

Billy says I shouted out "Waiter!" several times in my sleep that night, but I don't believe it; he is always making fun of me.

The next day dawned perfect as they always did, and we ran for the head of the river and the Everglades. Water turkeys were in evidence everywhere, coots rose ahead of the launch, alligators slid from the banks with a kersplash into the water, but they were mostly all small and we didn't bother them. Tarpon were rolling everywhere, and once the head of a great manatee rose and gazed at us for a moment, then sank beneath the surface.

Suddenly the river forked off into two branches, the left-hand one of which we took. Two hundred yards farther on, the branch ended, and we looked out into the Everglades.

This desolate land has well been termed the "Land that God forgot." As far as one can see, a never-ending vista of saw grass and water presents itself to view. And not a sound, not a breath disturbs those vast solitudes.

Once on the East Coast I penetrated the 'glades to within eighteen miles of Lake Okeechobee, when circumstances forced us to turn back. But I have never forgotten the trip. The silence, the loneliness, got so on my nerves that I felt like throwing myself screaming mad into the nearest 'gator wallow.

We boiled some tea and ate our lunch at an old Indian camp near by and then started back for the cruiser. Gene had told me of a lake back in the swamps where the 'gators had not been hunted for



## 'NEATH SOUTHERN SKIES

ten years (the demand for their hides having decreased), and I was anxious to secure the skins of some of the big saurians, and at the same time improve my rifle practice somewhat.

The following day found us anchored off Gene's home, on an island at Porpoise Point, and the next morning Billy, he, and I set off through the jungle for the lake of the 'gators.

We plodded on for several hours through the steaming growth, across sloughs, under and over twisting roots, until all of us were more or less glad for a chance to rest. The chance presented itself in the shape of a broad prairie, about a mile in circumference, covered with waving yellow saw grass, and here we sat down for a smoke and a consultation. Gene said that the lake was a few miles farther on and that it would take us some time to reach it, also that if one of us chose to remain behind at the prairie, the chances for a deer were very good in the tall grass along the edges.

Billy elected to remain, and Gene and I pushed on. It was hard going and I must confess it was with real relief that I at last saw the water gleaming through the trees and knew that we had reached our destination. It was a wild and desolate sheet of water that we looked out upon. Gene said that we were the first white men to look upon it for over ten years, the last time being when he and his brother were hunting 'gator skins for market and had taken close to a thousand 'gators from the body of water before us.

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

There was no beach, as the mangroves grew out into the water, so we ascended one and crawled out on a limb which overhung the lake. There were five 'gators in sight at the time, lying like logs on the surface of the stagnant water, so picking out the nearest I fired at him. I overshot, but he did not move; no doubt having lived so long unmolested, did not even know what a rifle was. Taking more careful aim the second time, I fired and hit him.

He threw his whole body out of the water with a splash and disappeared. The same with the next one I shot at; I could hear the thud of the bullet as it struck the reptile and then it immediately disappeared.

It was impossible to reach these brutes, so I gave up the long-range shots and turned my attention to those nearer at hand.

All the alligators had sunk from view by this time, except one which we could see swimming along the bushes on the far side of the lake. I did not wish to try him, so asked Gene to "grunt some up." A few persuasive notes from that worthy's throat and there rose to the surface no less than thirty-seven alligators, which I slowly counted in wide-eyed astonishment.

I was just taking aim at the nearest, a great bull, when I felt the tree which we were in tremble slightly, and looking down I beheld, not three feet from my foot which was suspended over the water, the form of a huge alligator.

I immediately thrust the rifle down between my knees and fired at the dark head, whereupon there

## 'NEATH SOUTHERN SKIES

ensued the most frightful commotion I have ever witnessed.

We were both deluged by sheets of water, and the mangrove tree shook so violently that I momentarily expected to be hurled from my perch into the savage jaws below.

I fired again and things grew quieter, though the great tail still thrashed about with powerful swings, breaking the low branches into matchwood.

We descended and skinned out our victim, a difficult job amongst the gnarled roots and mucky ground, but we finally accomplished it and a beautiful skin it was, a fitting memory of that desolate lake in those far-off swamps.

I killed three more 'gators and then, as we had all the skins we could carry, we started back for the prairie.

The swamps were full of raccoons and on the return trip I shot two. one a dandy with the fur in prime condition.

We came upon Billy almost where we had left him and here a pleasant surprise awaited us, for he was skinning out a fine little buck—enough fresh meat to last us for several weeks.

On the way out we stopped at old man Jorkan's, a hermit who lived some miles back of Gene's place, and got some sweet potatoes for the boat. I was surprised to find Jorkan a man who had traveled over a good part of the world, including China and Japan. What he was doing living in that out-

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

of-the-way portion of the globe I do not know—nor did I ask.

The next day we went duck shooting. I have never seen so many ducks in all my life. There were literally thousands upon thousands of them, and they covered the water in acres! We secured enough to last ourselves and Gene's family for a couple of weeks to come and called it a day. If ever again I want ducks, I know where to go for them.

We drifted around that vicinity for several days, visiting a white pelican rookery and taking part in some of the early season mullet fishing, the principal occupation of the few inhabitants of that region.

Gene's brothers and father lived at the mouth of Lossman's River, a wild stream that flowed down for miles out of the vast Everglades, and, after a short visit to them, we decided to explore the upper reaches of the river.

The very afternoon after we started I shot an otter, a big, handsome fellow; and the second morning up-river I had a new adventure.

I had risen before the others, and taking my rifle slipped into the skiff and rowed quietly up the stream, scanning the banks for possible signs of deer. I had just rounded a bend when I thought I saw something move on the opposite bank and barely discerned some sort of a body slinking off through the brush.

Taking hasty aim I fired twice. Out on the still air burst a terrible scream and a long yellowish body crashed through the trees and disappeared.

## 'NEATH SOUTHERN SKIES

Very much excited I rowed quickly to the shore and made my way cautiously through the bushes. Fifty yards back from the bank I found it, a big panther, stone-dead.

Just then I heard the "put-put" of the launch, and Billy and Gene hove in sight. They had been awakened by the shots and the frightful cry of the beast and had hurried to the scene, clad merely in their pajamas.

We skinned out the big cat and returned for breakfast, while I related, again and again, the exact details of the killing.

Were I to tell of our many other adventures it would consume a volume, so I will not try. We hunted, ate, and slept; fished, ate, and slept again. One day, up toward the head of Lossman's, a big tarpon, which Billy had hooked, jumped into the boat from which he and I were fishing, and immediately capsized us, wrecking things generally. Another time—but what's the use; I could go on forever.

We finally left that enchanted land—back to civilization once more. We were to return there again in April, but had we known of some of the things that were awaiting us, we would never have left.

## CHAPTER IV

### WITH THE SALMON OF MONTEREY

EVER since the days when first I fished for the wily *Salvelinus fontinalis* in a little ice-cold brook that ran through the meadow back of my uncle's farm in the Connecticut hills, I had heard of the salmon of Monterey. The Salmon of Monterey! those great game fishes that year after year drew anglers from all over the country down to the little Pacific Coast towns of Monterey and Santa Cruz in the Golden State, to do battle with the king of anadromous fishes, the chinook salmon. In all my dreams I could see myself fighting those silver beauties of the far-flung western seaboard.

And if one wishes for a thing long enough, his most cherished dreams and wishes can be made to come true. So, one summer I found myself making my way by motor over the mountainous roads south of San Francisco, bound for Santa Cruz. It is at this point in the coastline that the Bay of Monterey swoops in somewhat in the shape of a crescent, on the northern horn of which is Santa Cruz, and on the southern, Monterey, from both of which places anglers go forth to seek the gamy chinook.

To the late Dr. Charles Frederick Holder is due,

## WITH THE SALMON OF MONTEREY

I think, the credit of making the salmon of Monterey famous to the angling world. He was among the first anglers to fish for them in that section, and his many stories and articles on the subject have done more to send anglers there than anything else.

The fish are the chinook salmon, known also as king salmon, or quinnat (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), running anywhere from two to sixty pounds. (The U. S. Fish Commission has reported them up to one hundred pounds.) Dr. Holder said of them:

“The salmon live somewhere offshore all winter—exactly where is not known, but it is the belief of anglers that they do not stray to any great distance from the shore, probably haunting some bank where the herring and anchovies roam in winter. In spring they move north, or in, and by the last of May, sometimes sooner, sometimes later, and generally about June 15th they enter the bays at Santa Cruz, Monterey, and Carmel, chasing in the great schools of herring, squid, and anchovies. In September or late in August, the salmon move north and enter the Sacramento, Klamath, and other rivers which lead them hundreds of miles from the ocean never to return, *as all Pacific salmon die after spawning.*”\*

The regular market fishermen go out from both Monterey and Santa Cruz, but of late years they are also accompanied by a great number of anglers. These make their headquarters either at Mon-

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\*The italics are mine, as this is a question which has frequently been asked me. This is not true of all the Atlantic salmon.

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

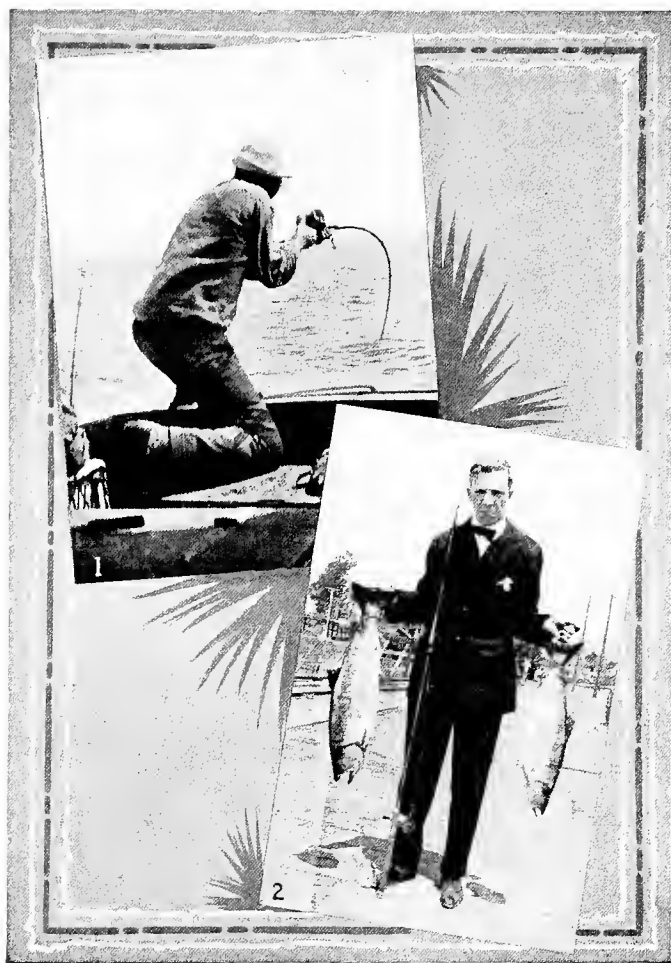
terey or Santa Cruz and charter boats that cater especially to the fraternity.

The method used in rod and reel fishing is quite novel and differs materially from any I have seen employed elsewhere. Two huge poles project, one on either side of the boat, serving as outriggers, to which are attached heavy tarred hand lines. On the ends of the lines, which average about fifty feet in length, are sinkers weighing from one and a half to two pounds. When the men are market fishing, the hooks are fastened onto these lines; but when they take out anglers, the hooks are removed.

The boatman strips several yards of the line from your reel (your line is sinkerless) and ties it by a loop near the sinker on the tarred line in such a manner that the slightest jerk on the hook will release it. When a salmon strikes, the loop slips out and you play your fish unhampered by any sinker. This method is adopted for the reason that at times the salmon are feeding at such a depth that so heavy a sinker would be needed as seriously to encumber the operations of the angler.

When I first came to Santa Cruz it was the night of the Glorious Fourth. Rockets, guns, and all that sort of thing burst upon my ears, but salmon were first in my mind and I saw that nothing else intervened. I made arrangements with one John Faraola, who had charge of boats and boatmen there, and who catered especially to anglers, for a comfortable outfit of which I was to take charge at 5 A. M. on the following morning. The necessary details having





## PACIFIC SALMON

1. Almost up.
2. A brace of chinook.



## WITH THE SALMON OF MONTEREY

been attended to, I proceeded to take in the sights and then returned to my hostelry where I was soon in the land of dreams, drifting through countless schools of salmon to the accompaniment of blazing rockets, shooting stars, and the latest rag from 'Frisco. A violent ringing disturbed me and I awoke to the fact that it was five o'clock and I must arise. In no time I was dressed, and hastening to the dock found the worthy Patrick Googin, my boatman, awaiting me. Together we had a bite of bread and a hot cup of coffee and made ready for our departure.

We headed into the west and for several miles chugged on through the mist which lay heavy on the surface of the sea. Soon we began to experience the ground swell, known so well to anglers of the Pacific, sometimes to their sorrow. The sea was like glass, but these great swells, seemingly coming from nowhere, lifted you one moment high on their crests and the next let you down deep into their hollows.

Other boats joined us, looking from a distance like great birds, the outriggers, their "wings," projecting from either side. All were "feeling" for the fish, *i. e.*, trolling at various depths in order to locate at what point the fish were feeding. Soon a boat farthest out struck them and the skipper called out the depth, "Two fathoms!" Immediately my boatman tied my line onto the heavier one and let it down the necessary number of feet. In no time I had a strike and was playing my first Pacific salmon.

The little rod nodded and swayed and the line

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

cut through the water at a great clip. Suddenly the glassy sea parted, and there he was at the surface. And a beauty! I had just time to enjoy the sight of him when he was away once more. At last, on the crest of a swell I saw him once more and in a short time had him alongside where Pat stood waiting with the net. A merciful blow on the head and he was laid quivering in the fish-box.

I noted hundreds of little birds resembling petrels flying low over the water, which reminded me of the birds I had seen in the company of whales, and I remarked to Pat on the subject.

"Yes," he said, "whales are common in this locality; in fact, there used to be a whaling station up here at Pigeon Point and quite an industry was carried on."

"Did you ever help kill a whale?"

"No; but a gentleman whom I used to take off fishing assisted once and I guess won't want to assist again. He wanted to see a whale killed, so they took him out on one of their trips. When they struck an old bull, the boat began ploughing through the water at such a rate that it piled a wall of water ten feet high at the bows, so they tell me. My friend became so frightened that he offered the captain a thousand dollars if he would cut the rope, which he finally did."

"Couldn't he have made more money from the whale?" I inquired.

"Possibly," Pat replied, with a faint twinkle in his eye. "You see, the whale had been hit with a

## WITH THE SALMON OF MONTEREY

bomb which exploded in his vitals and killed him shortly after."

"But I thought that whales sank after they were dead," I remonstrated.

"They do, but there was another boat standing by and . . ."

Our conversation was cut short there, for I had hooked another chinook, so I did not see to what lengths my friend's imagination would have carried him. The thought of the captain getting a thousand dollars was too good a point to leave out.

At first I believed this to be a small salmon, but as ten and fifteen minutes passed and I had not seen the fish, I reversed my decision. At the end of twenty minutes I had a scant fifty feet on my reel and with a sudden rush the chinook took it all. For one heartbreaking second I held on; then the strain told and the line parted. This must have been a very large fish.

My bait was anchovies. Pat said he had tried to procure sardines but had been unsuccessful. He rose at 3 A. M. each day to get the bait fresh for the morning's fishing. He had put the anchovies in formaldehyde to keep them "fresh and firm,"—something I had never observed before. I should think that fish would not strike at a bait that had been saturated in such a pungent chemical as that, but it seemed otherwise, for they took it hungrily.

Along toward ten in the morning I struck another salmon that took nearly all my line on its first rush. Pat, who was no mean rodsman, and who

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

had been fishing on the other outrigger, also hooked a fish, and we had a lively time. The lines crossed several times, forcing us to shift places in order to prevent fouling. Pat finally landed his and stood waiting with the net. But my fish wasn't quite ready for that. Just when I thought I had him coming, off he would go again, and all my hard-earned line went for naught. Finally he showed signs of weakening, and looking over the side of the boat I could make him out, a streak of silver-green far below, heading away from the boat, game to the last ounce. Lifting the tip of my rod, I gradually brought him to the surface and slid him into the waiting net, a beautiful chinook of twenty-seven pounds.

I shipped this fish on ice to my mother, who was in San Francisco at the time, and she told me that she had never tasted anything more delicious than that salmon, fresh from the waters of the great Pacific.

Shortly after this the trade winds began to blow and the fishing was over for the day. We headed back for the distant shoreline, five beautiful fish resting in the cockpit. The fishing was always at its best from early morning up until ten or eleven o'clock; after that the water became quite rough, and, so far as comfort was concerned, was very unpleasant.

I spent a week at Santa Cruz and each day was like the first. The sport was wonderful, the salmon magnificent. We were nearly always back for luncheon, with from five to ten salmon—comfortable, easy, luxurious fishing. On the sixth day

## WITH THE SALMON OF MONTEREY

I took a fish weighing thirty-one and a half pounds, my largest for the trip.

I have pursued the salmon along the Columbia River in Oregon, and also at the famous falls of the Willamette, near Portland, but perhaps most pleasantly of all do I remember my experiences at Santa Cruz with the salmon of Monterey.

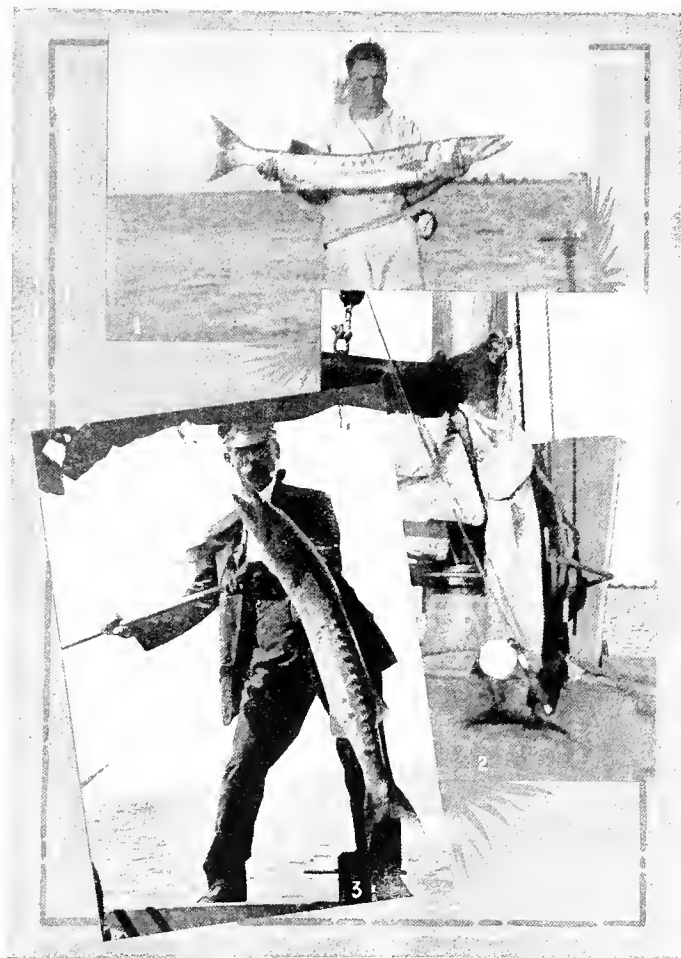
CHAPTER V  
BARRACUDA ON BLACK-BASS  
TACKLE

THE Florida angler, as a rule, knows the barracuda—or barracouta as it is often called there—viewed from one end of a six-foot reef rod, automatic drag, and eighteen-thread line, as a game fish and a fighter. But if he knew the marvelous gameness displayed by the barracuda when angled for on the tackle one ordinarily uses in fresh water, he would never again seek this fish—one of the sportiest propositions of Southern seas—with a reef rod.

My earlier fishing for barracuda in Florida had been done with my reef outfit. And at that time I respected the fish as well worth the efforts of the most expert angler. Had I known then what I know now: that these wolves of the sea become veritable demons of strength and endurance when fought on a light rod, I would have thrown my heavy outfit into the sea. After four years' experience with barracuda on extremely light tackle, I consider them the match for gameness, spectacular leaping, and fighting ability, of any tarpon that ever swam. And I have taken tarpon on the identically same equipment.

One winter the idea occurred to me to try for





### WOLVES OF THE SEA

1. The terror of the reef.
2. Forty-four pounds of silver fury on a four and one-half ounce outfit.
3. Gaffed. (Photo by W. B. Haynes.)



## BLACK-BASS TACKLE

these pike-like fishes with a rod I had always employed when angling for bass in fresh water. I showed this outfit, a four-and-one-half-ounce, five-foot Heddon bait casting rod and a 3/0 surf reel holding eleven hundred feet of nine-thread line, to Captain Anderson.

He laughed at me. He took the line in his hands and snapped it with the merest jerk.

"Why!" he assured me, "that wouldn't so much as hold a needlefish, let alone a barracuda!"

But I would not be discouraged. "We will try it, anyway," I told him.

He shrugged his shoulders. "All right," he said, "we will try."

It was during the early part of March. We were anchored among the Ragged Keys, a small chain of islands some fifteen miles in a southeasterly direction from Miami. Between these keys ran swift, deep channels, varying in width from a hundred yards to a quarter of a mile. Elsewhere the water was very shallow, with a sandy or marl bottom. In the channels, the banks shelved off into fifteen and twenty feet of water. Great coral heads dotted the ocean floor; and under these we would often take fat, luscious crawfish, which in my opinion, when prepared in the right manner, are more delicious than lobster.

On the incoming tide, these cuts and channels would be thronged with fishes, barracuda especially. Rowing along in a skiff one could see these huge wolfish fellows floating along the edge of the bank, or

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

dashing through a school of terrified mullet. The marine life was varied and ever changing. I once witnessed among these same keys a death battle between a whipray and a shark. The ray continually leaped high into the air, falling with a report that could be heard for miles. The shark finally got a mortal grip on the ray and shook it as a terrier would a rat. It bit great pieces out of that ray. The water all around the scene of the conflict was crimsoned with blood. It was a disgusting but thrilling sight.

We set out in our small launch, Cap steering from the bow, and I trolling from the stern. Large quantities of mullet had come in on the rising tide and hundreds of pelicans were feeding on them. The pelicans would sail gracefully along some distance above the water until they sighted fish. Then they would turn, and, folding their wings, plunge downward, striking the water with an awkward splash. I have frequently been deceived at a distance by feeding pelicans: The splash they make as they hit the water, when seen out of the corner of one's eye, greatly resembles that made by a leaping fish.

We had only proceeded a short distance when I had a violent strike. The line whipped off the reel, the rod nearly described a circle, and I blistered my thumbs badly endeavoring to check the swift rush.

Soon I was rewarded by the sight of a barracuda as he cleared the blue-green waters of the channel some four hundred feet away. I was astonished at the fight the fish gave me. Back and forth he rushed,

## BLACK-BASS TACKLE

often shooting into the air amidst a great smother of foam. At one time I could see the great black splotches on his belly as he came out broadside on his tail.

I was fearful of placing too much strain on the rod, for I did not know then what it could stand. I played him very gingerly and in forty minutes had him alongside of the boat. After weighing him—twenty-six pounds and a fraction—we released him. The hook had caught in a corner of his jaw and he was uninjured.

I was much elated over this performance. It demonstrated to my satisfaction that my light tackle was adequate for these fish. That one barracuda had given me the confidence I needed and an unquenchable thirst for more. And I was determined I *should* have more.

We were forced the next day to return to Miami, as Captain Anderson's time with me was up. But I hastened with the news to Charlie Miller, an old boatman of mine who had just arrived from the North.

"I think, Mr. Van," he confided to me, "this recent cold spell we have had down here has affected your brain."

"Has it?" I rejoined. "Fill up the *Wahoo* with gas and provisions and let's go down to the keys and see."

The *Wahoo* was a fast launch. She made between seventeen and eighteen miles per hour. And Charlie had an arrangement whereby he could use kerosene

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

as well as gasoline, which increased the speed another mile. So we lost no time in reaching Ragged Keys.

It seemed good to be back once more among those emerald islands and traversing those enchanted channels with their myriad fish-life. I celebrated by taking a long, invigorating swim on one of the shallow banks, out of reach of any marauding sharks. While I was loafing around in the water, I came across some coral rock lying partly submerged. In a pool in this rock I discovered what appeared to be a live crawfish, but without any head. I preserved this queer object and later learned from the American Museum of Natural History that it was an uncommon specimen of crustacea. Whether it was good eating or not, I have forgotten.

That afternoon on the incoming tide we started trolling. The first cut produced nothing outside of two small groupers, which we later utilized in a savoury chowder.

The second cut proved a new trial for my rod. As we were passing out of the far end, some unknown thing seized my mullet with a vicious jerk. Out sped the line and we watched for the leap that would tell of a barracuda. But no leap occurred. I suggested to Charlie that he start up after the fish, as it showed no inclination to stop. We followed it back through the pass and into the shallower waters of the bay. Here the strain seemed to tell, and after it made one or two long, ineffectual rushes to regain the channel, it came to boat.

## BLACK-BASS TACKLE

It was a seventeen-pound mutton-fish, a reddish-looking thing somewhat on the order of a snapper. But it was a splendid antagonist. I had it mounted, and it has always proved a pleasant reminder of Latitude N. 25°.

"Let's see you try it, Charlie," I said, and handed him the rod. He took it warily, for although Charlie is a fine rodsman, I think, perhaps, this was the lightest he had ever handled in this kind of fishing.

I ran the launch back through the channel and hooked him onto a fourteen-pound barracuda. He played it quickly and easily and soon brought it, belly up, to boat.

"I am converted, Mister Van," he said, with a look of wonder. "I have whipped this fish to a standstill, in the most sportsmanlike way, and he deserves his liberty."

Off the end of the northernmost key there was a small reef which protruded from the water at certain stages of the tide. It was devoid of vegetation, with the exception of one straggly piece of mangrove which struggled pluckily against the buffets of contending winds and seas.

In all the times I have visited Ragged Keys I have never—and here is a remarkable thing—I have never circled this reef with fresh bait without receiving a strike from *something*. That night, as we were returning to the *Wahoo*, we passed the reef and saw several barracuda—big ones they looked, too—breaking among some mullet. We were out of bait, so did not stop; but we made up our minds

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we would thoroughly investigate those waters in the morning.

We went out after supper and netted some bait and the next morning, early, were out at the reef. The tide was nearly high and was moving in very slowly, almost at a standstill, in fact. I expressed some doubts to Charlie as to whether the fish would strike. For it seemed that on the change of the tide, as if by magic, they would all disappear. He said he thought he had seen a barracuda over near the edge of the bank, so we commenced circling.

We had not gone far—in reality not halfway 'round the reef—when I received a tremendous strike. It was so unexpected that the rod was nearly jerked from my hands.

Before I could recover from my surprise, *over six hundred feet* of line had been stripped from the reel. I had never had a barracuda take this much on its first rush before. I was stunned. So great was the friction on the reel that I was forced to hold it under water to prevent it from overheating.

“For goodness’ sake!” I shouted. “Shut off the engine and row—row for your life!”

Then he came out of the water. In a great smother of foam he lashed his head from side to side, and then sounded. Charlie had thrown me another thumbstall and I slipped this on my left thumb. The boat was now gaining some headway under Charlie’s masterful strokes, and I began to breathe easier.

He headed away from the reef and for the near-





## BARRACUDA

1. "He was sorely fatigued." (Photo by W. B. Haynes.)
2. "He started jumping."
3. "cleared the blue-green waters of the channel."



## BLACK-BASS TACKLE

est channel, through which deep water led to the sea. Despite our frantic efforts, he seemed to be outdistancing us, and my heart sank like a stone.

"Oh, Lord!" I groaned. "What the devil is the matter with you? Row!—row, *can't you?*"

Charlie swore at me. He called me several very bad names. I believe I reciprocated in kind. We were both mad; mad at each other and at the fish.

The line now was almost out. I could see the copper spool to which it was tied. And, to make matters worse, the barracuda crossed the bank which separated us from the next channel and gained the deep water. The water on this bank was too shallow to float the launch and things looked desperate.

He started jumping. But all we could see was the splash. I dared not place any strain whatsoever on him. So much line was out that I feared it would break of its own weight. At any second I expected to hear it snap like a taut fiddle-string.

But suddenly the luck turned. I gained a few feet. Then I gained some more. Then he jumped and I lost it all. But it was a tired-looking jump, and I quickly regained what he had taken out.

Slowly—very slowly—I took in line. Now, after an agonizing moment, I had him out of the channel and onto the bar! Here he made some more savage rushes, leaping into the air and shaking his head violently. But I held him.

It was ticklish work to get him in. When I pumped, I was forced to lay the rod along my left

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arm and lift cautiously and gradually. Then I would drop the tip sharply and reel swiftly.

My pulse throbbed like a triphammer. The sweat rolled off my face and hands till my clothing was saturated. I cursed. I prayed. I worked. And *I gained!*

Now he was across the bar, now only a few yards from us. He swam slowly in a circle, the line cutting through the water with a peculiar zipping sound. Charlie backed and filled on the oars and kept the fish constantly in front of me.

And then we made him out. He looked a monster. In he came, deep down, and shaking his head from time to time. When he saw the boat, he turned and ran, but I stopped him short of two hundred feet. This time he came easier.

Charlie shipped the oars and reached for the gaff. I now held the fish with my thumb only. He was sorely fatigued. He made a turn. I strained hard and brought him to the surface.

"Careful! C-a-r-e-f-u-l!" I panted. "Stay where you are! I'll lead him to you!"

There was a quick movement on Charlie's part, a great splashing that deluged us both, and the great barracuda was in the bottom of the boat. He thwacked the boards with his tail twice—then lay still—dead.

When we got back to the *Wahoo* we lifted him onto the scales. He weighed forty-four pounds three ounces; length, fifty-six inches; girth, eighteen inches; time, one hour twelve minutes.

## BLACK-BASS TACKLE

As he floats motionless upon his panel above my desk at home, his white fangs bared in defiance, his lithe, tigrish body suggestive of all his great strength and endurance, I cannot help but feel, whenever I gaze up at him, like bowing in acknowledgment to one who, in pluck and gameness, outfought any barracuda for which I have ever angled.

In the three succeeding days I took on the same tackle fourteen barracuda, the largest of which weighed thirty-seven pounds.

I have also, since then, taken a fifty-six-pound tarpon on the same outfit.

I sincerely hope that some of my readers will try for large fish on correspondingly light tackle. For I am sure that they will find, as did I, that the fish then shows off to its best advantage, and though the odds be twenty to one in its favor, the sport afforded is nothing short of wonderful.

## CHAPTER VI

### LIGHT VERSUS HEAVY TACKLE

THE great question, Light Tackle Or Heavy, has been a bone of contention among anglers for years. I have known men to come almost to blows upon such an apparently trivial subject. Much has been said by both sides without, as a matter of fact, very much being accomplished.

Personally, I am a light-tackle "bug." I have used and advocated it for years; I have derived more genuine pleasure in fighting one fish on the lightest of light tackle, than fifty such fishes on heavy tackle. But in this chapter I shall endeavour, as much as it is humanly possible, to subordinate my enthusiasm and try to give an outsider's view on the subject.

The use of light tackle in the taking of big game fishes may rightly be credited, I am sure, to Dr. Charles Frederick Holder, founder of the Tuna Club of Santa Catalina Island, California. However, even this famous angler noted that the capture in Canadian waters of a six-hundred-and-eighty-pound tuna by J. K. L. Ross on a thirty-nine-thread line was a remarkable feat. Personally, I have hooked many giant Atlantic tuna and will truthfully say that I doubt if I could handle one over three hundred pounds on a twenty-four-thread line, the *heavy-tackle* standard.

## LIGHT VERSUS HEAVY TACKLE

During my many fishing trips, if using heavy tackle, my friends would say to me, "What are you trying to do; catch *all* the fish in the sea?" And when using light tackle, those of heavy-tackle fame would caustically inquire if my idea of sportsmanship consisted in letting a fish run himself to death, or to break loose with a barbed piece of steel in his jaws to suffer for God knows how long?

Pondering on this dilemma I ran across my old friend, William Barber Haynes, a sportsman who has taken big game of the open ocean under every condition and on every type of tackle.

"What is your idea, Bill?" I asked him. "You know I am prejudiced in favor of light tackle. I consider it adequate for tarpon and many of the other big fishes. And still there is much to be said on both sides."

"Why not a happy medium?" he countered. "That's what I use."

And so, when I came to prepare this chapter, it occurred to me it might be a good idea to get the views of one who used neither light nor heavy, whom the barrage of words flung forth by both sides disturbed not the slightest. I wrote to Mr. Haynes, asking him if he would mind giving me his brief views on the subject. His reply will, I think, be of much interest to all anglers:

DEAR VAN:

Answering your letter as to my views on the light- and heavy-tackle controversy:

If it were possible—it isn't, probably—still, if it

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*were* possible to have a fair discussion of the comparative advantages of light and heavy sea tackle from the standpoint of the enjoyment of its use, something might be learned of the best all around outfit for big game fishing.

But, unfortunately, the nine-thread-line advocate will accuse the other of "using a rope" as soon as he loses his temper, while the heavy-tackle enthusiast, who can also lose his temper, will retort that the nine-threader is using fool tackle in an effort to "play to the galleries," then, after the first man has used the stock retort, "well, it simply depends whether one is a sportsman or a fishgetter," the controversy ends by the world being no wiser.

I own and use and like light tackle as well as the heavy tackle, but my favorite outfit is a combination of the two, namely, a six-ounce rod and an eighteen-thread line, and I will try to give my reasons for this selection, remembering always that no gentleman ever interferes with another's rights, and certainly a man may use the tackle he prefers without ungentlemanly comment.

My hunting ground for big game fish is off the broadside of the Florida east coast. Its north edge lies in sight of the Jupiter Light north of Palm Beach, and its southwest corner is a harbour safe to rest in back of a little lonesome island that lies off the broad sweeping side of Key Largo.

From this turning point in our cruise one can see at night the flash of the Alligator Light, so this hunting ground lies well over a hundred miles along





## A DIVERSITY OF CREATURES

1. An amber-jack from Bahamian shores.
2. Grouper and kingfish.
3. Baby tuna—the light-tackle prize.
4. The dolphin—rainbow of the sea.
5. Tuna and albacore.

(Photos by W. B. Haynes.)



## LIGHT VERSUS HEAVY TACKLE

the coast. "Stranger shores" mark it to the east, for here the great winking eye of the Gun Key Light, in the Bahamas, has watched us creep in out of the sea to the palm-fringed shelter of the islands that mark the western side of the Great Bahama Bank.

In these seas you will meet in battle the heavy amber-jack and swift sailfish—probably; the heavier marlin swordfish—possibly; and the light, swift kingfish and barracuda—certainly.

This is by way of showing that this outfit must be adaptable to a wide range of game fish.

We will try to select an outfit that will give you the best chance at this wide range of quarry—sport with the small ones, and a fighting chance when you meet the king—and that unexpected time will not be of your choosing.

This outfit must be light enough to try to bend double to the bullet-like rush of the kingfish, and be staunch when pitted against the boring rush of a big amber-jack that strips five hundred feet of line from your reel.

It must be so willowy that when we approach a certain rock-bound coast that marks the feeding ground of a school of small tuna—our latest discovery—that these small twenty-five-pound fish can pull its tip over to the water as they screech the line off. The use of a ten- or twelve-ounce tip against these small-sized tuna would draw the teeth from the sport.

Then, again, this outfit should be equal to heavy work, such as an hour-long battle against a big sail-

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fish. Then, too, there are fish that can strip every foot of nine-thread line from your reel and go away with it, leaving you open-mouthed and paralyzed.

There is the memory of the great tunas that in January, 1920, fell upon those unsuspecting nine-threaders "off Miami" and left a trail of hard-luck stories in their wake and the proof of their visit in three specimens taken by the heavy-tackle men; tuna of one hundred and forty pounds weight—tuna whose dorsal and anal fins waved back almost to their tails—tuna past any naming, so that the fish experts were forced to make a name for them and admit them as a new species with only a single lonesome mounted specimen to show.

There is the big marlin swordfish that wanders in from the Caribbean waters on occasion—yes, and wanders back again, too, for all the nine-threaders have done to stop him, and only the few, taken on heavy tackle at Miami, have to my knowledge been brought in to prove that they take their path through this part of the Gulf Stream.

Would you care to lose such prizes of the deep because your line was a few strands lighter than suitable to give you a probable chance against them?

This, then, is the kind of hunting ground for which you are to select this all-purpose outfit.

The rod should be light, so that a ten-pound barracuda can give you real thrills as it whips over into a bow, thus giving you sport from a fish that on heavy tackle is devoid of sport and unable to bend that billiard cue of a rod.

## LIGHT VERSUS HEAVY TACKLE

Then the line should be heavy enough so that when that once-in-a-year chance comes to fight one of the great tuna or swordfish, or other strangers, that by the grace of those freaky seas may be yours to battle, it is strong enough to give you at least a chance. "Yes, but!" eagerly interrupts the light-tackle crank, "a three-hundred-pound swordfish and a one-hundred-and fifty-pound tuna have been landed on light tackle."

What of it? Nothing is proven except that exceptions prove rules, and the rule is that these big fish break loose from light tackle.

Most light-tackle men who fish the Florida coast are after records or prizes, and so, as gentlemen, others should let them use the tackle they have chosen and paid for. It certainly is their own affair—but when users of light tackle set themselves up as superior fishermen to heavy-tackle anglers, it might be well for some of us on the sidelines to ask a few questions in the interest of science.

The first question, and probably the only one, I will ask is, "Do you want the boatman to throw out the clutch when you hook the fish, or do you prefer that the boat be kept moving and be managed by the guide?" Almost invariably the answer comes, "Why, certainly, I want the boat to be managed by the guide and kept moving at all times."

There you have it—by the skill of the guide in handling the boat, and the set drag of his reel, he wants it made impossible for the fish to get a slack line.

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One of the guides I know refuses to handle the boat against fish and pulls out the clutch, letting the boat come to a stop, thus giving the fish a chance, this over the protest of customers who, as he says, "want the boat to catch the fish for them."

When any fisherman admits that he catches his fish by preference from a moving boat, this guide decides that from standpoints of skill and sportsmanship he has far to go and is easily entertained, for surely he cannot tell whether it is the fish or the engine that is doing most of the pulling—surely a brick reeled in back of that chugging power boat would give him much the same feeling as a fish, unless it was a big one.

My idea of sport is to set the hook, throw out the clutch, let the boat come to a stop, and feel the fish pull, not the boat.

Of course, when the line is vanishing and the thumb-brake squashes deep into the reel's throat under my thumb, I then expect the guide to follow the fish until I gain back a safe margin of line on the reel, for many heavy fish are landed a half-mile or more distant from where they are hooked.

So to the fisherman who wants to "give the fish a chance," I say, "Throw out your clutch and you may be surprised to see how many fish you will lose on slack line."

One good argument for light tackle is that fewer fish are caught and conservation is encouraged. This is certainly so; however, the fact remains that some of the most generous winners to vanquished quarry

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I have ever seen were heavy-tackle fishers, as I have seen my companions release literally tons of fish alive, rather than bring them back and show off with them before the evening crowd at the dock. And if the fish is released alive, I suppose it makes no difference to him, or to conservationists, what size line he was taken on.

As many light-tackle fans have brought in game fish day after day that they knew would be thrown into the sea, it comes to a question of sportsmanship, not tackle, and the best guides are now encouraging their parties to release game fish alive after the battle is done.

A sportsman has the moral right to bring in a fish when it is new to him—make pictures of it—feast his eyes on it—but he has no moral right to do this day after day when it is a “chestnut” to him and even so to the people he tries to impress with his prowess. (The opinion of some of the guides is very much worth while in the matter of this choice of tackle.)

In the winter of 1919-1920 Captain Wm. Hatch brought in or released one hundred and eighty-nine sailfish; surely his views are worth considering and his verdict is “eight-ounce tip, fifteen-thread line.”

William Dunn, known for years as one of Miami's star guides, advocates the atheistic combination I use: six-ounce tip with eighteen-thread line.

Captain Morgan names eight-ounce tip and eighteen-thread line as his choice. Then there is Jimmy Jordan, the man who originated cotton-thread-line

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fishing; one would surely expect "Cotton Thread Jimmy" to be one of the "extra-light brigade;" but no, eight-ounce, twelve-thread is his idea of the even balance, for, as he says, a lesser rod can be broken by a twelve-thread line, and a lesser line can be broken by an eight-ounce tip.

It seems to me, however, that as the reel is supposed to let the line go, that the breaking balance is not relevant. As Russian John says, "The rod can be as light as you wish if the line is strong enough."

To sum up in a few words my objection to nine-thread line, one is afraid to feel the big fish pull, and when the pull comes the line must be let to run out, or it breaks; consequently one lets the fish merely swim till he is tired out. My enjoyment comes from seeing the rod try to go double, so why should I use a line that permits only a little curve to the rod? Having hired a sea-going cruiser to search heavy seas for big fish, I want to at least feel him pull, without breaking the line.

So with the repetition that any gentlemen who prefer nine-thread line may keep right on using it without derogatory comment, if they will accord me a similar courtesy, and with the assurance that any heavy-tackle fisherman who will buy a good six-ounce rod and watch it bend under a few big barracuda or kingfish will have a fine return on his investment, I will tell of a happening that confirmed me in my choice.

We were on the *Gypsy Queen*, with Bill Hatch at the wheel, coming towards Miami after a four-day



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cruise, and my companion and I had each taken sailfish and other good fighters.

My companion, a gentleman from Kentucky, who for the purpose of this story we will call Doc, was using a six-ounce rod with nine-thread line, and I have never fished in better company, as he was pleasant, a thorough sportsman, and, in handling his fish, skillful.

About an hour after dinner, as we were fishing the Gulf Stream in a fairly smooth sea, Doc slacked, struck, and hooked a fish, presumably a sailfish.

Out came the quarry in a jump—a short run—then another jump—and another and another. The fish, big and powerful, was over eight feet long, and, after running out half of Doc's line, turned and came back to us, jumping as he ran.

When opposite us, the suspicion dawned on me that he was no sailfish, for at a hundred feet distance he reared out of the sea and "walked on his tail" for twenty feet.

Fifteen times the big fellow reared out full length, then he settled into a dogged slow fight.

Once he sounded for two hundred feet, then after a minute he came up with a rush so fast that he almost got slack line, and we again saw him as he quartered along on top eighty feet away. He had been on now three-quarters of an hour, the line worked in and out and the time stretched to an hour—then to an hour and a half. Doc's spool was well filled up now, and though the battle had passed the

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danger point, the fisherman gave none of the usual signs of enjoyment, but seemed in deadly earnest.

Nearer and nearer we worked the boat, the line stood straight down now—the fish was very near—and Bill, looking over, yelled, “Look! look! it’s a swordfish!” and under us passed the fish, only thirty feet down.

From his sides there stuck out two great scythe-like fins of the strangest light cerulean blue tint I have ever seen, and he was in no distress, not even on his side, but fighting erect with those wonderful plane-like fins spread out.

As I looked over on him I felt that I would gladly trade my catch of the year for his like, and, as the gods of the Gulf Stream had awarded him to Doc, my next best wish was that he would surely win.

“Take your time, Doc,” I urged. “Take plenty of time—be sure of him if it takes an extra hour or so.”

The time stretched to two hours, we had the blue-finned one in sight continuously now; from tip to tip of the side scythes, he looked to be three feet wide, and Bill brought the boat to him for the fiftieth time, almost in gaffing distance this time, and the swordfish swung athwart our course under the stern.

I can see Doc yet as he moved to the stern, cleared the line safely, and the fish bored away—then I saw and heard and almost even felt that nine-thread line snap and go high in the air. Doc turned from the stern, his rod dropped to the floor, and he walked a bit shakily to a chair and sat down.



“In a great smother of foam he lashed his head from side to side.”  
(See page 72.)



## LIGHT VERSUS HEAVY TACKLE

Nobody said anything—for a minute. The Gulf Stream had swallowed up the big fish, striped sides, blue fins, and all, after two hours and twelve minutes of fighting.

Finally Doc looked at me. "Where did I make the mistake?" he asked, and, for there was no other, I said that the mistake had been made a long time before.

"What do you mean?" And then, because he had asked it of me, I told him. "You made it when you picked out the line."

The above is food for speculation. An angler is most certainly privileged to use the kind of tackle he wishes, provided it is coincident with the ethics of sportsmanship. And a great deal depends upon the conditions of fishing and for what one is angling. For instance, in the majority of cases, it is almost futile to attempt to land a big grouper on light tackle. One may not be fishing for grouper, but they may be about, and the instant one seizes the lure, he makes for the bottom where he seeks refuge in the rocks. And the line must then be broken and the hook left to rust in the fish's jaws. On the other hand, there is nothing more gloriously thrilling than to fight a big fish under the proper conditions on light tackle.

The whole question can best be summed up in the words of the immortal Kipling: "Unto each his spoor and sign." And then, why not the "happy medium"? Since reading Mr. Haynes' letter, I

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have added an outfit such as he describes to my collection and look forward to many glorious days and nights with it along the far-flung reefs of the Spanish Main, or the long blue swells of the Pacific.

Yet will I still, when the necessity arises, use my heaviest tackle, or my lightest, just as the mood of the moment dictates. *Sua cuique voluptas.*

## CHAPTER VII

### DIARY OF AN OFFSHORE ANGLER

*The Jersey Coast—August 18th*

Left the beach at 7 A. M. A dense fog obscured everything and made getting through the surf rather difficult. Sighted a large school of menhaden right off the breakers. Two other boats accompanied us for a while, but we soon lost them.

The ocean was alive with schools of fish to-day. Captain Bob said they were mackerel. They looked to me like skip-jacks. They would not take a hook, though we trolled a squid through them repeatedly. In every direction you looked, the oily surface of the sea was broken into boiling patches by these millions of fish. It was a wonderful sight.

Feeding near the schools of mackerel, or skip-jack, were great quantities of Wilson Petrels (*Oceanites oceanicus*). I also saw three Cory Shearwaters (*Puffinus borealis*), which are supposed to be quite rare. From a long way off we could tell of the presence of an exceptionally large school of fish by the great number of petrels flying about.

Passed quite close to a fisherman hauling his lobster line. It was most interesting. There are two flagged buoys anchored about a quarter of a mile apart. Between them under the water is stretched a rope. Suspended from this rope are the lines leading

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to the lobster pots. There are often from twenty-five to forty pots on a single rope. The fisherman was alone in the boat and pulled the main rope up over the bow on a pulley. As he came to each pot, he emptied the lobsters, rebaited it, and tossed it back into the water. The last we saw of him, he was still hauling on the rope. Bob tells me the lobstermen made between five and eight thousand dollars apiece last season. I think I shall take up lobstering next year!

It began to rain and we put on our slickers. What little sun there was had now disappeared and we steered our course by compass—due east from Shark River Inlet for two hours and a half.

The grounds at last. But we were the only boat there. The fishing has been very poor lately. Many of the marketmen have quit fishing entirely. They all blame the pounds. The mackerel had disappeared and we were alone in the drizzling rain. At ten o'clock the rain had ceased and the sun shone on a gray and slimy sea.

At eleven o'clock we raised a school of tuna right back of the boat. I had laid down my rod to pick up the thermos when they were with us.

"I've got one!" shouted Billy, and I heard his powerful B-Ocean reel scream in a long staccato under the rush of a heavy fish.

"Look out for your hand line!" I shouted to Captain Bob, who had an outrigger on an oar projecting from one side of the skiff. But my warning



## DIARY OF AN OFFSHORE ANGLER

came too late. The heavy tarred line swished through the water. For an instant the long oar pointed jerkily toward the stern, then snapped with a loud report.

"Good-bye!" I sang out, and turned to watch Billy. His tuna was still running; as yet he had been unable to check the first rush.

"He's a good one, Campen," he assured me. "Over a hundred, easy."

Suddenly the fish turned and Billy reeled frantically. Then—"He's off . . ."

True enough. The line had been severed well above the six-foot leader. We decided that it had been cut by another fish. I have known the same thing to happen with swordfish.

We got no more strikes the rest of the day, and made the beach about two o'clock. I have always preached the gospel of "keep your line in the water," but I did not put it in practice to-day, and, consequently, missed my opportunity. Better luck next time.

### *August 20th*

Arrived at Captain Bob's at 4.30 A. M. He appeared dubious as to whether we could get out the inlet. A heavy sea was running. I had heard it booming along the shore during the night. He would chance it, though, if we said the word.

Started down the river and reached the inlet where we saw the fleet tied up along the jetty, waiting for the tide to go down a bit. I looked at

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

the surf on the bar and shook my head. The waves were mountain high. Talked with several of the men but they would commit themselves neither one way nor another. "Might get out—might not."

Heard an engine starting up and turned to see Olaf Ericson starting out. He was going to chance it. He always fished alone, a great blond Swede who feared nothing on the sea nor in it. He jockeyed back and forth in the wash behind the bar, waiting for a slatch. Suddenly the waves slackened for an instant and we heard his motor roar as he advanced the throttle and headed for sea. Three-quarters of the way across the bar a huge wave rose in front of him. I held my breath.

The bow of his skiff pointed heavenwards, two lobster pots, as if propelled by some unseen force, flew high into the air, and for an instant it looked as if he would be overturned. But the wave passed and he fell with a sickening thud in the trough on the other side.

Daredevil though he was, he was no fool, and at the first chance he turned and rode the waves back over the bar into the inlet. That settled it. If Ericson could not make it, no one could; and one by one the boats headed for home. As we returned I could see the wind was freshening and the sky had become overcast. It looked like a northeaster—rather early for the season, and I cursed our luck. Spent the rest of the day overhauling my tackle and putting things in good shape against the time when we could get out again.

## DIARY OF AN OFFSHORE ANGLER

*August 25th*

Storm about blew itself out yesterday afternoon, and the sun set all pink and rosy on the white breakers at low tide. I guess we will have good weather for a while now. I hope so, at any rate.

Went out the inlet and over the bar at 5 A. M. sharp; a good start and things looked propitious. Ran into a small school of bonito just off Spring Lake and had some lively fun. Watched the sun rise, a great red ball from behind the edge of the world. It lit up the cottages and hotels along the shore. I could see our house plainly and idly wondered if any one was awake.

About twelve miles offshore ran into a heavy ground swell, the aftermath of the storm. Very nasty sensation and for a half hour or more I was quite seasick. Soon became accustomed to it, however, and quickly recovered, eating four sandwiches and a banana with great gusto.

At 10 A. M. we were seventeen miles out and ran into a large school of bluefish. They are the first I have seen in any great numbers this year.

They presented a beautiful and thrilling sight. From a distance they looked like a large wind streak, moving slowly across the swells and we would have believed this to be so had not a great blue-backed fellow leaped high in the air at frequent intervals.

Petrels and terns were all about them, dipping and swerving above the dark mass. We could hear their "kree-kree" while yet some distance away.

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

We trolled our squids past the edge of the school and each hooked fish—about three pounds apiece.

“Don’t think these are the big ones,” remarked Captain Bob. “A couple of more weeks of good weather ought to bring *them*. . . . Hold on, though!”

Billy had received a swift strike that caused his rod to sweep downward in a low arc. Fifty feet astern a blue-green apparition burst from the rippling shadow, tossing the spray like myriad bits of broken glass in all directions. The line swept outward and around in a long circle—then, so near the boat that we all shouted in excitement, a bluefish that looked as if it might weigh twelve pounds leaped in air, shaking his head like a playful puppy. I distinctly heard the slap of his gills and saw the squid fly out of his jaws and land with a splash a full six feet away.

“Bad luck! Bad luck!” muttered Billy, shaking his head as he ruefully retrieved his line. “What’s the matter with us, Campen? I believe you’ve put a jinx on me.”

“Jinx on you, nothing!” I retorted. “It’s merely that you don’t know *how*. Now if I . . .” But here I hooked a fish, and after bringing him within twelve feet of the boat, lost him, so said nothing further.

Our second trip around the school proved more lucrative, for we each boated two fish apiece, while Captain Bob, who was fishing for market, landed seven. The fish then stopped biting and shortly after sank.

## DIARY OF AN OFFSHORE ANGLER

At noon we were twenty miles offshore, where we ran into a small fleet of Seabrighters. We tied up to one of them while we ate lunch.

The captain proved an old friend, one Knute Bjonstrom, with whom I had fished out of Seabright a few years ago. They had not been getting much off the Hook, he told us, hence some of the fleet had come down here looking for the fish.

"Dey bane late," he explained. "Ay can rememb'r de tam wen dis tam o' yar, yus as far as you can see, de water she bane chock full o' feesh. Now, by gar! where de hell dey go?"

The wind had ceased and the two boats rolled gently against each other in a dead calm.

"Let's go!" Captain Bob's voice slowly percolated through a huge mouthful of sandwich.

"Where to?" I asked. "There doesn't seem to be anything here."

"I'm going to try the outer Ridge," he explained. "I have a hunch the fish are working well offshore."

We cast off lines, and waving a cheery farewell, chugged into the southeast.

Twenty-seven miles off the beach. And we've found the blues, one of the largest schools I have ever seen.

Fishermen are, by nature, born liars and exaggerators. On second thought this term sounds rather coarse, rather vulgar, as it were. Perhaps it would be better to say that they are so enthusiastic that they are apt to make statements which, while they do not intend them to be, are coloured far

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

in excess of the actual occurrence. When a fisherman makes a statement, as a rule it is safe to deduct about thirty-five per cent, then an extra five per cent for good measure, and you will have a fairly accurate idea of what it was he saw.

Taking all this into consideration and making the necessary deductions from my memory of the event, I should say this school of blues with which we were now confronted extended over the water the distance of about four acres. It was a wonderful sight. It is difficult to describe a large school of deep-sea fishes feeding. It is a spectacle which the angler must see himself in order to realize its beauty, its mystery. These bluefish had surrounded and brought to bay, as it were, a vast shoal of tiny fishes, which they had herded into one compact silvery mass. I hesitate to say how deep this mass of bait extended into the water—possibly twenty feet, possibly more. The majority of the bluefish had long before sated their appetites and were now killing only for the love of slaughter. They were filled with the blood-madness.

The hapless fry were in danger of immediate extermination. Hemmed in on all sides by a wolfish pack of finny fiends, escape was impossible. Above them clouds of hysterical gulls swooped down upon them, fighting and screaming in delirium at this Gargantuan feast.

We caught bluefish until we were exhausted. I heard a sigh from Billy and saw him lay his rod in the bottom of the boat.



## OFFSHORE MEMORIES

1. Beaching a Seabright dory.
2. A light-tackle tuna from 'squan Ridge.





## DIARY OF AN OFFSHORE ANGLER

"Believe me, Campen," he said, "I'm fished out!"

"Well, since you mention it, so am I," I replied, reeling in. We both sat back, lit our pipes, and watched Captain Bob who was still at it with his hand lines, for every blue meant dollars and cents to him. He fluctuated, like a pendulum, from one side of the boat to the other. No sooner was a blue aboard than he dropped the squid over the side and seized the other line, and *vice versa*. The bilge now presented a compact mass of bluefish, ranging from two pounds up to twelve, and more arriving to join their fellows at every moment.

I glanced at my watch. It was four-thirty. The sun set at seven, but we were thirty miles, more or less, offshore, which meant four hours or more to land. Luckily the tide served right or I would have been most apprehensive. Running a skiff, even a Seabrighter, through a treacherous inlet after dark, is not the easiest thing in the world. Further, we were blessed with a moon which would make things easier.

I called Captain Bob's attention to the hour. "Late as that?" he said in a surprised tone. "We *will* have to be getting back."

So he hooked 'er up into high speed, and we sped away from that vast school of blues. I could see them for nearly a half hour after—a long dark patch on the surface of an afternoon sea. I have never before, nor probably ever shall see, such a sight again.

9 P. M., and we ran past the old men fishing

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on the Belmar Pier in the moonlight, and through the inlet on the crest of a huge white comber.

*August 27th*

Ten miles offshore to-day and we ran into two whales. They evinced no fear whatever, and passed quite close to us, so close I could have shot one in the eye with a .22, had I desired to do so. I fear I would not be writing this had I tried it, for if the huge mammal had sounded suddenly, its great flukes would have smashed our boat into matchwood. One was about forty feet long, the other about twenty-five. A small bull and a cow, I judged. A few bonito—no sign of the tuna.

*August 28th*

To-day has been a record-breaker. We found tuna shortly after we left the breakwater. They were evidently feeding in close. Billy hooked one that ran off eleven hundred feet of line and then got off. I had a small fish of about sixty pounds almost to the boat when he ran under the stern and cut the line on the propeller.

Somewhere, off between Sea Girt and the Ridge, I hooked a monster. His first rush swept over a thousand feet from my 9-0 reel. I eased up a little on the brakes and fought back with all my strength. The joy of physical combat pulses wildly through my veins when I am fighting these great blue torpedoes of the ocean. My feet were braced taut against the stern, the butt of my rod had been

## DIARY OF AN OFFSHORE ANGLER

slipped into the movable socket on my chair, and grasping the rod with both hands just above the reel, I lay back and "gave 'er hell."

Despite the terrible strain I was exerting against the fish, he was slowly taking line from the reel—three, five, eight feet at a time. Captain Bob wanted to run toward him. I was afraid of the consequences, should a bag get in the line. "Put her in neutral and let him tow us," I advised. This he did, and we started slowly, stern first, after the fish.

He had sounded now. I could feel a steady thump, thump on the rod tip, caused, I think, by his burying his nose in the sand in an effort to work out the hook. I tapped on my butt with the handle of my knife, which must have annoyed him, for he ceased his sounding tactics and started off with a rush.

The skiff had lost headway when he went down, and now, before we got under way again, he had taken four hundred feet or more. For two long, weary hours we followed him, always the fish taking line, until at the end of that time there was a bare seventy-five feet remaining on the huge reel.

The line now sagged and bellied under the great strain, the rod tip pointed stiffly downward in short jerks. Physically, I was a wreck. My wrists ached with an excruciating pain, my back throbbed with a worse one. Every nerve in my body seemed to be crying, "You've had enough: quit. He's beaten you." "Beaten me? Never!" I muttered to

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myself, "not until the last inch of line passes through the guides!"

This soon occurred. The fish started off; slowly but irresistibly. I rapidly tightened every brake to the last notch. The weight I seemed pulling against was terrific. "*Hold him!*" shouted Billy. As in a haze I could see the line going . . . going, and hear the shouts of Bill and Captain Bob. "*Hold!*" How familiar that cry! For some strange reason I saw again the days of my boyhood at Andover, the throng-packed bleachers of Brothers Field, and the thin line of blue battling on the one yard line against the onrushing hosts of Exeter. "*Hold 'em!*" I strained every muscle to the breaking point, the sweat stood out in great beads on my temples, I threw myself against the rod until I thought it would crack under the great pressure. Then, with a rush, the spool of the mighty reel spun rapidly 'round as if there were no brakes at all, the line whipped through the tip and snapped taut against the knot where it was fastened. I seized the rod in a vice-like grip. Billy and Captain Bob grabbed me from the rear, and as I was almost jerked over the stern, the line parted. The fish was gone.

. . . . .  
As I glance over my notes of offshore trips, I find incidents like these recorded from time to time. The above has been a collaboration and elaboration of a series of "typical days." From the last of June until October, these great tuna,

## DIARY OF AN OFFSHORE ANGLER

or horse mackerel (*Thunnus thynnus*) as they are generally known to the natives, roam Atlantic waters from Nova Scotia southward. They are the largest in the world. Nowhere else in United States waters have they anything to compare with these Atlantic tuna. They are monsters—tremendous. They average four and five hundred pounds apiece. Lucky is the angler who hooks them under a hundred pounds. As a rule, the only fish landed are these small ones: forty- to ninety-pounders. The big ones leave the bewildered sportsman sitting dazedly in the stern of his launch, wondering if he has just hooked a fish or a Leviathan. Their known weight reaches fifteen hundred pounds. I do not doubt for a moment they grow larger. I measured a tuna during the last season taken in one of the pound nets, which was reported to me as weighing seven hundred and ninety-six pounds. The fish was one hundred and eleven inches, or nine feet three inches long, from tip of snout to tip of tail. Its head was twenty-five inches, its eye two and a half inches, its snout eleven inches. Fish like these are caught each season in the nets. Other fish, much larger, get in the nets and destroy them. They are the bane of the market fisherman, the terror of the offshore angler.

Offshore fishing along the Atlantic seaboard presents an endless succession of delights and thrills which will satisfy the craving soul of the most ardent big-game angler in existence.

## CHAPTER VIII

### WITH GRAINS AND HARPOON

As a boy, the term "harpooning" always brought to my mind pictures of whaling ships and whales, of "cutting in," of "trying out," of cruises through Arctic seas, or southern island waters. The thought that I might one day hurl the flashing iron into the back of some fleeing monster, even though it might not be a whale, never occurred to me.

Little did I realize that in the great Floridian archipelago there was a vast cruising ground, where the big-game angler and searcher after excitement could quench his desire to its dregs in a form of fishing entirely different to that of rod and reel, and fraught with just enough danger to appeal to the red-blooded sportsman.

When the Northland lies shivering beneath the hoary breath of old Boreas, it is then that Southern skies look most promising, and, no matter how great the distance, they seem to stretch forth across the spaces with an appeal as alluring as the sirens of Ulysses. There is a sort of gloating exultation in the thought of one's friends in the North huddled around a fire while blizzards howl and whine outside, while one is sitting under a palm tree being fanned by a Nubian slave, figuratively speaking.

So it was with a sigh of relief that N— and

## WITH GRAINS AND HARPOON

Billy and I left the snows and ice of New York behind and set our faces toward that tropic fairyland. Long Key was our destination, a coral island among the keys, washed on its western shores by the Gulf of Mexico and on its eastern side by the old Atlantic. Here we found Charlie Miller, master of the *Corsair*, which, with his launch *Rover*, I promptly chartered and set sail among the emerald islands.

One morning found us anchored on the edge of the flats just south of Indian Key. The shoal water stretched away on all sides, calm and colourful, its surface undisturbed except for the fin of an occasional marauding shark. Now and again there would be a great splash, as a long, lean barracuda came upon a school of mullet.

The *Rover*, having been fitted out with grains and harpoons, rifles, cameras, and sundry, we clambered aboard and were soon speeding across the glassy flats in search of prey.

Captain Charlie mounted to the bow, grains in hand. Grains resemble a frog spear, only, as a rule, they have but two stout prongs, tipped on each end by sharp barbs. The best grains are made in Nassau, B. W. I., the second best in Key West. To my fanciful imagination, Cap resembled some henchman of old Neptune, standing athwart the bow, trident (lacking one) in hand.

The water was shallow, about four feet in depth, but clear as the purest crystal. Gazing down we could see all manner of queer shells, sponges, and waving sea fans scattered along the sandy bottom.

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We were experimenting with a new method of "striking." Cap took the end of my fishing line and tied it to the wire leader which was attached to the grains, the idea being that after the quarry had been struck I would fight him on rod and reel, instead of on the end of a rope. We figured that with rays and small sharks this should be productive of much sport.

"There he goes!" he suddenly cried, and pointed in the direction of a black form that was scudding off just ahead of the launch.

We gave chase and soon made out our game to be a large whipray, waving its batlike wings up and down like some huge bird as it flew swiftly from one side to the other in an effort to dodge the boat.

Billy guided the launch dextrously after the ray; and when about ten feet distant Cap hurled the grains. The water churned like a whirlpool, there was a great commotion, and the big fish, leaping almost clear of the water, tore off at frantic speed, while I hung grimly on to a swaying rod and vainly tried to break his wild rush.

In this I was only partly successful, and the launch had to be turned after the fleeing game before I had it in any measure under control. Each time I thought I was gaining line, I would suddenly awaken from my dream to discover that such was not the case. I found that different tactics were needed in this kind of sport from those which I had employed in ordinary angling. Fortunately the grains had struck near the head, which made handling easier. Had they entered near the tail,



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there would have been no telling how long it would have taken me. At one time I had my quarry so close that Cap reached for the gaff, but suddenly he was away on another wild dash, beating the shallow water into miniature waves and stirring up great whorls of mud and sand.

Slowly I brought the struggling fish closer, and Cap, waiting his chance, jerked back on the gaff. Spray was tossed high in the air, a pistol shot added to the din, and the ray was roped securely to the stern post. It presented a queer-looking spectacle, with its huge black back and wings covered with small, golden circles and half-moons; its rather doglike head; and its long, slender tail armed at the base with two vicious-looking multi-barbed darts. This specimen weighed close to three hundred pounds.

While I waited for Cap to strike a fish, Billy trolled from the stern for barracuda. These savage-looking fish, well named "wolves of the sea," were scattered all over the flats and in the little channels winding in and out between them, the frequent skittering splash, as a school of frightened mullet leaped into the air, betraying their presence. Billy had just landed one of about fifteen pounds' weight at the conclusion of the fight with the ray. It was now his turn with the grains, so I traded positions with him and took my place in the stern with a nice fresh slab of mullet for bait.

Cap spied a small shark, and with a well-directed throw sent the irons into his back. At the same

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moment a ponderous jewfish rose from his lair 'neath the bank of a small channel through which we were threading our way and snatched my bait into his cavernous mouth.

Here was a how-de-do. Billy, from the bow, was exerting his best efforts to stop a very determined young shark, while from the rear I was having my hands full with an equally stubborn jewfish. It was a veritable tug of war, and whether the shark would win out, or the jewfish, was a matter of speculation. The latter had sought his hole and remained invincible, while the former was making top speed for Channel #2, where lay deep water and possible freedom.

At last I determined to risk it and called to Cap to start up. I paid out my line, keeping it taut all the while, while Bill reeled vigorously and thus gained some much needed line. When at length he had the shark under control, I ventured to persuade my charge to come out of his cavern. At first he politely refused, but upon my earnest entreaties, accentuated by strenuous pumping and reeling, he condescended and came out with a rush.

Billy's fish having been gaffed, the boat was run back over my quarry, and, looking down through the waving sea fans, we could make out the huge form of the jewfish sluggishly moving over the bottom. With a mighty effort I managed to bring him toward the surface where Cap gaffed him. A fountain of water drenched me to the skin, as the struggling fish was hauled aboard and deposited along with the

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shark. My fish weighed over one hundred and twenty pounds, while Billy's shark just touched eighty.

The next day we decided to try the Gulf Stream for loggerhead turtles—having relished for some days an appetite for turtle steak and soup—and also for whatever else chance might choose to cast our way. The dark blue waters of that mysterious river of the sea were soon reached, and Cap, stationing himself on the forward deck armed with a pair of binoculars, cast his eyes horizonward in search of a chelonian.

One was soon sighted, but when we came up with it, it proved so small that we let it pass. "Gib" Johnson, our second boatman, averred that we would find a better one. He then proceeded to enlighten us on the science of turtle-diving.

"When Ah was a boy," he explained, "whenever we wanted to get a turtle, we'd dive down an' pick out de one we wanted an' bring him up."

"How would you do that?" we inquired, interested.

"When Ah'd look over and find mah turtle, Ah'd dive ovah an' swim right fo' 'im. Then Ah'd stick one han' behin' his neck, an' he'd tho' up his haid and close mah hand against his shell. With mah othah hand Ah'd grab the hind end of his shell and work him toward the surface. Ah knowed if he "blowed" befo' Ah did, hit was all off, so jes' befo' we'd reach de top, Ah'd push him down an' "blow" mahself, an' the skiff would cum up then an' . . ."

The conversation was interrupted by N—, who

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pointing off across the bow exclaimed, "Look at *that* hammerhead—"

There, not fifty feet away from us, the fin of a great hammerhead shark was cutting through the water. While I grabbed my harpoon, fitted it onto the pole, and feverishly coiled the line, the boat was turned in the direction of the fin.

We bore swiftly down upon him. I had a brief glimpse of a long, grayish-brown shape in the water, a powerful tail swinging from side to side, and then I hurled my harpoon with all my strength. I heard the iron enter his body, and then grabbed with my gloved hands for the line, which was shooting over the side like the coils of some great snake. The shark ran out all the line in a very few seconds, then turned and made for the boat, striking us amidships with a dull thud. At this moment the .22 Hi-Power barked rapidly at my side, and with a few convulsive shudders the great brute, which measured over twelve feet, turned slowly over on its back and died. Years ago, on the Florida reef, I hooked my first dolphin, a rainbowed bit of iridescence, whose colours, as I brought him to boat, glowed like molten gold. As I called for the captain to take the leader, a long sinister shape shot up from the depths and cut him in twain. From that day I swore eternal enmity to sharks of high and low degree, and I have carried out the vendetta to the best of my ability. The death of a shark does not affect me as do some others of Father Neptune's children. Could I rid the seven seas of sharks, I would do so.

## WITH GRAINS AND HARPOON

Toward evening we sighted a huge loggerhead asleep on the surface. The afternoon sun glinted dully on his great barnacled back, over which the waves from the blue, blue Gulf Stream lapped gently. I prepared to "peg" him. The peg, which is slipped on the end of the striking pole like the other irons, is small, perfectly straight, sharpened at the end, and sometimes is finely serrated along its edge. A slight thrust serves to imbed it in the turtle's shell and it is not easily extracted.

The boat was brought up behind the sleeping reptile, and I cast the peg. The turtle, at this moment awakening and seeing the boat, tried to escape, but the peg caught him just as he was diving, and he carried it down with him, the line streaming out behind like a great tail. We all loaned a hand, and after several minutes of "heave-hoing," he came to the surface to "blow," and a well-directed shot from the automatic catching him in the head, it was no difficult task for Cap to get a gaff under the edge of his shell and haul him aboard, where "Gib" set to work making steaks out of him. This fellow weighed three hundred and eighty-seven pounds.

A few days later found us once more south of Indian Key. The crystal water of the great southern peninsula was at its clearest that day. Objects on the bottom a half-mile distant showed up as if only a few feet away. Our first victim was a sting-ray which we wanted for shark bait in the evenings. Then followed two nurse sharks, which Billy grained with a tiny harpoon and released after fifteen min-

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utes of excitement. These nurse sharks are harmless creatures, and despite my hatred of sharks I seldom strike them. I have heard wild stories concerning these nurse sharks—of how the Key West conchs would catch them in shallow water, and leaping upon their backs, insert their fingers in their gills, wrap their legs around them, and ride them whither they willed. One cannot always believe all one hears, especially when pursuing the gentle sport of angling, but still it *might* be done. Some day when there is no one around to see me I shall try it.

We had now reached a sort of hole or “pocket” in the flats, where the water shelved off and formed a basin some two or three hundred yards long by seventy-five wide. Small sharks were darting everywhere, but we paid no attention to them as we were after larger game. We sighted another ray and gave chase. I was about to drive home the grains, when I suddenly saw a vast brown shape passing directly across our bow. I did not stop to ascertain what it was, but seizing a heavier iron which lay at hand, hurled it with all my might at the shadowy mass.

The coils of rope attached to the harpoon rose into the air as if on springs and disappeared into the water ahead.

“By the ten-horned Manta, what is it?” shouted Billy.

“Sawfish, I think, and a buster!” I replied through my teeth, for the line was spinning out at such a rate I was kept sidestepping to avoid being snatched overboard with it. Soon I saw that the line



## SAWFISH

1. Lashed to the bows, over fourteen feet.
2. "with a face like a Chinese kite."





## WITH GRAINS AND HARPOON

would be quickly exhausted, and, as the launch had not gained sufficient headway to break the shock, feared the line would part. In a jiffy I had snapped the end through a ring in a buoy I always kept handy, and just in time, for I had barely made it fast when it was yanked from my grasp.

The engine was speeded up, and in about five minutes we overhauled the buoy and took it aboard. To try to force the fighting at this stage of the game would have been foolhardy, so we lay back on the line and let him tow us. He had reached the end of the pocket and was heading out across the flats for the open sea. We cheered with excitement as we saw his great shape plowing up a furrow of water on the shoals. The shallow water slackened his speed, while we, still being in deep water, gained on him rapidly. As the launch reached the flats I took a chance and made a long pitch shot. We held our breath as the pole sailed skyward in a long, graceful arch and dropped on his back just behind the dorsal fin—a hit! This was a bad place for an iron, but it was better than nothing.

A half-hour of steady towing and the water grew deeper. Now to force the fighting! We hauled up close and watched for an opportunity to shoot. It came as the fish turned suddenly. But I was not prepared for this move on his part, and missed. On came the sawfish. I was sure I saw murder gleaming in his wicked little eyes. I tried to take in the line, but he was too fast for me. The impact as he struck us hurled me off the bow into the cock-

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pit, and I narrowly missed striking the engine. As I struggled to regain my feet, up out of the water shot a long, ugly weapon, armed on each side with deadly looking teeth, which swept across the gunwale like some giant scythe. Cap managed to cast a noose over the saw at this moment and jerk it tight. I cut loose with the rifle and emptied the chamber into the giant body.

The struggles of the fish were tremendous. Crouching in the bottom of the launch, we were deluged with sheets of water, while she shivered from stem to stern under the impact of the mighty blows inflicted by the huge weapon. At every opportunity I would let him have a shot, and at last these seemed to take effect, for he suddenly ceased his struggles. We got him alongside, and getting a rope around his tail tied him astern.

That night we towed him into Long Key, where I dissected him in the interest of science. There were no scales available to do him justice, so we left his weight to the approximators, who did a noble job. There were, however, plenty of tape measures, and these he stretched to fourteen feet six inches, a good length for one of his ilk.

His saw, with others, hangs in my study at home. As I glance up at them, I see the long white coral beaches gleaming in the moonlight against their fringe of ghostly palms, the flats, colourful and strange, stretching into the distance, hear the whisper of the outgoing tide, and feel the *secret* of the great reefs across two thousand miles of space —— calling me back.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE COAST OF ROMANCE

THIS is a story of the Southland—that country of enchantment at the tip of the far-away Florida peninsula, where coral reefs moan their siren songs to the scented trade winds, and the ghostly palms whisper their nightly secrets to the moonbeams on the Gulf of Mexico.

It is a story of the quest of three men, two white and one black, of their wanderings and adventures at a time when the Northland lay helpless in the grip of the Ides of March and the faint murmurings of Spring were but dreams to a snow-weary land.

As I glance at my diary of that memorable cruise, it seems best perhaps that I follow it in the telling of this tale, for its impressions were made at first hand and at a time when the glamour and beauty of that great country held us all as if under a spell.

We left Long Key the middle of March. The sand beaches of that little island never seemed so white, the Gulf never more colourful, more calm. After once setting the course, we hardly touched the wheel. We almost believed the *Nepenthe* to be alive, so well did she take her way. A long, smooth wake, which rippled to either side and gradually vanished in the great immensity of water on all sides of us, was all that marked our progress.

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

There were three of us who held domain on the little cruiser: Billy, and Henry, and I. Billy, my companion of many years past, and with a disposition as cheerful and sunny as the Land of Flowers itself; Henry, with the skin of a black man but the soul of a white, the greatest guide in the whole vast Everglade region. He had been away from his home in the islands for six years, a little shooting affair in which he had helped send to the Happy Hunting Grounds the soul of the worst desperado in the section. But I had prevailed upon him to return with us and show us the wonders of that country of which I had heard so much but knew so little.

Now Long Key and the viaducts of the east coast settled down to the horizon line and finally vanished entirely. From the bow I made out the sentinel islands of the great country of flats surrounding Cape Sable. Man O'War Key, looming out of the distance, looked like a tiny black dot floating in the air.

Nearer and nearer we drew to it, until we reached the narrow channel that marks the short cut through to the Cape, and edging over the bar that blocks the entrance with only two and a half feet of water at low tide, ran its entire length, skirted the flats, and came to anchor near the Oyster Keys.

Henry and I took the little skiff and went striking that afternoon. Saw four fair-sized leopard sharks about six or seven feet long. Threw at three and got two. One acted in a very vicious manner, rushing us repeatedly, but we killed him finally. Observed through the glasses a flock of white ibis, some

## THE COAST OF ROMANCE

great blue Louisiana and great white herons. The mullet are commencing to run—big fellows. If we can get some of them we shall have some fine tarpon bait.

Returned to the *Nepenthe* and found that Billy had a fine supper ready for us. He had killed a broadbill which was already roasting his fat sides in the little Dutch oven. Went to sleep immediately after dinner.

We spent the next morning in striking. I think the water was too "riley," for we saw but little. Henry pointed out a sawfish on a near-by bank, but before we could get to him he was in deep water. Chased two porpoises for nearly an hour, but could not get close enough for me to throw at them.

In the afternoon I went over to the little settlement of Flamingo and made arrangements with two of the boys to take me on the morrow to a certain lake which was reported to be full of alligators. In the evening quite a crowd came out to the cruiser, and we played the phonograph, did the vanishing act with a pint of corn whisky, and retired in somewhat of a stupor. No more corn "licker" for me! I thought I had been drinking carbolic acid.

Along the coast, moonshine goes by the laconic name of "augerdent," this being a corruption of the Spanish *agua ardiente*, or "fire water." I can assure you, it is well named.

It was that afternoon that I appreciated that Henry evidently had quite a reputation in those parts. As we drew up to the dock a soporific in-

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dividual, who was smoking thereon, was galvanized into sudden action.

"Jesus Christ! mom," he called out in a loud voice toward a near-by shanty, "heah's Henry——!" Several faces immediately appeared at the windows. I learned later that Henry was held in a kind of veneration from Fort Myers to the Cape. Terrorized by the murderous villain, who at present for various reasons shall be nameless, the inhabitants never knew at what moment they would be called forth to meet their God. And any one who had had a part in his dramatic finish was one to whom respect was due. This picturesque bandit had nine murders chalked up to his credit before he went to join his victims—or did he join them, I wonder?

We got an early start for the lake the following morning. Part of the journey was made by mule, part on foot. About six miles from Flamingo, we abandoned the mule and struck out through the tall swamp grass for our distant objective. Away to the north could be seen the beginning of the 'Glades, and on their edge, dark green hummocks. Out there in that morass was the lake, and though we plodded on incessantly, they seemed to grow no nearer.

It was hot. Not a cloud flecked the great burnished dome of steel-blue sky which arched above us. The sweat rolled from our faces in rivulets.

"Gittin' weary?" our host queried. "Not so much further now."

## THE COAST OF ROMANCE

It seemed ages, but at last the grass parted and we were at the edge of a small island-filled lake, branching into many arms, on the shores of one of which we stood.

Seven big 'gators were in sight at the time, looking for all the world like floating timber. One of the men squatted down in the grass and grunted, whereupon three more appeared. From a 'gator standpoint things looked promising. The other guide had vanished but soon reappeared, coming across the arm of the lake in a frail craft, apparently constructed from three boards, two for the sides and one for the bottom.

I eyed this rather dubiously, but upon being reassured of its utter seaworthiness, took my place in the bow, resting my western extremity upon a board laid across the gunnels. My two companions distributed themselves somewhere behind me and with a slight shove we were off.

There appeared to be a small but even flow of water coming through the joints of our yacht. I expressed the opinion that I expected we would sink before our journey was completed.

"That ain't nuthin'," came the cheery reply; "we alls got a can t' bail her, an' even if she does sink, de water ain't deep heah."

As we left the arm of the lake and entered the main body of water, a great chattering sound broke on my ears. Looking toward the farther side of the lake I beheld the islands there covered with great white birds.

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

“Gannet rook’ry,” they informed me. As we drew nearer I saw they were great wood ibis, thousands upon thousands of them. The noise they made was terrific. We came quite close and I commenced taking pictures. The big birds, resembling storks, perched on every limb, flew through the air in every direction, and seemed to mind my presence not in the least.

My companions ran the bow of the boat into the mangroves, and I got out and climbed into the branches. On all sides of me were nests, some filled with young birds, some with eggs. The parents arose with heavy flappings as I squirmed along a limb toward the nests, and I had an exceptional opportunity to observe the young ibis at close range. I was surrounded on all sides by birds, but none offered to attack me, though I photographed them and their young sometimes within but two or three feet.

That climb into the rookery proved a disastrous one for me, for on the following day I developed a beautiful case of red bugs. If you’ve ever had them, dear reader, you can sympathize with me; if not, I will not pain you by describing them. But no matter; that was all in the game.

From the colony of ibis we made our way among the other small islands. Suddenly, with a rush of wings, a flock of flaming pink birds arose ahead of us. It was a sight that few ornithologists in the world have ever beheld. They were roseate spoonbill, known in that country as “pink curlew.” They have



## THE COAST OF ROMANCE

become so rare, due to the persecutions of the plume hunter, that to-day there are but few in existence.

I thrilled at the sight of them. They were coloured a wonderful peaches-and-cream, with patches of brilliant carmine. Their heads and bills were green, their legs and eyes, blood red. Touches of blue and orange showed in many of them. It was a "memory picture," recollections of which still remain as vivid to-day as they did then.

I was distracted just then by a large alligator that rose to the surface some two hundred feet ahead. I shot him directly in the eye. I could hear the bullet hit and saw the blood spurt. With a mighty splash he leaped clear of the water like a fish and disappeared in a maelstrom of mud. We attempted to follow him by the bubbles which came to the surface, but he soon outdistanced us. I am glad he got away, though I am sorry I did not wound him mortally. A 'gator of his size would have been a nasty thing to handle in our little craft.\*

The lake seemed to be filled with alligators. I never saw so many. The boys told me that they are attracted there by young birds; that they jiggle the trees with their tails, whereupon the young birds fall out of their nests and are eaten. I never heard this story before, and others I have talked with haven't either, so it can be taken for what it's worth.

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\* On our way past Flamingo on our homeward voyage, the boys told me they had found an eight-foot 'gator dead in the lake with a bullet hole in his eye; so my shot took effect after all.

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We next came to an island where the egrets were breeding. I must confess to a feeling of sadness when I saw what few birds there were. Only a hundred or more. The plume hunters had cleaned them out. As it later developed, these were the greatest number of egrets I was to see on the whole trip. The beautiful stately birds eyed me wonderingly as I took their pictures, their wonderful "aigrettes" stirring slightly in the hot wind. Untold murders had been committed for those beautiful feathers. Were the history of the plume trade ever placed in book form, the list of crimes would fill several volumes.

We had consumed several hours in the lake, and it was now time to be starting back. My guides advised me not to kill the large 'gators as they were harder to skin, so I picked out two, about five feet in length, and added them to our already overloaded boat.

By the time they had been skinned and we were ready to start, it was already late. Night in the tropics comes swiftly, and I did not wish to be caught out in that swamp in the dark. The insects would descend in full force and life would be unbearable. My throat was parched and burning for the want of water, for that in the lake was brackish and of a disagreeable taste, so the sooner we were out of it the better.

Upon our return to Flamingo, we found that Billy and Henry had been out striking all day. Billy had connected with a big sawfish, but after a wild ride the iron had pulled loose. Henry had

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caught some mullet with the cast net, and we had these for supper.

Harry Roberts came out on the *Nepenthe* that night and said that he had shot twice at a big panther down the road, just about dusk. Thinks he hit him, but it was too dark to track him. Well, we leave for the west coast in the morning, or we should probably join in the panther hunt. Henry tells me there are plenty of them where we are going.

Arose at dawn the next morning and started around the Capes. There are three of them: East Cape, Middle Cape, and Northwest Cape. The day was perfect, not a cloud in the sky, and the Gulf like the polished surface of some great silver tray. Just off Middle Cape we saw the fin of a big shark on the banks. He was nearly half a mile distant, but so calm was the water and so clear the atmosphere, he showed up as if only a few hundred yards away.

Henry and I jumped into the skiff and went after him, while Billy continued in the *Nepenthe* at reduced speed. Upon coming up to him, we perceived he was apparently basking in the sun. I made a long pitch shot and the harpoon struck him directly in the head—a very lucky throw. For a moment he seemed dazed, then turning, made straight at the boat and seized the bow between his jaws, tearing great splinters out of the planks. Henry held the line while I beat him off with a belt ax, and for a moment there was great excitement.

He finally released his hold and ran straight away

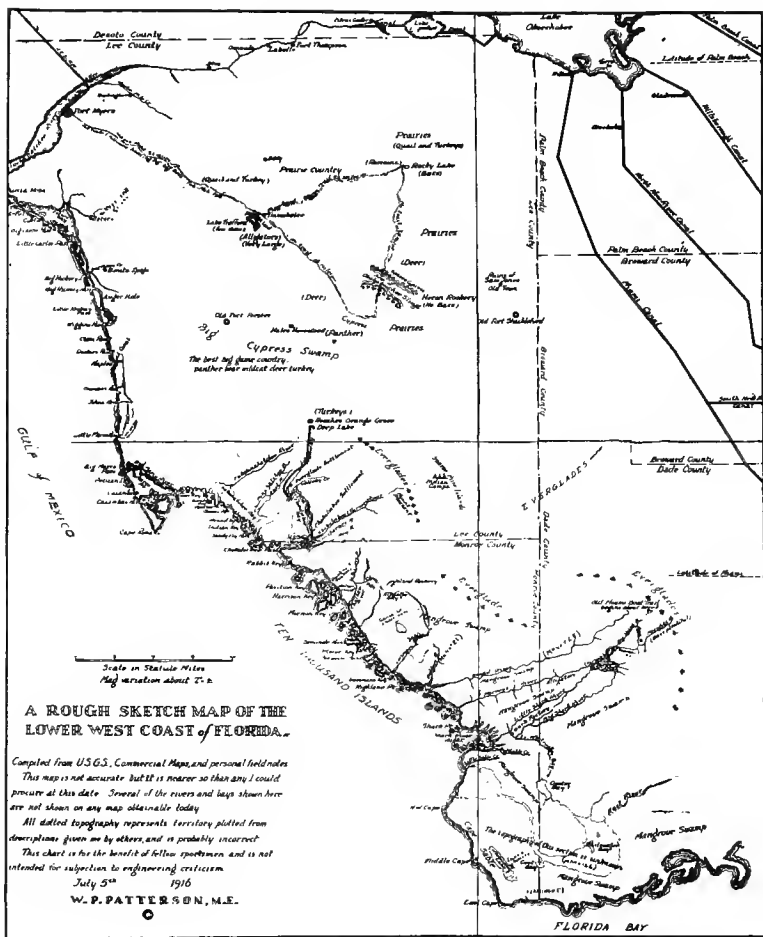
## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

from us, taking out all our line. As it fetched taut against the bow, he commenced rolling up on the line, winding it around his body in a perfect coil. During this maneuver Henry shot him three times, and the fight ended. He was eleven feet long.

Six hours' running brought us to Shark River, the gateway to the object of our wanderings, that enchanted land of our hopes and fears, the vast and formidable region of the Ten Thousand Islands. Nor is it by any means a misnomer. There are ten times ten thousand islands, some of them mere clumps protruding from the water, some of them acres in extent, a baffling maze wherein the most experienced woodman or mariner might be hopelessly lost in the space of half an hour.

And here let me tell of a remarkable thing about this wild and lonely country. *There is not a single correct map of it in existence in the country to-day!* A chart hanging on the wall of my study at home is the only one that approaches it the nearest in correctness and it will probably remain the authority for many years. It was drawn by my friend, Mr. W. P. Patterson, of Richmond, Virginia, one of the few sportsmen in the world to ever penetrate that little-explored land.

All of the most modern and up-to-date maps, which can be purchased, indicate a big bay just north of Northwest Cape. This is usually labeled "Ponce de Leon Bay," or "Whitewater Lake." *No such bay exists! The coast in that section is unbroken,* with the exception of one or two small rivers. White-



Through the courtesy of Mr. W. P. Patterson, the author takes great pleasure in presenting to the sporting fraternity the first map containing any degree of accuracy of the vast and little known section of Southwestern Florida. Mr. Patterson, a sportsman of widest experience, has spent years in this section and to him anglers and hunters are indebted for this valuable contribution to the geography of the United States.



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water Bay lies inland and can be reached with some difficulty through Little Sable Creek or a branch of Shark River. Mr. Patterson admits the topography of that section is *unknown*; I myself have penetrated it but little.

It is the fascination of the unknown, the lure of the unexplored territory, the outlaws and desperadoes who inhabit this region, that makes it the last frontier in the United States to-day.

We arrived at the little settlement at Lossman's River in the afternoon, and after renewing acquaintance of former years, and buying a few necessities from one of the men, started up the great river which finds its source in the Everglades. The river was a picture of tropical beauty. Here and there a water turkey poked its long neck above the surface and swam rapidly along, the rest of its body submerged, for all the world like some sinister serpent. Pelicans flapped sedately away at our approach, and occasionally the waters burst asunder into myriads of flashing diamonds as a big tarpon hurled his gleaming form into mid-air. Once we saw the distant form of a big alligator lying motionless at the surface.

At dusk we anchored off a small creek down which Henry said they used to bring the plumes from the Alligator Bay rookery. "If Ah had de money from all de plumes that have come down dat creek, Ah would never work again," he assured us. When he was a boy he could walk all day and see great clouds of plume birds wherever he went, and now—

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the glory that was Greece! Alas! Tiberius, thou art no more!

I was quite anxious to visit the far-famed Alligator Bay rookery, not far distant from where we then were. I had heard that there were still a few birds left there, but I determined to see for myself.

About 6 A. M. we stocked the skiff with grub and started out, the little Evinrude carrying us merrily along. Our way led through a small creek overhung by branches and roots of mangroves. Several times we were forced to stop and hack away obstructions with our ax. These were placed there, Henry tells me, to make more difficult the approach to the rookery. In the course of a few hours the creek opened out into quite a large bay, the one we were seeking. Just as we emerged Billy was bitten on the hand by a large spider. His hand at once began to swell, but Henry disappeared in the mangroves and a short time afterward reappeared with a root which he mixed with some tobacco and chewed vigorously. Upon applying this crude poultice to the infected part, Billy's pain was immediately relieved and an hour later the swelling had completely subsided. I have never to this day found out what it was that Henry used with such good effect.

As we approached the rookery, which was situated on an island at one end of the bay, I saw it was quite deserted. Upon closer inspection we found heaps of blood-clotted feathers strewn about the ground. We were too late. The plume hunters had been there before us.



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A great feeling of sadness filled me. Where once thousands of beautiful egrets had raised their young, where the islands were white as snow from their gorgeous feathers, now nothing broke the deathlike silence but the snort of a manatee as he rose to the surface along the shore.

And all for the vanity of women!

"Dey's de gateway t' hell," Henry solemnly averred, though whether he had reference to the birds or to the women I did not ask. Perhaps he had had experience!

We turned and silently made our way back through the creek with the hollow mocking laugh of an *opah* (owl) ringing in our ears. These broken feathers, the deserted branches, the awful silence, seemed to jeer at us and it was with relief that I saw the distant slender form of the *Nepenthe* gleaming across the water.

As we emerged from the creek, a fat broadbill was incautious enough to fly directly across our bow, and I downed him before he had gone a hundred feet. He immediately dove and commenced swimming along the bottom, but so clear was the water we followed his every movement, and when he came to the surface I had the gun right on him. Before we had covered the remaining distance to the cruiser, Henry had him picked and ready for the oven.

Right here I would like to add a word of praise for the little boat that carried, fed, and slept us during all our journeying. Due to her light draught of twenty-seven inches we were able to navigate creeks

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and waterways accessible only to cypress log dug-outs and canoes. No yacht has ever been where she has gone, nor is likely to, unless she be a mate to the *Nepenthe*. I feel that her makers, the Elco Company, deserve all the praise they can get, for during four years' steady cruising, from Barnegat to the Florida Keys, she satisfied my every need and whim.

We hoisted anchor and started on our way, passing through Lossman's River Bays, a beautiful succession of green islands. We were sitting on deck, playing the Victrola, when we suddenly saw two large manatees close inshore. Henry and I jumped into the skiff, I being armed with a tiny harpoon, for I wished to capture one without injuring it, to make some observations of the great animal; but by the time we had reached the place where we had last seen them, they had disappeared, and though we hunted for several minutes, could find no trace of them.

Continuing, we came to anchor near a great prairie, about an hour before sundown. We had just finished making things shipshape, when two flocks of beautiful white ibis passed overhead, their snow-white feathers gleaming in the sunlight. They looked like great white jack curlew and are called white curlew by the Indians and natives. It was another one of those stirring memory pictures that I still have of that wonderful country.

As we were entirely out of fresh meat and had been living on canned goods for some time, we de-

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cided to go out and see if we could bring down a deer before dark. Accordingly, we rowed ashore in the skiff and fared forth on the prairie, Billy and I with our rifles, and Henry with a revolver, with which he said he preferred to shoot and with which he had previously killed deer.

We ranged wide. I took the eastern end of the prairie, Henry the middle, and Billy the extreme western end, and working northward, between us, we covered the ground pretty thoroughly. We had not been out twenty minutes before I saw, off to my right, a large mudhole, barely visible through the tall saw grass. Thinking there might be an old bull 'gator in it, I made for it, skirting the edge. As I did so, a buck jumped up from his bed and leaped away. The first shot hit him in the side and felled him, but he was on his feet again and off through the swaying grass, when my second shot broke his neck and he went down for the count.

He was a spikehorn buck, a small fellow with very reddish coat, but he was a very welcome addition to our larder and we lost no time in skinning him out and packing him in the cruiser. Henry and Bill both reported having seen plenty of sign, and I do not doubt had we continued our hunt, we should have all gotten a deer. Our ice was gone, however, and meat does not keep very long in that country.

The next morning we started up Lossman's in an attempt to reach a rookery Henry had told me about. About fifteen miles up, the water became too shallow and we were forced to turn back. Saw our

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first Indians to-day. Very unsociable and would not speak to us. Ran back to the mouth of Lossman's and took Gene Hamilton aboard—an old guide and friend of former cruises. I think Lossman's should be spelled Lostman's, as the boys tell me a Chinaman was once lost there and starved to death. Probably Lostman's is the original and it has become corrupted.

Ran down to the fish house on Lossman's in the morning and found the "run boat" which brings supplies down from Fort Myers was there. Purchased a few supplies from them. Uneeda biscuits at last! My! how glad I was to see them! And candy, too! We were getting spoiled with so much luxury.

Alfred Johnson and Leo Gomez came aboard while we were stocking up, and while I thrummed the uke, they balled the jack. Some dance! Especially when executed by those who know *how*, but I rather fear it would not get by in polite society.

We were told that while we were gone there had been a fight with some mullet fishermen who had come down from Fort Myers. The intruders had commenced running out their nets in the waters usually fished by the Lossman's River boys, and upon being warned to depart and not heeding the advice, a rifle duel had ensued in which over a hundred shots had been exchanged. No casualties reported on the island, but they could not vouch for the others who apparently had enough of their crew left to hoist sail and clear away.

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Left Lossman's, ran down to Roger's River, and all afternoon up Broad River. Just as we were anchoring for the night, we saw two very large manatees and went out after them. We slid silently up on them, and as one came to the surface, I fixed the little harpoon in his great flat tail. For a few seconds we had a thrilling ride, but the iron pulled out. The sea-cows were together for a while, but soon separated, and it was getting so dark, we lost track of them in the gloom. A beautiful night with a full moon, flanked by a million stars, and the whippoorwills calling on all sides of us. Gene listed the boat over so that we had to shift ballast in order to sleep comfortably.

Got an early start the next morning in order to investigate another rookery at the head of Broad. Found it deserted! They're all the same. The plume hunters have beaten us to it. The rivers are all salt. Very unusual, Gene and Henry tell me. By rights they should be fresh, and we find them salt clear to the 'Glades. Is Harney's going to be salt, also, and no black bass?

Saw another manatee, but he was too foxy and "settled away" from us. This makes the sixth. I have despaired of getting photos of one.

Our fresh water is giving out. They only have barely enough for their needs on the coast, and with these rivers all salt to their heads, the situation looks serious. If we can't find any in Harney's, we're up against it.

After lunch ran down Broad and along the

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coast to Harney's. Caught the flood tide and carried it up to Tussock Key before dark. Had roast duck for supper. We went very sparingly on our water. River still salty, and it is the dry season, so we cannot hope for rain.

Supper over, Henry and I went fire hunting for 'gators, but the salty water appears to have driven them back to the 'Glades. We must find fresh water soon. The tank ran dry to-night, and there is only a little left in our water bottle on deck. Henry tells us he thinks he can find some to-morrow by digging for it. Well, I hope so.

Got an early start in the morning and ran for the head of Harney's. Had not gone far before Gene espied a huge 'gator swimming near the shore. Gene and I both fired, but both missed, and he sank. We immediately jumped into the skiff and made for the spot where we had last seen him. Henry and Gene both grunted at frequent intervals, while I, rifle in hand, nervously scanned the water on all sides.

Suddenly he came to the surface, his huge eyes staring directly at me, and I blew a great hole in the top of his head. Never shoot alligators with steel-jacketed bullets. As a rule they go right through them, making a clean hole and only stunning them. I always shoot soft-nosed balls and dum-dum them by cutting a cross in the end. It is more effective and more merciful.

This was a large 'gator, just ten feet from tail to snout, and the one we saw in almost the same place last Christmas.

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We hoisted him across the stern of the launch and proceeded. The river still salty! I fear our wonderful black-bass fishing will be gone. Soon we reached the great curlew rookery. Deserted! Where have the birds gone? I suppose we will find Cuthbert Rookery the same, all gone—dead.

The head of Harney's and the Everglades at last. Tasted the water and found it salty. Tried a few casts with plugs, but no bass, of course. Billy lost his pet Wilson Wobbler on a big snook, and I caught a smaller one. We then went ashore at an old Indian camp to hold a consultation and eat some lunch. Henry broiled a shoulder of the venison over the fire and we ate *a la cochon*. Simply de-e-e-licious!

Henry said he would try to get water by digging. Going out into the marsh, he dug a deep hole with his hands and allowed the water to seep in. At first it tasted brackish, but gradually, after clearing it constantly with a cup, it became sweeter and sweeter, until to our great joy, it came in fresh. Here was luck indeed! We filled the water bottles and canteens we had brought with us, drinking our fill meanwhile. Afterwards we had a glorious wash.

After skinning out the 'gator, we made our way back down river to the *Nepenthe*. Hoisted anchor and made the bark factory at Shark River by dusk. We played the Victor for the poor fellows who were there. One of them told me that he had never heard a phonograph before!

We went out after tarpon that night, but only got two small ones. The insects became unbearable.

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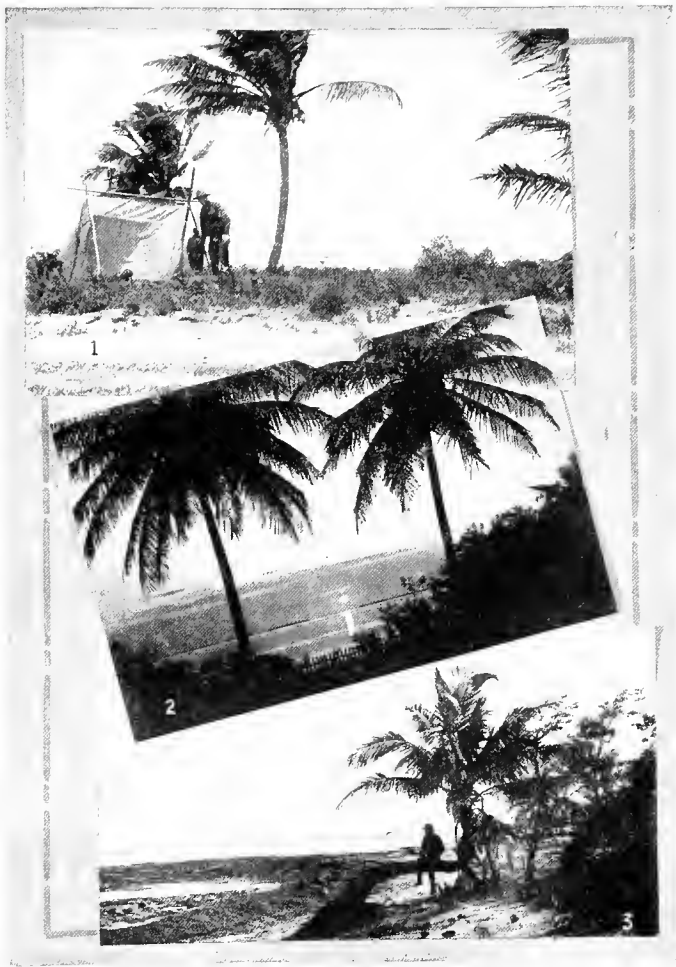
The mosquitoes were terrible! At every breath you drew them up your nose, your mouth, your eyes. We put on our head nets, but even then we suffered. Finally we succumbed in despair and went back to the cruiser to find that she had been invaded by hordes of sand flies. They sifted through our screens like blowing smoke. At last, unable to stand the torture longer, we moved two miles out into the Gulf and anchored. Fortunately it was calm, and we passed the balance of the night in comparative peace, though the wounds inflicted by the winged hosts burned inexorably.

Do not let this account of the fly in the ointment deter the sportsman from visiting this enchanted land. It is merely one of the annoyances that must be put up with on nearly any expedition. Equip yourself with a liberal supply of head nets, and fly dope preventive and curative, and your trials and tribulations will soon be but memories.

Dawn found us under way, running down the coast in the teeth of a stiff gale. We rounded the capes with the green water drenching us from stem to stern, the skiff slapping and pounding in our wake. Passing Flamingo in the early afternoon, we ran to the eastward until the water shoaled perceptibly and anchored in the lee of a long bank some three miles south of Snake Bight.

While Billy put on the potatoes and started supper, Henry and I went out in the skiff, armed with harpoon and rifle. Saw a tremendous shark—he looked at least nineteen feet long. When we got up





### THE SPELL OF THE TROPICS

1. Camp Edon, a lonely key of the Floridian Archipelago.
2. Sunrise over the Great Bahama Banks.
3. The Barrier Reef.



## THE COAST OF ROMANCE

to him, I was so nervous that I overthrew about four feet. We could see him running for half a mile, ploughing up the water in a long white furrow.

Came up on a big porpoise feeding on mullet and placed the harpoon nicely, a little far back though. We were off at a high rate of speed, but our ride was short-lived, for the iron pulled out. I never saw so many mullet. They are commencing to run. Literally *millions* of them! The water, for miles, had the appearance of being struck with thousands of buckshot from the continual splashes of the leaping fish. Just before supper we all went in swimming. The water was delightfully warm and languid and gave us a splendid appetite.

Some time during the night we were awakened by the sound of something walking on the cabin roof. We could not imagine what it was. Billy took his rifle and went cautiously on deck, to discover a large cormorant waddling sedately up and down in the moonlight. He obligingly flew away, rather offended, I imagine, to be disturbed in the midst of his nocturnal promenade.

I had long heard of Cuthbert Rookery. Discovered in its glory by the man whose name it bears, it was for years the principal plume-bird rookery of our southern peninsula. Ornithologists, in their study of Florida bird-life, have made it their goal, though but few have ever reached it. The approach from the coast is so long and so difficult that, had not Cuthbert accidentally discovered it from the rear,

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it is doubtful if its existence would have been known for many years.

The creek, which marked the entrance to the rookery from the Bay of Florida, lay not far distant from where we were then anchored, and Henry told us he thought we could find it, though he had not been there since he had shot the rookery many years before. I was most anxious to visit it, to see if the birds were still using it, and to gaze on the spot where blood, both bird and human, had been spilled in such profusion.

Accordingly, at daybreak, we set out in the skiff, the little outboard motor carrying us merrily across the shallow banks to the head of Snake Bight. Here, after some minutes of searching, Henry parted the mangroves, and disclosed the mouth of a small creek, partly choked with roots and débris. On we went, stopping occasionally to clear with our belt ax obstructing logs and brush, placed there, Henry told us, by the last plume hunters who had gone through.

After hours of alternately running the engine and poling through miles of countless creeks and bays, we emerged at last into Cuthbert Rookery Lake, a fair-sized body of brackish water, lying roughly, fifteen miles inland from the coast line.

Upon entering the lake, Henry espied the track of a big 'gator in the mud. We followed it and soon came upon him, a huge fellow moving slowly along the bottom, which we could see easily, due to the clearness of the water. I harpooned him, the iron striking him directly in the top of the head. For a

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moment things looked lively, the big saurian rolling over and over up the line until he was within a few feet of the boat. I was just about to shoot him, when, with a convulsive shudder, he turned on his back, his half-human-like hands clawing the air. He proved to be six inches longer than our Harney's River 'gator—and the record for the trip.

The rookery lies on one of two islands at the far end of the lake. From where we were, we could see it was not deserted. As we approached we could hear the confused "chick-chack" of thousands of birds, and to our great delight saw one egret (snowy heron—*Egretta candidissima*) flying above the trees. We could also make out several roseate spoonbill (*Ajaia ajaja*) sitting on the branches near the water.

We ate lunch before going nearer. Then Henry poled the skiff slowly up, while I sat in the bow, camera in hand. When within a few yards of the shore nearly a thousand white ibis (*Guara alba*) arose in a gleaming crowd, making the air roar with their wings.

I counted fourteen spoonbills and suppose there must be more there in the evenings. I noted their feet were blood red, a sign, Henry says, that they are building. We circled the island, then I went ashore for some photographs and made following notes:

"Several thousand Louisiana herons, all with baby birds; hundreds of water turkeys and cormorants; one Everglade kite; buzzards, crows, etc.—not nesting. In the water surrounding the island,

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

thousands upon thousands of coots (*Fulica americana*) and broadbills (*Marila*). No plume-birds. The one we saw must have been a stray.”

To have seen a great bird rookery is a wonderful experience. To have seen Cuthbert Rookery in its former glory must have been nothing short of spectacular. I could picture in my mind the shores of that lonely inland lake re-echoing to the sharp crack of rifles, as desperate men battled and slew each other for possession of the rookery, to the end that they might slaughter the thousands of foam-white birds that the vanity of woman might be satiated.

Henry tells me there is one great rookery left, untouched by the hand of man. It lies somewhere back of Madeira. Joe Williams was the first to see it, and three years later, while hunting in that section, Henry came upon it. But neither were able to approach closer to it than about two miles, for it was situated in the heart of a vast impenetrable bog. He judged there were about ten thousand egrets nesting there at the time.

Far to the north the great dredges are slowly but surely draining the Everglades, and I suppose it won't be many years before this last great stronghold of one of the most beautiful birds on earth surrenders to its deadliest enemy, the plume hunter.

Sunset found us back at the *Nepenthe*, tired, but filled with enthusiasm over the completion of a most successful adventure.

We spent the balance of our stay in Cape Sable

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country, harpooning. One morning, while skirting the edge of a long bank, we saw a big cow sawfish coming out of a little channel some distance ahead. As we were running toward her, a small bull appeared and followed her out on the flat. I had broken my harpoon pole short a few minutes before on a large shark and I was in a quandary as to which fish to attack. Finally we cut off the Evinrude and poled up on the cow.

Kneeling in the bow, I waited until we came alongside of her and jabbed the iron with all my might into her back. Had I thrown it, as usual, the shot might have gone true, but as it was, it struck far back, near the tail. For over an hour we rode behind her, while she towed us nearly two miles from the cruiser, apparently undisturbed by the harpoon. As it was in such an awkward place, we could do nothing with her. In all that time we had not gained ten feet of line. Finally she turned to charge us, and as I tightened up on the line to take in slack, the harpoon pulled out! She rushed past us, barely missing the skiff and disappeared in a near-by cut. She was easily between fifteen and sixteen feet long.

Came a long, lazy afternoon, when for miles in every direction the tarpon were leaping as far as the eye could see. We were unable to get fresh mullet, so resorted to spoons. The country in that section consists of miles of banks and flats, interspersed by small channels and false passes. Trolling through one of these, I hooked and landed a beautiful fish

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of 120 lbs., getting nine leaps out of him. Shortly after, I took another, 78 lbs. I then changed from the regulation light tackle I had been using to still lighter, consisting of my little Heddon bait casting rod (about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  oz.), and a 3-0 surf reel with 9-thread line.

Rounding up at the end of a blind pocket, I received a beautiful strike, and out of the water shot a wondrous Silver King. The little rod bent gamely to the task, and knowing the strain the outfit would stand, I tested it to the limit. Though constantly bent in a graceful bow, the frail wand stood my pumping and the rushes of the fish in splendid shape and came through with flying colours. Five times the tarpon hurled himself high in the air; one long last rush he made and then came swimming quietly alongside. We did not gaff him, but slid him over the gunwale and under the seats. Fifty-six pounds he tipped the scales, and to-day hangs mounted on the wall of my trophy room.

Another afternoon, I got the iron in a big porpoise and we rode three times around a small key at breakneck speed. At one time we estimated we were making nearly twenty miles an hour. We were forced to crouch in the stern of the skiff to prevent her bow from being buried under. After two hours we landed him—a nine-footer.

Came one soft moonlight night when we lay out in the cockpit, puffing contentedly on our pipes and gazing at the shimmering path of silver which stretched away and away to be lost in the shadow



## THE COAST OF ROMANCE

of the distant keys. A lazy breeze caressed our cheeks for a moment, and died away. From a near-by island, the sleepy croak of a heron drifted across the water. Billy took a deep draw on his pipe, blew the smoke slowly out, and profaned the solitude with a low, "Damn!" I said nothing, for I appreciated his feelings. One of the happiest and best cruises we had ever taken together was drawing to its close.

At last we arose, knocked the ashes from our pipes, and descending to the cabin stretched ourselves contentedly on our berths, just as the great round moon completed her nocturnal journey, and slipped down behind the distant capes of the coast of romance.

## CHAPTER X

### CLEMENTE SWORDFISH

WHEN I first came to Santa Catalina, that enchanted isle off the Southern California coast, laved by the ceaseless rollers of the Pacific, bathed in the sunshine of eternal spring—I called on my old friend, Zane Grey.

“Van,” he said, “I’m not wishing you any hard luck, but I hope you don’t get your swordfish too easily; I hope you have a hard time. You’ll appreciate them more.”

I laughed off his words good naturedly, little dreaming that they were in the nature of a prophecy. Frankly and in plain, straightforward language, I had a hell of a hard time. For three long, weary years I crossed the continent in the hope of taking a two-hundred-pound marlin, the gold button fish of the Tuna Club, the highest angling reward in the world.

My first season at Avalon was a bad one. The marlin were scarce and acting “tricky.” I could not hook them. For fourteen days I trolled the waters from Seal Rocks to the Isthmus without seeing a swordfish. Once we sighted a school of tuna far off the East End, but when we came up with them, they had gone down and we could not get a strike.

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I gave up in despair, and took to yellowtail. For three days a vast school of them lay off and on between Church and Seal Rocks. The Japs and Austrians slaughtered them. We begged in vain for sardines from the Japs. They would not sell or give them to us. A shake of the shoulders, or absolute indifference, was the only answer to our pleadings. Finally, I was able to secure a small pailful of live bait from an Austrian, after offering as high as five dollars for it.

Immediately we were surrounded by yellowtail. They were on all sides of us. I was fishing "3-6," the lightest of light tackle, which means a 6-oz. rod 6 ft. long, and 6-thread line. I brought every fish to boat within fifteen minutes except one, and he took forty-five. As he swam alongside, Captain McKay uttered an exclamation.

"A button fish, sure's you're born! Hold him while I get the gaff!"

An angler using "3-6" was at that time allowed a twenty per cent margin in his favor for buttons of the Light Tackle Club. The fish looked an easy twenty-five pounds. But when we came to weigh it in at Avalon, it weighed exactly 15 lbs. 14 oz., losing me the button by 2 ounces. Luck was against me. I could see it.

I saw Z. G. at the Tuna Club that night.

"Damn you, Doc!" I said to him, "You've jinxed me."

He only laughed.

"Have I? Someone put a jinx on me when I

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

first started, and I've always thanked him for it. When you do get your fish, you'll always remember it."

"When you *do* get it!" Words that fell strangely on my ears. They were full of hope, yet hinted darkly that the day of triumph was still far off.

I bade farewell to the rocks of Avalon with a feeling of sadness. I had failed. But my failure had only served to sting my pride. I would return again, and when I did——!

The next season I returned with hopes high. From the decks of the *Cabrillo* I eagerly scanned the long slow rollers of the Pacific as the little steamer plowed her way nearer the precipitous cliffs of Catalina.

Again was I doomed to disappointment. Fate had cast the dies and they had fallen against me.

For almost three weeks I trolled a flying fish through an idle summer sea. The marlin were there, but I could not get them. We would leave the club shortly after eight and off Pebble Beach we would run across Hooper fighting a marlin. Way off the East End we could see Adams flying the swordfish pennant, and all in less than three hours from the time of our departure! But nary a marlin came behind our baits.

There was one small consolation. Colonel Wheeler was playing in the same sort of luck. And he had been at it a month longer than I. We held a consultation of war and decided we must take

## CLEMENTE SWORDFISH

drastic steps to frighten away the hoodoo which pursued us both.

"I shall fish in a white hat to-morrow," the Colonel declared.

"All right, so shall I," I told him.

But the charm refused to work. Neither of us saw fish.

"It's our neckties, I feel sure," I told him that night. "If by nine-thirty to-morrow I have not received a strike, I shall signal you, and you must remove your tie. No good angler can expect to catch fish while wearing a tie!"

But even this great conjuration proved of no avail. The evil spell still held.

We switched boats. I fished from his, he from mine. Then he tried a day with me and I one with him. Then the luck changed—somewhat. While fishing with him, a marlin suddenly appeared back of the teasers, took them both in quick succession and swam rapidly for my bait. When within a foot of it, he suddenly swerved and seized the Colonel's. After a half hour of long runs and wonderful leaps, he was brought to boat—140 lbs.

"Now, Heilner, go to it!" the Colonel advised. "I've broken your luck for you; see what you can do."

I "went to it"—hard and long. One morning I hooked two marlin and both threw the hook on their first jump. This was better than nothing, and hope flared once more within my breast. But it gradually died. Next to my last day out, I hooked another, which after nine leaps threw the hook.

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

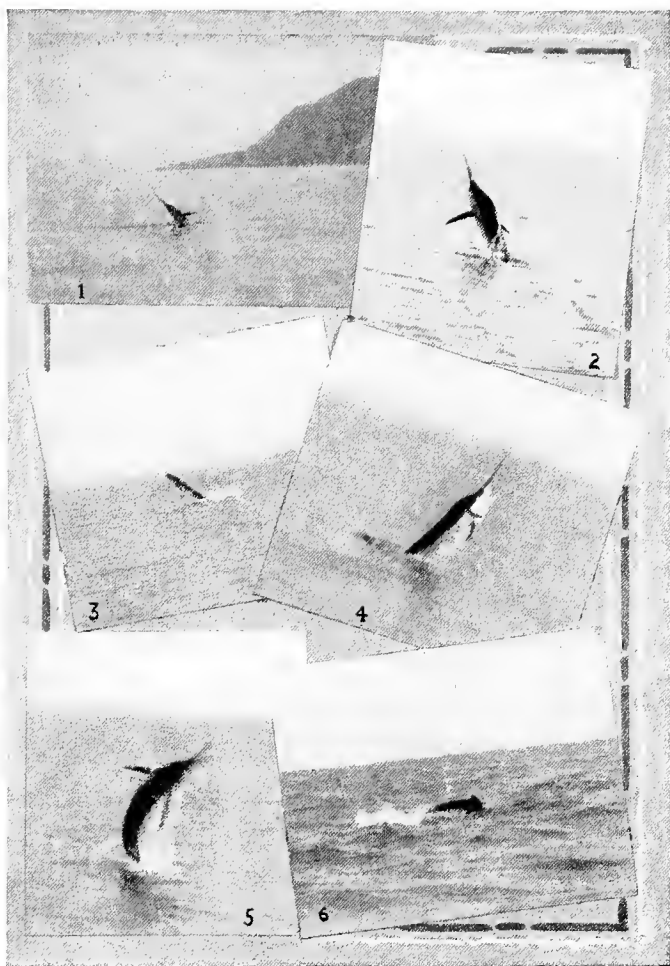
On my last morning, way off the East End, within sight of the mainland, we sighted a huge broadbill. His two great fins showed above the surface like a monster shark. He was swimming slowly, apparently aimlessly. We circled him and drew the bait directly across his path. He went down.

Cap threw out the clutch and we waited in agonizing suspense. I felt a sly, gentle tap and commenced to pay out line. Slowly it slipped between the guides and away into the sea. The boat rocked gently with the swell. I could feel my heart beating violently against my ribs. Seconds were æons—then I gradually brought the line taut and struck. . . . once, twice, and again! The line sagged outward. I felt a great, fearful strain on the other end and then—a sickening slack. I had struck too soon.

I turned my head so that Cap could not see the tears that welled in my eyes. My last day, and I had missed my great chance!

That night I put away my rods and reels, and the next day I left for the East.

. . . . .  
The peaks of Catalina loomed through the mists like the crests of some great ghost range. Far, far below us, a destroyer, ploughing her way across the blue, seemed but a tiny toy afloat on an ocean of sapphire. The wind hummed in the struts, and the steady roar of the engine beat on my muffled ears like the roll of a drum. Peering over the side,



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1. Against the lonely peaks of Clemente
2. "threw the hook on his first leap."
3. "he was 'walking on his tail.'"
4. "out shot a long, tigrish body."
5. "shaking its head like some mammoth bulldog."
6. "clearing the water fifty feet at a bound."

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## CLEMENTE SWORDFISH

I made out, through the glorified atmosphere produced by my amber goggles, a small object barely discernible on the surface of the sea. An ocean sunfish, in mid channel. My pilot touched me on the shoulder, pointed off and down to one side, and made queer motions with his hand, culminating in a gesture which appeared to elongate his nose.

I gazed earnestly in the direction he had pointed and my heart gave a great bound. An angler fighting a swordfish! Though some two thousand feet above him, I could distinctly see the white splashes of spray as the marlin leaped. It was a sight, that even had it not been viewed from above, thrilled me in every fibre.

Now Avalon gradually took shape ahead of us and in another five minutes we were over it, the half-moon bay, flanked by the picturesque Sugar Loaf, spread out beneath us like a map. We swung over the great fleet of small craft anchored in the bay, Andy cut off the engine, and tilting up on edge we shot downward, the air whining and moaning a weird tune in our ears as it rushed past us. Skimming along just above the surface, we took the water and roared onto the beach at Lover's Cove, having made the passage in just short of twenty-five minutes.

Two years had rolled by since last I had seen Avalon. Two years fraught with angling adventures in distant waters, from Canada to the Spanish Main. But as I gazed at the familiar scenes about me, it seemed but yesterday that with a heavy heart I

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had watched the receding town from the after deck of the *Cabrillo*.

I made my way along Crescent Avenue and into the Tuna Club. All seemed the same; the view from my window onto the bay, the chug-chug of launches passing below, the screams of the wheeling gulls.

After a shower and fresh linen, I descended to the living-room and through the big telescope watched the returning boats. One by one they rounded the point and made for the dock. A boat appeared flying a tuna flag. She blew three blasts with her whistle. It was Jump, light tackle champion of the world. He always let us know he was coming in with something worth while that way. I sauntered down to the fishing pier, and sure enough, he had two big tuna—bluefin.

Dave Coleman and I were fishing together—from Dave's boat, Captain Ray Millsap. Our first day netted us nothing and I had fears that my experience of past years was to be repeated. But such was not to be.

On the second day we ranged far out in the channel midway between Catalina and Clemente. The wild, lonely peaks of the latter could be seen as we rose and fell on the great swells.

At two o'clock we had our first strike. Dave was fishing the kite. A tuna came clear out of the water in two great jumps for the flying fish. On the second leap he got it.

I reeled in my bait and climbed to the roof of the cabin where I would not be in his way and at the

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same time have a bird's eye view of the situation. In twenty minutes he had him alongside, and Ray gaffed him in a wild smother of foam. He tipped the scales at 104 lbs.

Dave sank back in his chair. "You take the kite, Van," he told me, "I've had enough for the present."

I put it out and fascinated, watched the bait skip across the waves, for all the world like a living, flying fish. We made a big circle and ran back over the spot where Dave had hooked his fish. As we did so, there was a great splash back of my bait and a tuna came way out of water, but missed.

"Steady," cautioned my partner, "he'll be back!"

And he was, but in rather an unexpected manner. Dave had been trolling a straight bait (i. e. not fastened to kite), and while we were both watching my kite, he received a hard fast strike and hooked a tuna; whether the same one that missed my bait or not, I do not know.

I quickly reeled in the kite and Ray and I cleared the decks for action.

This fish was a fighter from Fightersville. He ran off a thousand feet of line in such quick order that we all gasped. I looked at my watch. Eighteen minutes had ticked by.

"You have only two minutes left to keep up to your record," I told him.

"Can't be done!" he hissed through his teeth, "this baby's a beaut!"

An hour and a half rolled by, and we had not seen the fish. By this time we were all very excited.

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That he had hooked a monster, we did not doubt for an instant. I saw the Tuna Club record shattered and Dave acclaimed by the multitude.

"Go to it, old fellow!" I shouted excitedly, slapping him on the back, "we're with you."

Two hours came and went. Dave was in bad shape. The sweat poured down his face. He had chewed two cigars into shapeless pulp.

"Want the harness?" I inquired.

"No, by—! I'll beat this fish alone or he'll beat me, and it looks very much as if he's done it!"

Two hours and fifteen minutes, and we all gave a great shout. The fish was rolling on the surface not fifty yards away.

"A little nearer, Mr. Coleman, and I'll have him," pleaded Ray, gaff in hand.

Dave braced himself for a mighty effort and heaved. Nearer and nearer came the tuna, and suddenly, leaning far out over the edge, Ray's gloved hand closed on the wire leader and with a strong pull, brought the fish to the surface and sank the gaff home.

What was our utter amazement to find that the fish weighed but 96 lbs., eight pounds lighter than the first one, and yet it had fought two hours longer.

And then the mystery was explained. The tuna was hooked in the side of the mouth, in the maxillary, and had thus been able to get his jaws firmly closed and keep off at an angle. I had seen similar incidents before on the Florida reefs.

The following day, Dave and I decided to go to

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Clemente. Marlin were none too plentiful in the immediate vicinity of Avalon, and we had heard reports of great schools that had been seen off the shores of the sister island, thirty odd miles to the south. We loaded our boat with the delicacies relished by us both for luncheons at sea and left the Tuna Club on the next morning, just as the good folk of Avalon were bestirring themselves.

The crossing was a long and a rough one. We trolled practically the whole distance, sometimes with the kite, sometimes without, but saw nothing for the first three hours. At the beginning of the fourth, when Clemente loomed high and rugged over our bow, I glanced astern and saw two marlin cutting down the crest of a roller after our baits.

A marlin in the water is, with the possible exception of the dolphin, the most beautiful sight that an angler can see. They are the most brilliant, scintillating, *living* blue that exists. It is a gorgeous, *flaming* blue; a blue that haunts one for months, for years afterwards. Whenever my mind reverts to beautiful things, foremost among them is that dazzling, baffling blue of blues—a marlin charging the bait.

These fish appeared hungry. They both rushed Dave's bait and one got it. But he was not hooked well, and threw it on his first leap. We circled and ran back over the same place but saw no more. Ray thought he saw tuna leaping ahead, so I put out a kite.

Shortly after we saw what we all thought to be

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a shark, making for my bait. I reeled in the kite swiftly, but the pursuing fin gradually gained. I became frantic and just managed to get the bait aboard ahead of the fish, which swerved astern in a flash of flaming blue. Our shark was a big marlin! I cursed my stupidity with violence, and as I did so, the fish saw Dave's bait, turned and took it.

On his first run, he leaped eighteen times. Once he went completely around the boat, and we were forced to keep turning with him like a ringmaster with a trick circus horse. He suddenly decided to change his tactics and settle down to thrashing on the surface, throwing but half of his body out of water and wagging his sword backwards and forwards. As this appeared to gain him nothing, he took to jumping again, but we could see that his great bounds were exhausting him. It was true, for in another five minutes Dave had him within twenty feet of the boat, where he swam in slow, half circles, glaring up at us defiantly. It was short work after that to gaff him—190 pounds of the gamiest and most spectacular fish that swims.

We continued on our way and made the camp just at dusk. Official sunset was still an hour or so away, but behind the beetling peaks of Clemente the sun sank early. The proprietor of the camp came off to us in a garvey and we rowed ashore, climbing the rocky bluffs to our little tent on the cliffs.

San Clemente is one of the loneliest and wildest islands of the sea I have ever visited. Towering from the blue of the Pacific it reminds one somewhat

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of Dominica in the far-flung reefs of the Caribbean, but there the resemblance ceases. For Clemente is a desolate, barren, wind-swept land, part of a one-time great mountain range perhaps. It is of volcanic origin, and its cliffs are full of great holes, like a cheese, in which the ashes lie to this day. Wild oats carpet the slopes in some places a billowy gold, interspersed with fields of the deadly choya cactus, and the mountains are a network of wild goat trails, for they and domestic sheep, together with a little band of herders are all that inhabit the island. There are no harbours on Clemente, as on Catalina. Smuggler's Cove is the nearest approach to one, but it is on the other side of the island from the camp and on certain winds proves a very rough anchorage. Off the camp it is an open roadstead, and while one may stay aboard his boat if he wish, it is better to go ashore. I used to love roaming about and exploring the great blow-holes and canyons. For atmosphere and fishing Clemente should satisfy the most fastidious.

We were in bed that night at seven-thirty and up the next morning by six. At eleven forty-five, Dave hooked the first marlin. As he slacked back his bait and I reeled mine in, one came up from the rear and grabbed me. Luckily I lost my fish on his first jump. After twenty minutes hard fighting, Dave had his beaten and almost to the boat when the leader unwrapped itself at the swivel and the fish sank from view.

Shortly after noon, while Dave was cutting the

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melons for lunch, a marlin showed back of the teasers and took my bait. I struck him and he leaped clear, once. This fish acted in a very peculiar manner. I had him on thirty-five minutes, and in all that time he never leaped but once, and that when I first gave him the butt. I received the impression that he had poked his head above the surface for a look-see and then ducked quickly under again. This fish tired me greatly, for by not leaping he had conserved his strength. Ray gaffed him after some difficulty and we lifted him aboard—185 lbs.

Returning to camp that evening, I hooked another. This fish evidently received his early training with Barnum & Bailey. He first stood on his head, then on his tail, did several "Flying Dutchmen" with an assortment of "one and a half's" thrown in for good measure, danced the Highland Fling and an old-fashioned breakdown, and departed in a magnificent succession of twenty-one straightaway leaps, that left us speechless with amazement and glowing with excitement.

We were in bed that night at seven. A long, hard day on the water, caressed by the winds and tanned by the sun, is conducive to the most wonderful sleeping in the world. At the base of the cliff below our tent, the breakers boomed in monotonous undertone. After discussing the events of the day, Dave would blow out the light, leap into bed, and shouting, "We're off!" would soon be breathing heavily, with yours truly a close second. I often look back on those days at Clemente as some of the happiest of my life.



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From the moment we left our anchorage the next morning, things commenced happening. Two hundred yards from camp, I saw a flash of blue back of my bait and hooked a marlin. After nine leaps, he broke loose.

From the top of the cabin, Dave spotted the fin of another. We ran up to him and circled him. He went down.

"Here he comes!" I shouted, and back of Dave's bait appeared a great brilliantly-striped form. I watched, fascinated. The fish rapped the bait with his sword and as Dave slacked back line, I saw him turn, seize the flying fish in his jaws, and swim off. Still, Dave did not strike, but allowed the line to slip off the reel, unchecked.

At last he straightened up, threw on the brake, and as the line came taut, struck—three long heaves.

The glassy sea, a hundred yards astern, parted with a great roar and out shot a long, tigrish body, wagging its sword, and shaking its head like some mammoth bulldog. Then there was a crash and the waves closed over it. I had been standing, camera in hand, and with the first disturbance of the surface had pressed the shutter.

Dave threw his weight against the rod and held on. Two, three, four . . . five times the big swordsman threw himself headlong into the air. We could see the blood streaming from the side of his mouth where the leader had cut him; we could see his eye turned in our direction—malevolently,

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we thought. Finding that straight-up jumping availed him naught, he started off in a series of long, clean leaps, clearing the water fifty feet at a bound, soaring through the air like a giant bird. It was magnificent. We cheered involuntarily. Within twenty-five minutes Dave had him to gaff—212 lbs. of spectacular resistance.

Shortly after this we spied another marlin on the surface. We circled him and he went down. A long, anxious wait . . . . then he suddenly showed back of my bait and took it. I hooked him, but after four jumps the leader broke at the swivel. This was very discouraging. We evidently had a bad lot of piano wire.

Ray spotted another fin and we ran up to it. It was a big marlin milling in some bait. We circled and he sank. Again the anxious wait. Then—there he was! Directly astern and headed for my bait! As he was just about to seize it, he turned and grabbed Dave's flying fish with a savage rush. This fellow leaped twenty-nine times in a succession of maddened plunges. As suddenly as he had begun his wild career, he ceased and allowed himself to be led gently to the boat—190 lbs.

It was a marvelous day. The sea, a glassy calm, seemed *alive* with marlin. In almost any direction we looked, we could make out a great fin working on the surface. On one occasion we tossed a coin to decide which fish we would try for! All of them seemed to be well inshore, within a half- to three-quarters of a mile of the beach. It was a day that

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comes but seldom in a big-game angler's life; a day I had long dreamed of, but never hoped to see.

About eleven o'clock, Dave spotted a big fin off the East End. So calm was the water we could see him a mile away. He was working among some bait, every once in a while dashing through them and scattering spray and small fish (sauer fish, Ray called them) in all directions. As we neared him, I could feel my heart beating with excitement and I trembled all over.

Ray made a beautiful circle and placed my bait directly across his path. Dave was not fishing. Seated on the roof of the cabin, he wished to be, he said, where he could "have a box seat."

The marlin went down . . . . I waited in agonized suspense. Had he become frightened and left for good? Even as the thought crossed my mind, I saw a flash of blue close astern, a great head and fin shot out of the water, a long rapier pointed directly at me, and, with a savage jerk of his head, the great swordfish seized my bait in his jaws and was gone.

The line sped silently off the reel. I made no effort to check it. I was waiting . . . . watching. Suddenly it stopped. He was swallowing the flying fish. I tightened until I felt the heavy, live weight at the end. Then I struck—struck hard and quickly four times in rapid succession.

There was a second of inaction, then my rod swept nearly to the water's edge and a huge form burst from the sea a hundred yards back of me and

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leaped into the air like a rocket in full flight. Instead of bearing away from the boat, he turned and rushed directly for it in great leaps and bounds. A scant ten feet away he turned to one side and with a tremendous spring that flung the spray all over the cockpit raced madly away, *directly on top of the water*. He was "walking on his tail," a sight that would have brought a calloused Roman audience, gathered for a combat of gladiators, cheering to its feet.

He shot straight up and fell back heavily several times. This apparently weakened him, and I made ready to fight him, for up to now I had done nothing but hang grimly on.

Apparently, however, he had merely gone below to rearrange his campaign and lay out a new plan of battle. Having thought the matter over carefully, he commenced battling the leader with his sword, an action that jarred me severely with every blow. This not proving very successful, he rose to the surface, spun for a moment on his tail, like a Whirling Dervish, and picking out a straight path dead astern raced away on it in nineteen long, houndlike leaps, trailing in his wake eleven hundred feet of line.

There was no doubt but that these pyrotechnics had exhausted him, for now for the first time I could begin to pump. At the end of twenty minutes, I was rewarded by the sight of him, played out, but doggedly bearing away on the starboard tack.

"Get the gaff, Ray!" I panted. "I'll have him for you in a minute; he's done for!"

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At that moment, as if to give the lie to my words, he sprang into the air and with fins erect, gills agape and blood pouring from his mouth, he rushed straight at the boat and rammed his sword four inches into the planking!

Quick as his action was, Ray's was equally quick, and leaning far over the edge he drove the gaff home. But it was unnecessary. Neither the swordsman's struggles nor our combined efforts could extricate him. He had stuck his nose into it, so to speak, and there he stayed.

At last Ray produced a saw and parted the rapier flush with the waterline. We triumphantly hauled our captive aboard, a mate to Dave's big one and a gold button marlin.

. . . . .  
The days that followed I will pass over quickly. Having taken the best I could hope for on heavy tackle, I switched to light. One day I hooked a marlin and for ten minutes had him under complete control. Everything was working beautifully. The fish had gone straight astern and was leaping frequently. Ray had reversed the engine and we were backing slowly up to him. Conditions could not have been better, and with hopes running high, I pumped and reeled with speed and precision.

"Take it easy, old fellow, he's your's," encouraged Dave, and I worked harder.

The fish was now a scant fifty yards away, and as I lifted, dropped the tip, and reeled rapidly, victory loomed near. But just then the leader

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untwisted, and with a quick flirt of his tail the marlin was gone.

One morning found us off China Point on the south shore. A long, heavy ground swell was running. We would rise high on the crest of a big roller one instant, to wallow in its trough the next. Gulls hovered, dipped, and screamed in our wake; pelicans sailed over our heads. The lichen slopes of Clemente, their peaks wreathed in the early morning fog, stood on our starboard like the turrets of a fairyland castle.

Dave's first fish was a small one, which, after five minutes of frenzied leaping, threw the hook. Then came two, one of which I hooked while going full speed, the other taking Dave's bait when we slowed up. Dave's fish spit out the hook, mine threw it on the third jump.

We swung in a wide circle and ran far out. On a direct line with the point we saw a sight that made us all gasp. It was a fin, but *such* a fin! Fully four feet it must have protruded from the water, and there was no mistaking that it belonged to the grandfather of all marlin.

We put on fresh flying fish and made a slow, wide circle, placing our baits directly in front of him. He appeared to hesitate a moment, then slowly sank like a submarine submerging, his dorsal, like a periscope, rippling the surface a few seconds before disappearing entirely.

There was a frightful wait. Would he decide the tidbit was to his liking? Would he scorn it? So



MARLIN SWORDFISH  
THE PRIDE OF THE PACIFIC





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swift were his movements that I did not see him as he seized it, my first inkling being the line hissing from the reel in long, quick jerks. I let him run unhampered . . . fifty—sixty—seventy-five feet, then tightened and struck.

The next twenty minutes was a nightmare. I had a confused recollection of a twisting, leaping, fighting monster that was on all sides of the boat at once, that smashed the water great sounding cracks, that crazily skittered sideways, catapulted itself through the air with a fury that was terrifying, and that finally ran out all but fifty feet of line in the most spectacular, hair-raising exhibition of deep-sea acrobatics I had ever beheld.

I was helpless. At one instant my line was entering the water astern and the fish was leaping across our bows. Three times he dove under the boat, and I thought the line would catch in the propeller. But it didn't. At the end of forty-five minutes I was completely exhausted. The fish was rolling on the surface. He looked as big as an ox.

"Dave," I said, "if I don't lick this fish in the next five minutes, I'll never get him. I'm played out!"

As if hurling a defiant challenge in my teeth, the gigantic fish rose from the sea and propelling himself on its tail alone bounded away in *forty-three* tremendous jumps out of sight beyond the horizon!

"Christ!" muttered Ray; "the marlin of marlins! A five-hundred pounder!"

I was too weak to answer. My strength had been

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completely sapped and my courage with it. I fell face downward in the cockpit, trembling in every nerve.

"Never mind, partner," Dave said that night as he rolled into bed, "you'll get that fellow yet."

I stood at the threshold of our tent, looking out across the sea. The moon had just risen and had flung her silver train sparkling and scintillating across the waters to my very feet. Above and behind me Clemente, dark and foreboding, rose towering to the star-pierced western sky. Beneath me the vast Pacific murmured sleepily.

"Yes," I answered, speaking more to myself than to Dave, "I'll get that fellow yet."

And so I will.

CHAPTER XI  
IN SEARCH OF THE FOUNTAIN OF  
YOUTH

EVER since the days when the brave Ponce de Leon set out on his fruitless search for that magical spring of water which the Indians had assured him would give perennial youth to all those who partook of it, Florida has been made an annual pilgrimage by thousands of seekers after that very same fountain. Many have found it in one way or another, others have failed, but it remained for us, not only to find it, but to bring it back with us, so that when the spirit moved, we had but to quaff from it, via the wonder of the motion-picture screen, and have our youth renewed.

It was the month of May—when all through the Northland the buds were peeping forth and the song-birds on every hand were heralding in joyful voices that spring was come—that we set forth. A motley crew we were, the Inventor, Artists No. 1 and No. 2, and your humble servant, the Photographer. And our baggage! Despite the fact that we had laboured for weeks, cutting our outfit to a minimum, we must have resembled moving day at Yaps Crossing. Cameras, magazine cases, tripods, sketch-books, paints, duffel bags, film cans, rifles, shot-guns, rods, tents, etc., etc.—when assembled at the

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station, attracted a curious throng who no doubt believed it a Mexican army of occupation en route to the border.

At Miami, that magic city of the far South, we broke our journey in order to purchase supplies, and when we left there, it required the services of a certain coloured person and his mule and wagon to get us to the station.

From Miami our trail led southward over those great viaducts where the railroad literally runs out to sea and disappears over the horizon. We occupied an entire baggage car, and as we sped along, the Inventor figured on some device whereby we might remove our duffel with the minimum of exertion, the Photographer thrummed the ukulele, and Artists No. 1 and No. 2 played checkers.

At Jewfish one of those tropical cloudbursts descended from the heavens and blotted out the landscape—continuing to do so until we reached Channel #2, our destination. It was now dark and still raining pitchforks, but we managed to remove our duffel from the baggage car and pile it in a great heap beside the track. As the lights of the train disappeared in the distance, and we stood there in the inky blackness, the rain pouring down over our outfit, over us, it seemed a long, long ways back home.

A lantern loomed out of the darkness, and there appeared in its rays the faces of Gene and Henry, whom we had written to meet us.

“Shelter near by, gentlemen,” they informed us,

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and we all got to work with a will and removed our paraphernalia to the hospitable Florida Keys Fisheries, erected on the spillway just a few months previous. Three young fellows from Miami had started the proposition, a place where the native market fishermen might put in and dispose of their catches without the necessity of running the eighty miles into Miami or Key West. During our stay at Channel #2 these fellows did for us all that could be expected of people who are thrown together in out-of-the-way parts of the country. They treated us royally.

That night we stretched ourselves on the bare boards of the fish house and, with the rain beating a tattoo on the roof, slept like those who are drugged. True, next morning, we were forced to stretch a little to remove the kinks acquired from our rather hard bed, but a refreshing plunge in the blue-green waters of the Gulf soon dispelled all thoughts of sleep and soreness from us, and we were ready for business.

Gene had brought his launch, Henry his skiff, and ensconced in the former with the latter trailing behind, we set forth on our wanderings. The Photographer installed himself in the bow of the launch, with his camera set in readiness to be pointed immediately in the direction of any excitement. The Inventor and Artist No. 2 trolled from the rear, while Artist No. 1 and Henry bobbed behind in the skiff with harpoon at readiness the moment a fin should be sighted.

Through the arches and out across the flats

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we headed, picking up several crevallé and barracuda on the way, all of which the Photographer duly recorded in his mysterious box. And then the fun began. A huge stingray flapped swiftly out of a hole and across a bank, with Henry and Artist No. 1 in hot pursuit. Soon they came up with him and the flashing harpoon found its mark. The line hissed out of the bow, the water churned itself into fury, Artist No. 1 fell down across a seat, and the grinding Photographer frantically shouted for "more *action!*"

The battle with the stingray successfully terminated, we turned our attention to barracuda, of which the flats seemed to be covered that day. They were on all sides—these gray wolfish fellows, floating along on the lookout for any hapless mullet which might venture too near.

From his station in the bow, the Photographer reported each barracuda as he sighted it: "Big one ahead—on the port," or "starboard," as the case might be. Thereupon Artist No. 1, equipped with a bait-casting rod, would cast in front of that particular barracuda, reeling in swiftly, and a merry battle would ensue. Nine of these savage sea-wolves we took that afternoon, while the Photographer wept, cursed, and implored the others to "make him jump," and turned the handle of the mysterious box at intervals.

On our way back that evening we swung in along the viaducts and Artist No. 2 hooked a big tarpon. Into the air he went with a rush, flinging the silvery spray in all directions. It was a sight we had come

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more than a thousand miles to witness, and we thrilled as of yore.

"Keep a tight line! Don't give him slack!" we shouted, as again and again he bounded upward, shaking his head furiously from side to side. But our advice was unnecessary, for with a final wild spring he flung the glittering spoon a dozen yards from him, and was gone.

One hot, still morning we bade good-bye to Channel #2, with its tarpon, its barracuda, and its rushing tides, and turned our faces westward toward the islands of Conkey Bay. The Gulf lay like a great polished stone, glaring in the tropic sun. From a long distance the fins of marauding sharks stood out like sickle-shaped knives cleaving the surface. The Photographer lounged in the bow of the launch, puffing contentedly on his pipe, Artists No. 1 and No. 2 sketched busily in the stern, the Inventor dissected his rifle. All was at peace with the world.

Soon the low-lying tops of the mangrove-covered islands began to show above the horizon, and as we munched our luncheon, we ran through a secret channel, known of old to the Photographer, and entered the fastnesses of Conkey Bay. Cormorants arose from the water singly, in twos and threes, and in flocks, and sped swiftly away with fast beating wings. On the neighbouring banks, sedate old pelicans flapped heavily into the air and fell back with a crazy splash, feeding. The Photographer trained the M. B. on them, and as they dove, panoramed down with them.

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“Look yonder at the big shark!” suddenly ejaculated Henry, pointing off. It *was* a *big* shark, so big in fact that, in addition to the heavy whale lance that was carried on all harpooning expeditions, the .30-30 was taken along “in case of emergency.” Away went Artist No. 1, the Inventor, and Henry in the skiff, while the Photographer set up his outfit on the bow of the launch and covered them with the M. B.

But the shark suddenly disappeared, and while the trio were vainly scanning the surface for a sight of him, there came into view the wing tips of a great whiplay, showing at regular intervals like the horns of some deep-sea monster.

Artist No. 1 hauled off and sank the harpoon deep into the broad, spotted back. The water spouted high in the air and the ray rushed off at terrific speed, the line, like the coils of some sinister serpent, shooting over the side of the skiff at a dizzying pace.

“Hold him! Hold him!” shouted Artist No. 2, while the steadily turning Photographer cried out in an encouraging voice. “Let’s see what you can do now. A little action. A little ak-shun, p-l-e-a-s-e!”

The ray seemed to know he was posing for posterity, so he redoubled his efforts. With a wild rush he slung the boat sideways, but the Photographer had him dead to rights, and as he leaped clear of the water had the M. B. trained right on him.

“Not so bad! Force the fighting, gentlemen—only thirty-five feet of film left!” sang out the camera-



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man. A wild moment ensued. The skiff became a whirling dervish of oars, men, and high-flung water, while frantic cries of "Shoot him!" "Bring him closer!" "Turn the boat!" "Hold him!" "Let him go!" etc., rent the air. The celluloid martyrs emerged victorious, with the vanquished ray safely in the bottom of the skiff just as the last foot of film passed behind the lens.

We selected as our camp site a tiny mangrove isle, where the palms flung their picturesque fronds about in graceful postures. Wading ashore, for the water was too shallow to permit running the launch in, we pitched our tent and deposited our duffel beneath protecting canvas. And as night swept over that lonely country, we crouched before the glowing embers of a dying fire and told stories. Above, millions of other worlds blinked down upon us, the palms rustled softly in the night wind, the water lapped gently against the shore, and the far-away cry of some nocturnal prowler blended strangely in with our peace and contentment.

Dawn, framed in a gateway of two majestic palms, stole up out of the Gulf and brought us consciousness. The Photographer and Artist No. 2 had decided upon a visit to a bird rookery, discovered by the former several years before, so they hurriedly gulped down their breakfast and were off. Assisted by two natives, who were living on the not far-distant mainland, the expedition started. For about five miles we traversed the prairie on a mule cart, together with the camera outfit, rifles, harpoons,

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etc., for we had a sneaking hope that we might run across a big 'gator when we reached the lake where the rookery was situated.

About four miles from the lake we disembarked, and, packing the outfit on our backs, started off through the swamp for the rookery. The day was hot—one of those cloudless, broiling days of the far South, when the sun burns down from a dizzy sky and the very grass seems to shrivel under the scorching blast. The sweat poured from us in rivulets, for the going was of the hardest. The tall, rough grass reached to and above our shoulders; under foot the swampy ground gave forth a “slooch-squelch” as our feet sank into it. It was a case of three steps forward and two back. Once Artist No. 2 fell into a sink hole, clear to his waist, and was only extracted with the utmost difficulty. For hours we plodded on, and by the time we reached the distant lake, which for years had been hidden away from the prying eyes of man, we were indeed a sight to behold.

The Photographer fell flat on the ground, breathing heavily, while Artist No. 2 collapsed in a state of utter exhaustion. From the near-by mangrove bushes our guides resurrected an old skiff—a home-made affair, consisting of a few leaky planks loosely nailed together. This they succeeded in bailing out, and with the camera mounted in the bow we set forth.

Lost Lake is one of the few bird fastnesses which has survived the dreadful slaughter of the plume

## FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

hunters. Hidden away in the midst of a vast swamp on the edge of the 'Glades, for years even the most daring failed to find it. At last those who did penetrate to its lonely shores realized that here was indeed a goose with golden eggs, and they "shot" it with caution. Instead of killing every bird in sight, as with the other rookeries, only half the birds were killed each year, with the result that in the following season the young birds returned again to rear their share, to be in turn depleted by half. The Photographer, in other years, had visited the famous 'Gator Bay rookery just after it had been shot. The torn and bleeding bodies of hundreds of beautiful egrets, from which the plumes had been ruthlessly stripped, was a sickening sight. At Lost Lake such carnage did not occur. It was one of the last, if not *the* last, great unprotected rookery that existed in southern Florida where the snow-white hosts returned each year in all their former glory. Cuthbert Rookery was but a broken memory; Alligator Bay, Harney's, Lossman's, Eagle Key—gone with the best of them. But Lost Lake. . .

As they rounded a small island, a great chattering of hoarse voices broke upon their ears. Ahead the bushes were covered with blotches of white. They were approaching the wood ibis section of the rookery. The Photographer crouched low in the bow, his fingers steadily turning the crank of the M. B. The great storklike birds flapped slowly about, balancing on near-by branches preening their feathers, gazing curiously at the skiff which bore such strange-

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looking occupants. Their poses were beautiful, and the Photographer thrilled at the thought that these were the first successful motion pictures of wood ibis in their natural haunts that had ever been made.

From the islands where the ibis held forth they wended their way through intervening creeks and came to the egret rookery. Here in the branches perched the stately "long whites" like immovable statues, their wonderful aigrettes falling like mantles from their shoulders. They seemed to mind the camera not at all and allowed the Photographer to approach within a very short distance.

As we rounded a tiny island in order to get a better view of two snowy herons (*Egretta candidissima*), we beheld a sight it has been the good fortune of only a few men in the world to see. Perched on a limb, his beautiful pink and red plumage standing out against the rich green of the mangroves, stood a roseate spoonbill, one of the rarest of birds in the United States to-day. To even the most expert ornithologist the sight of a spoonbill is an event in his career, and there are but a handful of them that can lay claim to having seen one. Formerly abundant, the spoonbill, or "pink curlew," as it is locally known, have been so persecuted for their marvelously tinted feathers that the few stragglers now left are confined to the most inaccessible swamps of our Southern States.

And here was an opportunity to make a motion picture of one! The Photographer breathlessly



"Billy had connected with a big sawfish." (See page 120.)



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ground out foot after foot, fearing at any moment that the lovely vision might take wing. But no! In all probability, these were the first white men this bird had ever seen, and he stood there curiously regarding us, turning his great flattened bill from side to side. At last the film was exhausted, and at that moment our friend lifted his beautiful rose-coloured wings and launched himself into the air, to disappear behind a distant island.

As we lunched beneath the sheltering arms of a great tree, Artist No 2 espied the head of a big alligator lying on the surface several hundred yards distant. We immediately set out in pursuit. The Photographer had the telescopic lens on the camera and caught him just as he was in the act of sinking below the surface.

One of our escorts commenced to "grunt up" the 'gator, and in this he was eminently successful, for suddenly there appeared at the surface the great head and bulging eyes of a huge saurian.

With a well-directed throw the harpoon was sunk deep into the big lizard's side and a whirlwind battle commenced. The 'gator threw himself entirely out of the water like a great fish, and rushed headlong for the skiff, rising under it and lifting it at least six inches from the water. With a mighty roar of foam he turned and again charged, but this time was stopped by the harpoon pole, with which one of our companions thrust him off after the manner of a knight of old in a jousting tournament.

This seemed to discourage him somewhat, for

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he suddenly disappeared and sulked on the bottom. During the lull the cameraman removed the precious M. B. to the limbs of a near-by mangrove tree—for there was no shore upon which to set up the camera—and from this position, with the machine on his knees in lieu of a tripod, filmed the remainder of the battle. It was short and exciting. The 'gator rose to resume the attack and was met by a terrific blow from a well-aimed ax, which sickened him to such a degree that he allowed himself to be successfully roped and rolled into the skiff.

We made our way out of the swamp rejoicing, our celluloid story safe in the magazine case, trophies cut from the skin of our late antagonist safe in the duffel bag. Incidentally, this was one of the largest alligators we have ever killed in Florida, and we have sent quite a few to the Happy Hunting Ground. He was exactly twelve feet long to the inch. And twelve-foot 'gators do not grow on every tree. Always measure your catch. You will receive much more satisfaction yourself than by merely guessing at it, and once the measurement has fixed itself in your mind, it is not so apt to grow with the years, as is many times the case.

We spent the remainder of our time loafing and camping through that tropical land, filming all and anything of interest which presented itself. And in due course we returned home.

But I started this story with something about finding a fountain and renewing one's youth. We found it and returned with it. Whene'er our cares



## FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

and work weigh too heavily upon us, we repair to the darkened interior of some neighbouring theater, and there, upon the silvery wonder of the motion-picture screen, quaff from our fountain and renew our youth in living again the scenes which have passed.

And should you ever see these pictures, we can but hope you may find in them that Great Youthfulness of the vast outdoors which we discovered in making them.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE TARPON OF CHANNEL TWO

WHEN the Florida East Coast Railway reaches the end of the mainland of the United States, it literally "goes to sea." From island to island it stretches forth its shining rails across the shallow waters of the Bay of Florida toward Key West. In some places it must pass of necessity across deep cuts and channels, and here, instead of the usual "fill," great concrete arches or viaducts have been erected.

Toward one of these, Billy and I had been steering the *Nepenthe* all day. Southward from Miami, the Inland Waterway offers so many attractive side trips that it requires a much stronger attraction ahead to pass them by. But Billy and I *had* our attraction, and we were heading for it with all possible speed. As the sun passed the zenith and swung westward toward the Gulf, we ran through the banks of the Bow Legged Keys, and turning eastward made out the long, white line of Channel #2, our objective.

At the northern end of Long Key, two great viaducts span the sea; between them a long limestone fill. The most southerly span is known as Channel #5; the other, Channel #2. They derived their names from the passes which cut through the keys at those points during the construc-

## THE TARPON OF CHANNEL TWO

tion of the Overseas Railroad. Channels #3 and 4 disappeared when the limestone fill came along, and the water which formerly ebbed and flowed through them became concentrated in the other two, with the consequence that the tide through these channels is terribly swift and strong, a speed of fifteen and eighteen miles an hour being attained at some points. Naturally great quantities of small bait and particles of food are swept off the banks and through these channels; and around the arches of the viaducts, waiting for them, lie the big game fishes, tarpon mostly.

The method used in fishing for them is to troll on the side from which the tide is coming, as close to the arches as possible, regulating the speed of your boat to that of the tide, so that your bait may be carried in under the arches while you stand just off them at a practical standstill. The one great objection to this method of fishing is that you are forced to use very heavy tackle. As soon as your fish is hooked, unless you put on full speed and drag him away from the viaduct, he is apt to go through on to the other side.

To those of us who have fished tarpon on the West Coast, where the principal method in vogue is still fishing from an anchored boat with crab or mullet bait, mostly with light tackle, this other method is rather distasteful. However, after having fished the viaducts for several winters, I evolved a system which obviated all of the objectionable features. By trolling from a very small launch, or

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light skiff with outboard motor attached, after hooking a fish, should he decide to go through from the Gulf to the Atlantic, or *vice versa*, cut off your engine, unship your oars, and *go through with him*. To attempt this in a large boat would be to court certain disaster against the concrete arches and the submerged piling of the old bridge which formerly stood there. In addition, this other method permits the use of light tackle which the former certainly does not.

Of the two passes, Channel #2, on account of its construction and short length, has always been my favourite. On the north, the whispering palms and coral shoreline of Lower Matecumbe reaches to the very abutments themselves; on the south, the fill is flanked on the Atlantic and Gulf sides by great banks and flats over which the barracuda drift like lone gray wolves, and where, on the incoming tide, one may find great sharks, sawfish, and rays. And under the arches, and in the swift tide which rushes through them like a mill race, lie great schools of tarpon at almost any season of the year. I have taken tarpon there steadily from December until May. It is one of the few places where one can be fairly certain of tarpon in early winter. As the season advances they increase in numbers, until from April onward they may be seen at all hours of the day, rolling on the surface as far as the eye can reach. Until April most of the fishing for tarpon is done at sunset, daybreak, or night—a beautiful and romantic way of fishing to my way

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of thinking; but later in the season they may be taken at all hours.

For several years I followed the tarpon. Up the rivers of the West Coast in December I would cast for the baby fish, wonderful sport on a fly rod or light trolling rod. Then to Channel #2 for a week or so's session with them there. Then down the coast to Bahia Honda and Spanish Harbour. By that time they were showing all along the keys north to Biscayne Bay. As Spring advanced I would work westward to the great banks off Cape Sable, where on still, hot days they would come up in the shallow water to feed by the hundreds of thousands. Then to Shark River, and from there gradually north among the islands to Fort Myers, Useppa, and Boca Grande. But it was at Channel #2 that I've had my most thrilling days and nights with the Silver King, and it was at Channel #2 that the *Nepenthe* was about to come to anchor when we last left her.

As Billy heaved 'er over, the sun was just sinking, a fiery red ball, into the Gulf. Along this stretch of keys is one of the few places in the world where the sun appears to rest upon a flaming pedestal just before slipping out of sight. This is due to the reflection on the water. As the sun sinks lower and lower, a great stand or pedestal appears to rise from the sea to meet it. On the crest of it, it poises for a few brief seconds, as if gathering itself for the plunge, and then dives below the horizon.

We hastily ate a few sandwiches and sallied

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forth in a small launch to try our luck. The afterglow of the sunset turned the arches into pink fairy bridges, and, as we chugged past them, the water beneath us took on various hues, changing constantly.

It had been too late to acquire fresh bait, so we trolled with spoons. We had just reached the end of the viaduct and were swinging for the turn, when I had a hard strike, and into the air leaped a tarpon. Luckily this fish ran straight against the tide and in five minutes was out of it, so that we could put the engine in neutral and drift with the fish. Shortly after, I had him to the boat where we released him. He looked about eighty pounds.

Returning to the viaduct Billy hooked another immediately. This one went through to the other side and we were forced to follow. He was quite a jumper and in the failing light looked well over a hundred. He kept working to sea until we were at least a quarter of a mile from the arches. It was now quite dark and we could not see him—only the ghostly white of the foam when he jumped telling us he was still on. Suddenly I heard a great splash close by and distinctly heard the faint tinkle of the spoon as he threw it through the air.

“He’s off!” came almost simultaneously from Billy, and he reeled in an empty line.

We went back once more to the viaduct, but the tarpon had evidently ceased feeding on that tide. A vast host of snappers, redfish, and crevallé had appeared during our absence and made life miser-



### TRACKING THE TARPON

1. "into the air rose a tarpon."  
*(Photo by Julian Dimock, courtesy Amer. Mus. Nat. History.)*
2. "Billy landed one weighing over a hundred."
3. "Gene spread his net successfully over a school of mullet."





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able for us, seizing our spoons every time we lowered them overboard. I dangled my spoon over the side, and, in the light of the moon, which was just rising, saw a veritable swarm of eight- and ten-pound fishes rushing after it. I jerked it away just in time, as the water boiled alongside from their frantic rushes.

Following the snappers and crevallé came great numbers of mackerel sharks, which appeared even more ravenous. After landing four we were so completely tired out that we decided to call it a night and headed back for the little yellow star that marked the riding light of the *Nepenthe*. A late supper and to our berths, lulled to sleep by the gentle murmuring of the tide through the arches.

Daybreak found us along the shore with our cast nets after mullet. Soon two schools were sighted, and I spread the net successfully over one, while Billy, with equal good fortune, corralled the other. Thus, plentifully supplied with fresh bait, we returned to the cruiser, iced up what we did not need, and, taking the skiff, rowed through the arches and out on the flats of Lower Matecumbe.

The banks inshore were almost dry, the tide being about three-quarters down, but those offshore were still covered with about three feet of water, and on them, and in the adjacent channels, we commenced looking for barracuda. I soon spied a big fellow drifting along the edge of the bank, and, baiting with a side of mullet, cast it directly in his path.

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As I retrieved it in front of him, he saw it and shied violently, ran off a little distance, turned, and, running close in behind it, seized it in his jaws. A barracuda in shoal water is a beautiful fish to fight, and this one proved no exception. He leaped a dozen or more times and, when brought to boat, weighed twenty-one pounds.

About that time Billy sighted another which he cast for and hooked, and now it was my turn to handle the oars and pass out free advice. By noon we had taken seven, all on bait casting-rods, and satisfied with a morning of splendid sport, rowed to the the near-by shore and ate our lunch in a grove of beautiful palm trees.

I stretched myself gratefully in the shade while Billy busied himself catching hermit crabs. The hermit crab is the *pièce de résistance* wherever a bonefish is concerned, and though I visioned the wonderful sport ahead and knew we must have the bait in order to enjoy it, I was frankly too lazy to go after it at that moment.

But the faithful Bill soon appeared with both pockets full, and finishing the last morsel of lunch we made ready for the bonefish.

Long Key bight is a favorite haunt of these swift and dazzling fighters, and thither we headed after picking up the launch.

Now, the bonefish is a strange and curious fish. He looks like the common garden variety of sucker found in our lakes and streams, but there the resemblance ceases, for his nature is entirely different.

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I do not mean he is the exact replica of a sucker, but that is what he reminds one of. He is a brilliant silver in colour, with the courage of a leopard and the speed of an antelope, and one of the most cunning and wary of fish to stalk and kill.

We anchored the launch, and, rowing some distance away in the skiff, commenced fishing. The tide was just beginning to run in and in some places the flats were well covered. To be a successful bone-fisherman you must have an abundance of patience as well as the temperament of an artist's model, for a move or a word is apt to frighten the quarry when almost within your grasp.

We fished and smoked for an hour in silence. Occasionally a pelican flew overhead or dove with a tremendously awkward splash on the near-by banks. I idly wondered why they did not break their necks; they fell so heavily and so clumsily.

At last Billy touched me on the shoulder, and gazing in the direction in which he pointed, I saw a number of small objects protruding from the water. Bonefish tails!

Instantly we were on the *qui vive*, for the feeding fish were working in our direction. Suddenly my line tightened slightly; it was as if something had brushed past it, more the *ghost* of a strike than an actual one. I struck quickly and firmly and hooked a bonefish.

These fish remind me of a channel-bass in their actions, and actually take out as much line. Imagine playing a channel-bass on a black-bass rod from the

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beach, and you have a fair idea of bonefish. Without stopping, this fellow tore off five hundred feet of line before I could bring him to a standstill. The other bonefish had all disappeared when I hooked mine. It was nearly fifteen minutes before I had him alongside, and then only after he had made seven long runs and circled the skiff twice. He weighed exactly three pounds. I have never seen a fresh-water fish which gave me half as much of a battle, and I have caught them all.

We then saw two more schools feeding up with the tide. We cast ahead of them and both of us hooked a fish, although mine got off before I could see it. Billy's weighed about three pounds and a half. The banks now appeared to be alive with bonefish, for in whichever direction we looked we could see tails sticking out of the water. I caught another weighing about two pounds, and then Billy hooked a big one which ran out nearly all his line. Twice he had him within sight of the skiff, and each time he raced away for a great distance before being turned. When we got him in he weighed an even six pounds, a really fine prize.

Though it was still quite early we decided to return to the *Nepenthe* in order to prepare an early supper and be out in time for the tarpon. While Bill peeled potatoes and chopped up onions—all so necessary for a first-class mulligan—I rowed over back of the banks and indulged in a swim, safe from marauding sharks. I left him sitting in the cockpit, the tears streaming down his face, and heartily

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cursing the person who first discovered onions as an article of diet.

It was still about an hour before dark when we sallied forth after the tarpon. We were fishing from the skiff with outboard motor attached. Hardly had we reached the middle of the viaduct when I had a heavy strike, and a large tarpon catapulted its huge silvery body high in the air. He at once went through the nearest arch, and we after him, Billy unshipping the oars and managing the skiff in a masterly fashion.

He made seven leaps and then settled down to deep-water fighting. I pumped and reeled furiously. Several times I had him within sight, but each time as I was about to call for the gaff, he took a new lease on life and ran out a hundred or more feet of line. All of a sudden he became quite frenzied, made three long, frantic leaps, and fell with a heavy splash. I felt a terrible jerking and wrestling on the end of the line, and then a heavy dead weight. No need to ask what had happened. I reeled in to find my tarpon bitten exactly in half, his muscles still quivering, his red gills still gaping spasmodically.

This was not so good, for with sharks around we began to have some doubt about the success of our evening's fishing. However, it was only one who had wandered in from the outer reef, or, else, satisfied with his meal, he had withdrawn, for we saw no more of sharks that night.

Following this, Billy hooked, fought, and landed one weighing one hundred and ten pounds. He

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was a very pretty leaper and performed in a beautiful fashion. Then I again took the rod and Billy managed the skiff. We ran the length of the viaduct twice without results. Then we went through to the opposite side with the same success, or rather, lack of it. By this time the night was waning and we were pretty tired, so came to the conclusion to quit.

“Just make one more turn,” I pleaded to Bill, “way out in that channel along the edge of the bank.”

He did so, and I received a tremendous strike. I could not see the fish, but saw and heard the heavy-sounding splash of his jump far back in the ghostly light of the moon which was just rising. After that first leap he refused to show again, and from the feel of him I might as well have been fastened to a large shark. Fifteen minutes passed without my being able to get him any closer, and by this time I was very much excited. The fish was acting in the same manner as the one hooked by Mr. L. P. Schutt, of Long Key. Mr. Schutt fought a tarpon at this same viaduct for two hours, during which period it *never jumped once*. When he had the fish beaten and was calling for the gaff, a very large shark appeared alongside and bit the tarpon in two immediately back of the dorsal fin, tearing out its entrails at the same time. The part remaining weighed 156½ lbs. The length from bottom of lower jaw to back of dorsal was 58 inches, the girth (*with entrails out*), 47 inches. Had the fish been landed entire, I am quite sure it would have been a world's record. The head of this

## THE TARPON OF CHANNEL TWO

fish was mounted for the Long Key Camp and is 19 inches in length from tip of lower jaw with mouth closed to extremity of gills.

In a little over an hour I had my fish well exhausted, and started to bring him to the boat. He was down quite deep, and I put a great strain on the line in order to get him in as quickly as possible. The moon was well up by now and it was as light as day. We peered eagerly into the water for the first glimpse of him. Suddenly we saw him, a phosphorescent flash of green beneath us. I gave a great heave on the line. Momentarily I expected to see the phantom form of a shark. He was a monster tarpon without a doubt, and we held our breaths for fear that our very voices might court disaster. But disaster came, and from an unexpected quarter. As I gave that one last heave to bring him within reach of Billy's waiting gaff, the hook, which had been caught in the flap of his outer jaw, pulled out. The sudden slacking of the line tumbled me backwards full length in the bottom of the skiff. Bill made one last desperate swipe at the tarpon with the gaff and caught him in the tail! It requires no great stretching of the imagination to picture what followed. The skiff tipped quickly up on one side and slowly and majestically filled, Billy was catapulted headfirst into the water, while I remained seated in the bottom of the boat, my head above the surface like an ancient Roman enjoying the ceremony of the bath, covered with sea water, tarpon scales, and slime.

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

Luckily we were near the edge of the bank, and the moon was so brilliant that every object was plainly discernible. Treading water, we pushed the half-sunken skiff ahead of us and soon our feet touched bottom. Detaching the outboard motor, we emptied the boat and in a short time were on our way, none the worse for our experience, with the exception of a lost oar which was recovered, to say nothing of a lost tarpon and gaff. Incidentally, we found the gaff the next morning floating in one of the little channels that ran through the flats, which confirms the statement that I had made to Billy the night before: that he was a very poor gaffsman.

We hung our clothing on deck and prepared to turn in. I had grained a large stingray that morning, and before retiring we fastened a big chunk of him to a shark line and tossed it overboard. We tied this firmly in the cockpit and looped several feet of the slack around two empty gasoline cans which we placed, one on top of the other, in the companionway.

I have no idea how long I had been asleep before I was awakened by a terrific racket. I leaped from my berth to see the cans bounding and banging around the cockpit. In an instant I was on deck with the half-naked Billy close behind. At that moment our shark line fetched taut and the *Nepenthe* swung slowly around. With a a heave-ho, blow-the-man-down! we seized the line and "lay back on 'er." There was a great, heavy weight on



## THE TARPON OF CHANNEL TWO

the other end, but of what nature we did not know. For several seconds neither side was successful, then our anchor-man's superiority began to tell, and slowly we dragged our opponent across the cleats. In five minutes a great, round form as big as a barrel loomed under the quarter. "A monster jewfish!" panted Billy. "Take a turn around the cleat while I get the gaff!"

But the gaff was unnecessary, for he had actually swallowed hook, line, and sinker, and would never have made his escape in a thousand years. We shot him with a pistol and retired once more to finish our rudely broken rest. This was a very large jewfish, and the next day weighed slightly over three hundred pounds.

In the morning we loafed and shot clay birds from the bow with a hand trap. This was great sport and provided the excuse for no end of sarcastic remarks about one's ability as a marksman as well as a trap boy. But we did well enough, and I think Billy finished with but two more "deads" to his credit than I.

The afternoon was spent in an equally languorous manner. There is actually such a thing as too much fishing. By that I mean, day after day of angling, from morning till night, gets on one's nerves. Fishing is a very strenuous sport and one in which the nervous system is brought into great play. While I know I could never be "fished out," I feel that to get the full enjoyment and health from angling, which it, like no other sport, can give you, it is advisable

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

to "lay off" occasionally and take things easy. Many anglers of my acquaintance, at Long Key and Catalina and elsewhere, fish every other day. This gives them an opportunity to rest and better fit themselves for the great strain which they must undergo in fighting great game fishes.

We had a light supper and set out at another try at our friends, the tarpon. Billy was fishing light tackle as usual, but I had switched to my little Heddon bait-casting rod and 3-0 surf reel on which I had had such success with barracuda. It was a trick outfit, plain and simple, but one from which I had derived a great deal of pleasure and enjoyment. It was a case of matching one's wits against the wild, than which there is nothing more fascinating.

About dusk I hooked a small tarpon of thirty odd pounds which cut some fancy capers before I had him alongside. It took me twenty minutes to subdue him, for though I had the little rod bent double, and had placed all the strain I dared on the nine-thread line, it was no easy task. The joints of bamboo creaked in astonishment at this strange variety of black bass, the like of which they had never before been forced to contend with.

We trolled about for another two hours with varying success. The tarpon were behaving themselves in a very right and proper manner, not one of them forcing us to go through the viaduct. Just as the moon was rising across the banks to the eastward, Billy had a hard strike and hooked a beauty. The fish jumped six times in quick succession and

## THE TARPON OF CHANNEL TWO

then did not show for ten minutes. But Billy worked on him hard, and in five more minutes had him almost up. Here he gave one last despairing leap which nearly landed him in the boat, and gave up. We towed him quickly to the fill where we weighed him—110 pounds—and then released him. For several minutes he lay in the shallow water on his side, his gills opening and shutting spasmodically, his tail working feebly. As his strength gradually returned, he righted himself and breathed more regularly. At last I leaned over and grasped the long plume-like fin back of his dorsal. With a mighty splash he wrenched himself free and sped away, quickly disappearing in the channel. There is a great personal satisfaction in releasing a fish, which can be acquired in no other manner.

The moon rose higher and with it the hour hands of our watches. The palms of Lower Matecumbe were sheathed with silver, the viaduct and white coral beaches took on a greenish-blue tinge. A soft breeze from the Gulf fanned our cheeks.

Just then I had a swift, strong strike. Into the air, bursting the surface of the channel in a great creamy spray that glittered in the soft moonlight like thousands of tiny jewels, rose a tarpon, gills agape and slapping, head jerking from side to side like a bulldog. My little rod nodded, and the reel hummed an exultant song. I shouted aloud with excitement. Then followed a silence as Billy cut off the engine and noiselessly unshipped the oars.

Down the pass sped the tarpon, pausing at in-

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

tervals in his mad flight to bound high in air, falling with a surging splash that echoed in our ears. I braked cautiously with my thumb, but still he kept on. The reel grew hot beneath my touch and Billy threw a hatful of water on it. Fortunately, the fish had worked out and away from the arches, so there was nothing for my partner to do but rest on his oars and see that I was kept stern-on to the quarry.

He settled down to a steady pull and I commenced pumping. At the slightest show of revolt on his part I was forced to let him have line, for any great strain would have snapped my outfit. A long, slow, upward heave of the rod, a quick dropping of the tip, and a second of furious reeling. Again the same motions, and I had gained a precious ten feet of line. Then he jumped and I lost it all. Though the night was cool, I was drenched with sweat. A great disturbance on the bank back of me nearly resulted in disaster, and although Billy shouted that a big whipray had jumped into the air, I dared not turn for fear of losing my fish.

Then the strain told and I began to work him closer. So clear did the moonlight show everything, that we could easily make him out beneath the water as he swam near the boat. Bill shipped the oars and reached for the gaff, and I slowly brought him to the surface and led him alongside. The gaff flashed outward and back, there was a great thrashing that sprayed us with cool, salty water, and the tarpon was slid into the bottom of the skiff—



THE SILVER MONARCH



## THE TARPON OF CHANNEL TWO

forty-nine pounds of fighting Silver King on a 4½-ounce outfit!

We triumphantly put-putted back to the cruiser. The tide murmured and gurgled through the arches; the moon's soft radiance threw the near-by palms and ghostly viaduct into misty relief. From a neighbouring key a heron croaked sleepily. Above, a billion stars gleamed whitely down from the tropic sky. From the sea came the winking flash of the light on Alligator Reef. Over all brooded peace and silence. It was the land of dreams, a land of far-flung reefs and emerald seas, a land

*Where the sea egg flames on the coral,  
And the long-backed breakers croon  
Their endless ocean legends  
To the lazy locked lagoon.*

CHAPTER XIII  
AN OCEAN GOLIATH

UPON my return to Avalon in the fall, my thoughts were all of swordfish. I had made the trip across the continent solely with the ambition to take from the vast bosom of the heaving Pacific one of those purple gladiators of the seas. At the Tuna Club I found that my rods and reels had preceded me and lay in their cases awaiting their master's bidding, wherever and whenever he willed it.

The soft, warm air, the blue skies, the long, glassy swells so indigenous to fall weather at Catalina, all bade fair for some wonderful sport. Tuna I had taken—big ones—on the Atlantic Coast, so with these I was of no mind to tarry. Swordfish was my goal, and swordfish alone. Had I but known it, I was to encounter and capture one of the largest fish of my entire angling career, and one which, up to that time, I had heard and read of but little.

I had chartered the *Mañana*, a large seaworthy motor boat of some 40 ft. in length, with ample deck room and commodious enough for the most discriminating angler. As developments afterward proved, it was fortunate that the boat was as large and as broad as she was, else we should never have succeeded in accomplishing that which we did.

The third of September dawned a typical Cali-



## AN OCEAN GOLIATH

fornia day. To those who have visited the Golden State, no explanation is necessary; to those who have not had that good fortune, suffice it to say that it was perfect. The peaks of the Sierras, over on the mainland, stood out in the clear atmosphere as if they might have been but ten miles away instead of seventy. The great Pacific lay silent and serene like some gigantic mill pond. The heavens were like a sapphire dome that reflected their wonderful colour in the responsive deeps. As we left the dock that morning I could feel the thrill of it coursing madly through my veins, and I thanked God to be alive.

About ten o'clock a marlin swordfish (*Tetrapturus mitsukurii*) appeared back of the boat. He took all three "teasers" in quick succession and then sheered off. "Teasers" are hookless baits, trolled aft on a light line which is easily broken, to attract a fish within reach of the angler's baited hook. I have had a swordfish take the teasers as fast as we could put them out to him, and never touch my bait. And I have had them take the bait upon their first appearance and never bother the teasers.

This swordfish was hungry. In a few minutes we saw him again, some distance back and deep down in the clear water, but coming rapidly toward us. He took my flying-fish bait with a great splash and I hooked him. He jumped eleven times, and on the last leap threw the hook. We saw no more swordfish that day.

We were returning home late in the afternoon when I called the captain's attention to a large

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

light-brown object on the water some quarter of a mile distant. At first we thought this to be a sea-turtle, as they grow to a great size in those waters. But, on turning the boat in its direction, we saw that this could not be so.

The captain looked at it for some time through the binoculars and said he thought it must be an ocean sunfish. This, he added, however, was highly improbable, on account of the great dimensions of the creature, which was twice the size of any sunfish he had ever seen, and captain has been fishing these waters for many years.

As we approached it, his supposition proved true. It was a sunfish, but what a sunfish! With the greater part of its body submerged, it lay basking in the warm sunlight, lazily waving a great spotted dorsal fin above the mirrored surface.

My basking sunfish know it  
And wheeling albatross  
Where the lone wave fills with fire  
Beneath the Southern Cross.

The thought of capturing it did not occur to me at first. I was filled more with the awe and wonderment of beholding such a huge monster of the deep at close range. It appeared to be oblivious to the close proximity of the boat and lay almost motionless as we slipped nearer.

Suddenly I felt an intense desire to harpoon it. My disappointment at losing the swordfish made me

## AN OCEAN GOLIATH

all the more desirous of getting *something*—no matter of what nature. I knew that the fish before me was an exceedingly large one; that it was a world's record I had no conception.

I dashed into the cabin and hastily assembled my harpoon and rope.

"He's still there—but hurry!" Cap shouted down to me.

Upon my appearance on deck I took my stand on the bow, harpoon in hand, and the *Mañana* was slowly turned toward the fish. He had sunk a little deeper in the water, leaving just the tip of his dorsal protruding. This was the first large mola I had ever seen, and the shape of it in the water confused me.

I drew back and hurled the iron with all my strength at what I took to be the creature's head. What was my amazement and surprise to see the harpoon bounce from the monster's side as if it had been thrown at a block of granite! It was a throw which would have buried the iron to the hilt in any ordinary shark or devilfish, but on this queer leviathan it seemed to make no impression whatever.

The harpoon, while not injuring the sunfish in any way, apparently annoyed him, for he sank down in the clear water until he was lost to view. Very much discouraged, I reclaimed the rope and harpoon and sat down on the cabin.

"No use, Cap," I exclaimed. "I'm a Jonah, and no mistake." And just then, as if to contradict my words, there arose to the surface, not two hun-

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

dred yards away, the big fin of our friend, the mola.

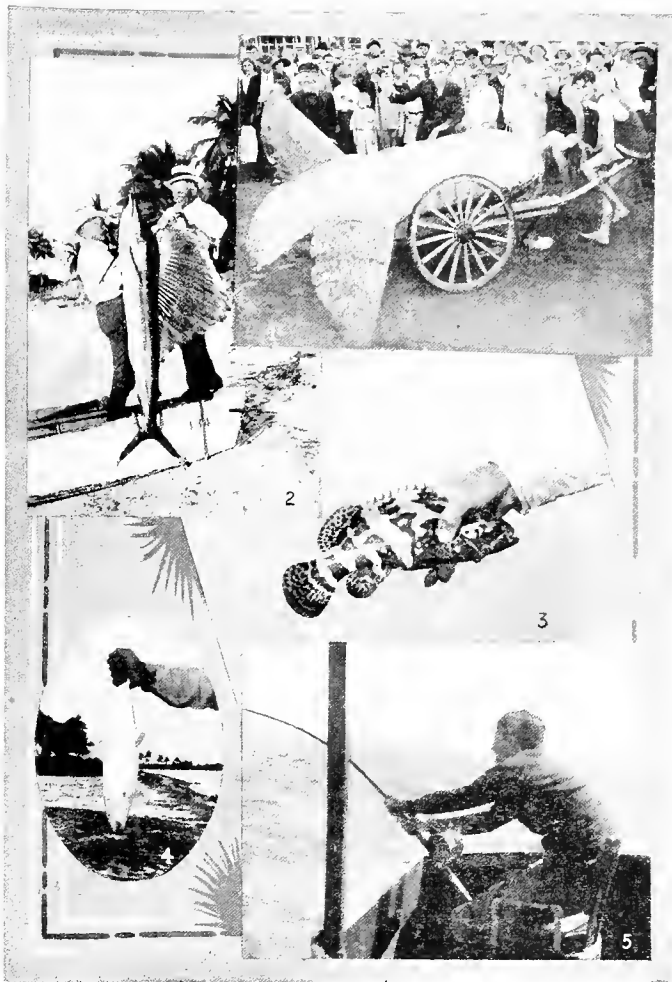
We steered for him again, and this time I threw the iron for the tail of the fish. It held. With a rush the line flew from the bow and sank into the depths. I took a quick turn around a cleat and held fast, awaiting developments.

The sunfish hung straight downward, a dead weight on the line, which sagged and creaked ominously. The *Mañana* had listed to starboard and swung round like a vessel at anchor in a swift tide.

Our task was now to get the monster to the surface, where we might lasso him or gaff him. But this was easier to contemplate than to do. Though the captain and I both threw our weight against the rope we could not so much as budge him.

Finally we hit upon the plan of backing the boat and gradually bringing him to the surface. It worked. Slowly the huge fins and body of this ocean Goliath appeared flapping on the surface and we quickly ran the boat alongside. The captain secured a gaff in the small, round mouth, and I plunged another into the eye, the socket of which had the feel of solid bone.

Then ensued a wild scene. The sunfish opened its mouth and belched forth great streams of water and steam, mixed with small particles of food, which covered the captain and I with a disgusting slime. The rope on my gaff broke, while the captain's straightened out like a bent pin. For the moment we thought we had lost him, but the har-



## IN MANY WATERS

1. The giant ocean sunfish or *mola*.
2. A Bahama sailfish. (Photo by W. B. Haynes.)
3. A young jewfish of the reefs.
4. *Albula vulpes*—the glorious bonefish.
5. "Dave braced himself for a mighty effort, and heaved."



## AN OCEAN GOLIATH

poon still held, and with this we were able gradually to work him back to the boat. Meanwhile Cap had hammered the gaff into shape and we again assailed him, this time getting a firm purchase.

But the fish was far from subdued and rolled heavily against the boat, pulling the rail of the *Mañana* almost under water. In the excitement I had forgotten my pistol, and now, remembering it, I hastened to fetch it, and emptied the six chambers in quick succession at the huge eye. Though it was apparent that the fish had felt the shock of the bullets, it still continued to roll and plunge, and broke another gaff rope. I quickly reloaded and fired again, and this time stunned it sufficiently for us to start back to Avalon, towing it slowly behind.

We made small progress, for the shape of our capture caused it to weave slowly around and around in the water after the manner of a fan which is thrown into the air, its broad side now presenting a resistance to the water, now sliding easily through it.

Over an hour it took us to reach the land. From afar we could see a large crowd collected on the dock and knew that our battle with the monster had been witnessed from shore. We reached the steamer pier, to find a huge concourse assembled and many more arriving each minute.

With the assistance of a dozen or more willing onlookers, a block and tackle was made fast in the fish's mouth and an attempt was made to hoist it onto the pier. But so great was the creature's

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weight that the whole contrivance collapsed and the fish fell back into the sea.

Seeing that we could never hope to get it up by that method, we secured a cart which was pushed down the beach into the water. The fish was floated onto it, and with a "yo-heave-ho!" cart, fish, and all were dragged triumphantly onto the main street of Avalon.

Hundreds of amateur photographers flocked to the scene and besieged us with cameras and questions. I remember one old lady accosted me with a benevolent smile and inquired: "Have you caught many of these this season?"

All in all it was a most exciting time, and it would be needless to say that both the captain and I enjoyed ourselves immensely.

I was aware at the time that I had captured a very large specimen of the ocean sunfish or *Mola mola*. That it was the largest ever captured in the world, I did not find out until later.

Sunfish are fish of the open sea. Going to and from Europe I have occasionally seen the wandering fin of one many days out from land. And on the New Jersey coast—my home—I at one time observed a sunfish about twenty miles from shore, enjoying at the surface the warmth of a lazy August afternoon.

Dr. Bashford Dean, in the *American Museum Journal* for December, 1913, says of the sunfish: "They usually 'scale' obliquely into the water when disturbed, and are said to sometimes jump above the surface like porpoises. But in general, little is



## AN OCEAN GOLIATH

known of their habits. It has the reputation of being one of the most abnormal of queer fishes. It is diskshaped and appears 'all head.' It has lost the hinder trunk region—and with this the spinal cord—to a degree, indeed, unique among backboned animals. Thus, the spinal cord of a sunfish a yard long measures only a small fraction of an inch in length.

"It is not possible to explain the 'adaptations' which this fish is supposed to have undergone, and the steps in its evolution. Several of its earlier stages, however, are known, and they show how the tail region comes to be changed. Furthermore, a clue as to the 'cause' of its modifications was obtained by chance when the puzzle of the reproduction of eels was studied.

"It was discovered that young eels were often found in the stomachs of small sunfishes, and from what we now know of the natural history of eels, it seems clear that at one stage of its life the sunfish lives in deep water. Its curious shape, therefore, may in some way be connected with its living under conditions of great pressure where most fishes develop huge heads and spindling trunks. Small specimens are fairly common in the warmer seas. Large specimens, however, rarely come to the hands of the naturalist."

The sunfish has a wide distribution, inhabiting most temperate and tropical seas. Specimens have been reported from the Mediterranean and from Russia. Dr. Pellegrin reports that sunfishes collect

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and spawn during April in definite areas in relatively deep water, as in the bay of Port-de-France. The eggs, he reports, are minute.

At any rate, they are a strange and wonderful curiosity for any angler to encounter, and I doubt if I should like to try to capture another one very soon. My fish measured ten feet eleven inches in length, and nine feet nine inches vertically, and put up a heavy, sluggish battle that lasted the greater part of three hours. But the experience was one I shall never forget and will linger in my memory as one of the most interesting and exciting incidents in all my angling career.

CHAPTER XIV  
DEATH STRUGGLE WITH AN  
ALLIGATOR

THIS story cannot strictly be called one of angling. Still I feel it is an "adventure in angling," for it occurred during a winter spent in pursuit of my favourite pastime along the great barrier reefs and both coasts of the Florida peninsula. To me, it is an illustration of that time-worn adage, used by thousands of writers since the gentle (?) art of angling was first invented—"it is not all of fishing to fish."

One can never tell just what will happen to him while angling. The fish one catches are entirely incidental to the success and enjoyment of the trip. It is the environment, the country into which one's search for angling leads one, the happenings which occur, and in the main these things having nothing to do with fish or fishing. The birds, the trees, the flowers one sees, the people one meets—all these, to me, should be included in an angling expedition.

And so, this little adventure, while it has nothing to do with the honoured sport of piscator, still is set forth to show that one can never tell what will happen to him when he goes a-fishing.

During one spring, as a supplement to a certain

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

fishing trip, I was investigating in the southwestern Florida swamps, in the interest of the Audubon Society, the great egret rookeries.

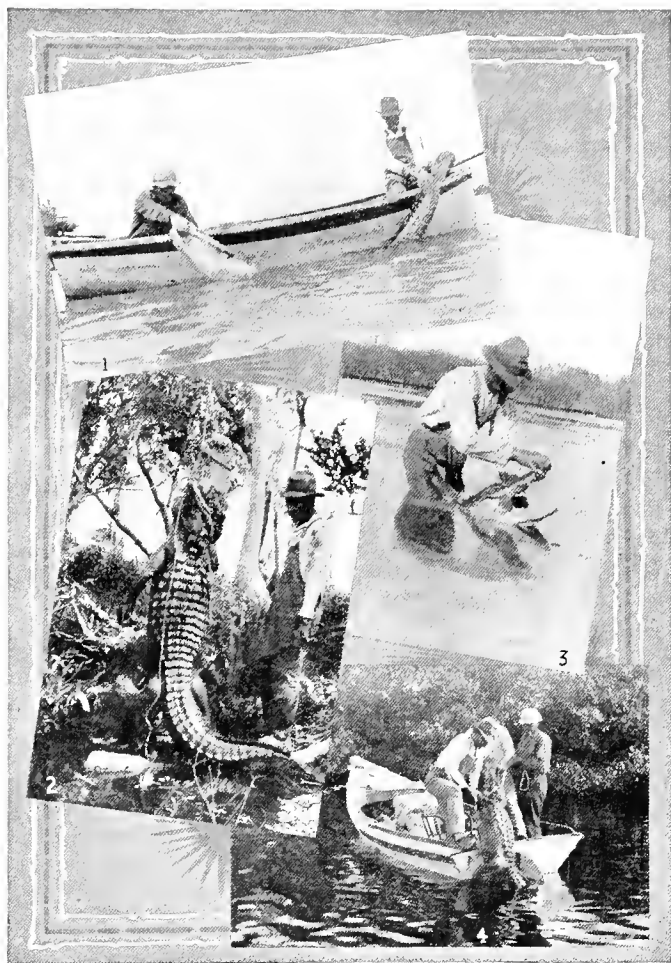
The egret, as every one knows, is much prized by women for its beautiful plumes, or aigrettes, which are worn on hats and in the hair. Men for years have risked their lives for the much-desired feathers, all to the end that lovely woman might have her passion gratified.

It was a sad state of affairs that we found, Billy, Henry (my guide), and I. We had cruised for several weeks in my boat, the *Nepenthe*, penetrating the vast swamps to the once great rookeries, but to no avail. The mark of the plume hunter was there before us. Where once had been a great chattering bird-city of gorgeous white herons, now nothing but a few blood-clotted feathers showed where was "the glory that was Greece."

We were becoming discouraged. For days we had not seen a living soul, save one or two wandering Seminole Indians propelling their queer cypress-log dugouts through the saw grass and water of the deserted island region, and the rookeries we had visited, once so famous to the feather trade, were barren.

At last we found some birds in a lonely lake back of Cape Sable; some four hundred all told, "Long Whites" and Snowy Egrets. But it was a small rookery and the birds were frightened, evidently having been "shot" that season.

Finally Henry bethought him of a rookery he had once seen some ninety miles distant from there



### IN THE 'GLADES

1. Our Cuthbert Rookery 'gator.
2. The big one from the lake of the 'gators.
3. The alligator that attacked the author.
4. Hoisting the Harney's River 'gator aboard.



## DEATH STRUGGLE

in the swamps of the Madeira Hammock, through which he had been hunting some five years previous.

It was worth investigating, for if the rookery still existed, it was safe to assume that the birds were unmolested, the region being so inaccessible.

We pulled up anchor and started for Madeira, more than a day's journey, considering the devious channels we must navigate and the slow speed at which we would have to proceed.

At last our journey's end was reached and it was a wild and desolate region that presented itself to view. Miles of Madeira trees stretched away on all sides, and the very air and water seemed to give off a sense of gloominess—as if these solitudes had not been disturbed by man for ages.

Madeira wood is a very hard wood greatly resembling mahogany, and when treated and polished, serves as an excellent substitute for the latter, making a very beautiful finish.

The next morning we made ready for our search for the rookery. Taking along blankets, weapons, and provisions enough to last us a week, we ran ashore in our small launch, and hiding it amongst the mangroves, set out through the swamps on our quest.

It was hard and tedious walking, for with every step we would sink into the soft ooze and muck which was characteristic of that whole country.

The first night we made camp in a myrtle hummock without having seen any egrets, though we had climbed trees and scanned the surrounding

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country for miles with our glasses. Tired and discouraged we rolled into our blankets beneath our mosquito bars and were lulled to sleep by the droning of countless insects and the exotic breaths of the steaming tropical vegetation.

We were up before dawn and off again. Henry said he thought we must be in the neighbourhood of the rookery, and as soon as it was light enough we should shoot off our guns and see if we could make out any birds flying.

Dawn came quickly, as it does in the tropics, and I ascended a tree and peered off over the saw grass and water with my glasses. Henry fired his rifle twice in succession, and as the last report snapped through the silence, I made out, far to the northward, three snowy-plumed birds, flapping slowly out of view. Egrets!

We all felt greatly cheered at this discovery, for it meant the objective of our trip was in sight.

Billy said that he did not feel very well and would rest awhile, joining us later at a myrtle clump which was plainly visible about two miles to the northward. Ah! fatal myrtle hummock! Had we known what was awaiting us there!

Henry and I set out, and for a long time trudged on in silence. We were almost at the myrtle island when I saw, off to the left, a small swamp hole, perhaps an acre in extent. We approached it out of curiosity and perceived, lying on the surface of the muck and slime, the form of a huge alligator.

Here was an opportunity for which I had long



## DEATH STRUGGLE

waited; the chance to photograph a large alligator at close quarters. In the rivers and lakes of the west coast of Florida, the glimpses one catches of alligators are few and fleeting. A splash as one rolls off the bank, or a swiftly moving log across the river, is about the average experience.

If we could keep this alligator at the surface—and as the swamp hole was only a few feet deep the chances of so doing were very good—I could secure some invaluable pictures.

Henry and I consulted together and finally decided the best thing to do would be for us both to enter the pond together, I with my camera, and he with a long stick to tease the 'gator into action. Now this was a very wild and foolhardy thing to do, but so excited were we over the prospects of the photographs and the size of the 'gator that neither of us stopped to consider the possible consequences.

The pond was deeper than we at first imagined and we immediately sank over our waists into the most evil-smelling muck you can imagine. I can think of nothing to liken it to except a thick mixture of sawdust and mud, heavily scented with sulphur.

Our friend appeared to be asleep and lay like a water-soaked log at our approach. Henry poked him with the stick and he slowly opened his eyes, green, baleful eyes, and glared at us, the while emitting a dreadful hissing sound. This was a great chance, and I snapped the shutter, whereupon he immediately submerged.

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

"Look out!" shouted Henry. "If he brushes against you, don't move for your life!"

I leaped to one side as the oozy slime shook convulsively. The alligator was headed straight for Henry and me! Luckily, however, he passed between us, and I felt a horny hand pushed against my leg as the great creature made his way by.

The cold sweat broke out on my brow at the thought of our narrow escape and I made for the bank. After some consideration, however, I determined to have another try at the monster, for this opportunity might never come again, and I *must* have the pictures.

I changed the film on my camera and slipped back into the vile hole, Henry floundering along with his long stick. Here we made a serious mistake, for neither of us carried a weapon, having left our rifles on the bank.

The 'gator was now nowhere to be seen and it was a case of poke around in the slime with the stick until we ran across him.

Suddenly, Henry, who had been thrusting hither and thither with his pole, cried out, "Here he is!"

He slid the stick under the saurian and commenced gently to lift him to the surface, an old trick of the 'gator hunters.

"I don't know which way he's facing," he laughed nervously. "This may be his tail or his head."

Gradually there came to the surface a great striped yellow-and-black tail. Henry made a grab

## DEATH STRUGGLE

for it as the shutter on my camera clicked, and with a great swirl the reptile again disappeared.

I was beginning to experience what might be termed a "stomach full." This photographing alligators wasn't all it was cracked up to be, and I was ready to quit for that day. In a pond, such as the one we were in, looking for a big alligator was a sort of blindman's-buff affair; if you ran across the 'gator before he ran across you—well and good, if not—well, it wasn't so good.

Suddenly the great brute rose to the surface not five feet from where Henry and I were standing up to our armpits in the sulphurous mire.

"Quick!" I shouted to Henry, "give me that stick and *get that rifle!*"

I held the stout mangrove club under my arm and backed slowly away from the advancing reptile, taking pictures at every opportunity.

Henry was floundering for the bank and I fervently prayed that he would be in time. I now saw that the alligator was bent on attacking me and that I must get rid of my camera. It probably meant the ruination of it, but keeping one eye on the big devil, I hurled the camera high in the air toward the shore where I heard it strike with a dull thud.

The alligator was now coming forward much more rapidly and I had hard work to keep my distance. Suddenly I slipped and he was on me.

I struck out with all my might at the huge form, and he sheered off for a second, but turned and plunged for me.

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

Henry had now secured the rifle and was running down with it to the edge of the bank.

"For God's sake, *shoot him!*" I screamed, as I warded off the reptile's rush.

"I can't, Cap'n," he cried, "I'm afraid of hitting you."

At this juncture I felt my right leg gripped in a frightful vise, and before I could cry out, I was dragged under that awful slime, down, down, with a pair of gruesomely human hands tearing at my legs.

I struggled and kicked in agony. This death-lizard was killing me! I bethought me of my sheath-knife and plunged it with all my might into what I judged was the monster's eye.

The hold on my knee suddenly relaxed, and I fought for the surface, blinded and nearly strangled. Henry was frantically stumbling through the muck some twenty feet distant.

"Throw me . . . the rifle!" I sobbed. . . .  
"Oh, my God! My leg . . . my leg!"

He threw it. It fell not four feet away, but before it could sink, I grasped it in my fevered hands and staggered 'round to see the 'gator just coming to the surface, blood streaming from his left eye.

I took dizzy aim and fired twice; and then the rifle slipped from my nerveless grasp and I sank down into the awful slime.

. . . . .  
A vulture, high up in the vault of the steep blue sky, met my gaze as I slowly opened my eyes.

## DEATH STRUGGLE

I struggled to a sitting position but was pressed back gently but firmly by—Billy.

“All right, old pal?” he queried, bathing my forehead with a wet handkerchief. “Here, take a little of this,” and he handed me a flask from which I gulped eagerly.

Henry had made a tourniquet about my leg, and the wound had stopped bleeding, though the pain was excruciating.

How I reached the boat I shall never know. It took us a day and a half to come in; it took us three days to go out. I could only move by short stages, supported by Billy, who every few hours bandaged afresh my wound with strips torn from his shirt and boiled in our coffee pot.

Henry had cut off the head of the alligator which proved to be an old bull, just two inches shy of thirteen feet in length, and we packed that along, too, a relic which now hangs mounted in my study at home.

When at last we reached the cruiser, they held the edges of my wound together with adhesive plaster, and three weeks after, it had completely healed.

I shall never forget that swamp hole though I live to the age of Methuselah, and shall carry with me the memory and the scars of that terrible encounter to the grave.

## CHAPTER XV

### WHERE CORAL REEFS LIE BARE

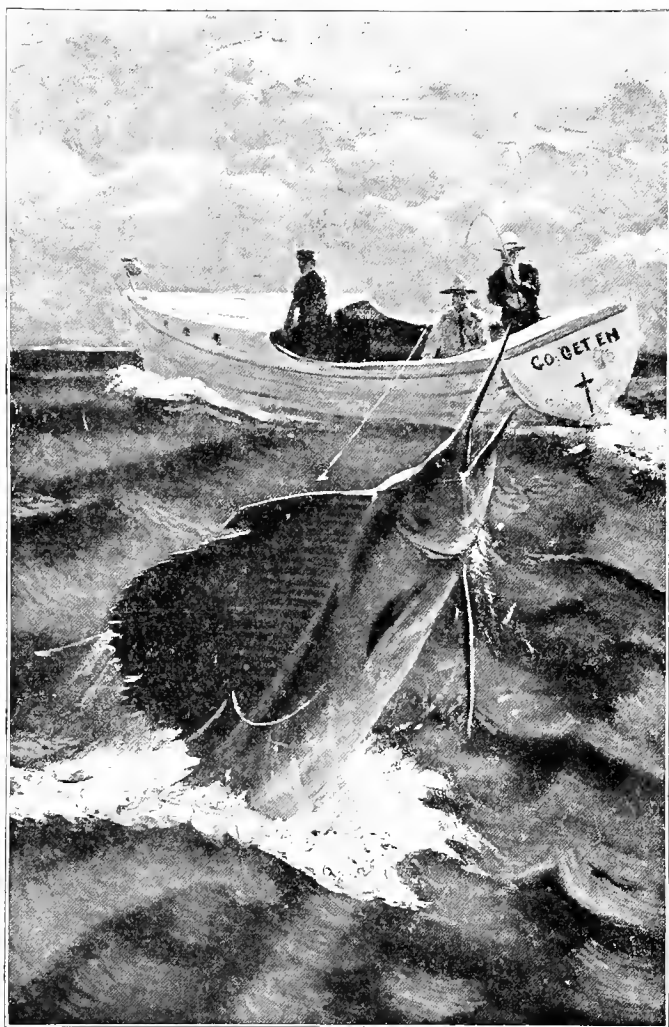
This is the ship of pearl, which, poets feign,  
Sails th' unshadowed main,—  
The venturous bark that flings  
On the sweet summer wind its purpled wings  
In gulfs enchanted, where the siren sings,  
And coral reefs lie bare,  
And the cold sea-maids rise  
To sun their streaming hair.

From *The Chambered Nautilus*.

CROSSING the blue, blue Gulf Stream from the Florida mainland of the United States, after several hours of running on the high seas, one mounts to the roof of one's cabin and makes out on the horizon the outlying sentinel islands of the British West Indies.

From Miami, in mid-winter, we pocketed our clearance papers and nosing out through the Government Cut one early morning, plunged, bow eastward, through a choppy sea for our passage to the islands of the blest.

In crew we were three: Billy, and Fred, and I; and our home for the weeks to come was my snug little cruiser *Nepenthe*, which during years that had passed by had carried us thousands of miles north and south along the Atlantic Seaboard. For four



“ . . . away across the slow-heaving rollers of the Stream  
bounced his quarry . . . ” (See page 220.)





## WHERE CORAL REEFS LIE BARE

men, she was the ideal boat, and though at times she had slept seven—her accommodations were for seven—feeding them was a little difficult. A good sea boat, still of shallow draught, and roomy almost to the point of luxury, she stood a credit to her designers and builders, the Elco Company.

About five miles out from land, we crossed the outer edge of the reef and entered the Stream, where the water became appreciably warmer and calmer.

To yachtsmen contemplating this crossing, let me suggest they set their course E. by S.  $\frac{1}{2}$ S. The nearest of the Bahamas, Bimini, lies due east, true bearings, but one must allow for the current of the Gulf Stream which sets in to the north at about four knots per hour. The first landfall will probably be Gun Key, on which stands a light. Run in until well within sight of the island, then turn north for South Bimini, keeping close to that shore until one strikes the entrance to Bimini Harbour at the southern tip of North Bimini. Pilots will come off to you, and it is well to take one the first time, though the channel is not difficult and may be safely entered by yachts with a draught of five feet or less. The channel must be entered by following the western shore of South Bimini, about fifty yards distant from the beach. Strike in for the shore a hundred yards or so south of a clump of cocoanut palms near a small house, and follow north to the entrance, keeping the reef on your left. The surf breaks on this reef at nearly all tides, with the possible exception of dead high water.

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

As we bowled along, we remarked the frequent intervals at which we saw flying fish. The further we entered the Stream, the more numerous they became. Now a school of porpoises kept pace with us, disporting themselves about our bow. One was a huge spotted fellow, seldom seen outside of mid-Gulf Stream. On all sides the *Physalia*—"Portuguese men o' war"—lifted their iridescent gauzy sails to the breeze and drifted away to unknown shores. Once we came upon a big loggerhead turtle, sunning his broad barnacle-covered back at the surface.

The wind was against the current of the Stream, causing a heavy ground swell. At times we would rise to the crest of one of these and appear to be looking down a mile-long slope of burnished blue. Then we would sink deep into a trough and seem to be surrounded on all sides by great heaving mountains. Land had long since disappeared from view and we were alone—"alone on a wide, wide sea."

They call it forty-five miles to Bimini, but I think it nearer fifty-five by boat. We stood one-hour watches at the wheel, while the others smoked or slept. On all sides heaved the vast waste of waters. Nothing broke the silence but the steady vibration of the engine, carrying us ever nearer our destination.

At two o'clock Fred mounted to the roof of the cabin, but, after vainly searching the horizon through the glasses, reported nothing. At three

## WHERE CORAL REEFS LIE BARE

o'clock, it being my watch off, I ascended, and steadying myself on the awning, peered across the pitching seas. As we rose to the crest of a long swell I made out the tops of some palm trees low down to the eastward.

"Land! Dead ahead!" I sang out, and there was general rejoicing among my companions. From the cockpit it was invisible, but as time crept by it showed itself higher and higher. Away to the windward we could see a sail, hull down, reaching in for the harbour, and now Gun Key Light stood a point to the starboard like the stack of a distant steamer.

The sea grew quieter each minute nearer the land and had now subsided almost to nothing. We were getting under the lea of the Great Bahama Banks. Turning more into the north we picked up Bimini and ran in for the land. A little after four, a pilot boat came out to us, and letting down her sail, signaled to come aboard. A barefooted, half-clothed personage, speaking a mixture of Cockney-English and Southern dialect, clambered over the side and assured us he would navigate us safely within the reef for twenty-five dollars.

"Cast off the towline," I shouted. "I will run her on the rocks before I'll pay twenty-five dollars!" (I had been coached previous to our leaving, as to how to manage these birds of prey.)

"All right, Cap'n, all right; seein' hit's you, fifteen dollars."

"Cast off!" I yelled again.

"Look 'eah, Cap'n," remonstrated our would-be

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

helmsman, "Hah'd 'ate t' see a nice lil' boat lak this bust up on the' reef. Fifteen dollahs ain't much."

"Five dollars or nothing," I answered firmly, stepping to untie the towline.

"By God! Hah'd run 'er in fo' nothin' 'fore Hah'd take five dollahs!" almost screamed the pilot.

"You have my permission," I retorted, and cast loose the line.

There was a wild sort of scramble among the five individuals seated in the sailboat and a rather tearful voice called across the waters, "All right, Cap'n, five dollahs."

Our worthy confrère took the wheel, not without much grumbling and muttering, spitting out, "Five dollahs!" at frequent intervals like a kind of curse. We paid no attention, however, being too occupied with the beauties of the country we were entering for the first time.

Across the north of the harbour stretched a coral reef, partly submerged, over which the seas were snarling and fighting, at times leaping high in the air as if in fury. The Gulf Stream stretched its ultramarine borders to within a hundred and fifty yards of the shore, and between it and the sand lay the submerged reefs, their green, purple, and blue colours shifting in a kaleidoscopic panorama before the eyes. Along the beach great rocks lay couchant, against which the inrolling surf dashed itself in sullen anger. Along the bluffs, facing the

## WHERE CORAL REEFS LIE BARE

sea, stood row on row of cocoanut palms, stretching forth their fronds as if to welcome the mariner to the safety of the harbour after his long passage. It looked like Paradise to us just then after nearly seven hours of buffeting on the breast of hoary Father Neptune.

We ran through the narrow entrance between the islands and came to anchor in a channel of such translucent depths that every ridge and hollow of the snow-white sand was visible at almost any distance. We signaled for the commissioner to come aboard and settled back in the cockpit to enjoy a much needed rest.

Soon the representative of His Majesty's Colonial Government was seen approaching, being rapidly sculled out to us by a stalwart, half-naked native, who worked the long oar in the stern of his skiff with an ease and grace which was pretty to behold. After viséing our papers and inspecting the cruiser to assure himself we were smuggling in no contraband, he welcomed us to the islands and departed whence he had come, standing in the bow of his craft like a potentate of old.

Our first procedure, having thus established our right to land on foreign soil, was to plunge over the side into the refreshing waters of that enchanted anchorage. So brilliantly clear was it, that, as I swam under the boat, I examined her bottom and made a mental note that upon the completion of this cruise, I would have her hauled out and given a fresh coat of copper paint. It was water in which

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one could have stayed for hours without feeling any ill effects. But the palms silhouetted against a pink and gold skyline warned us that dusk was imminent, so we climbed aboard and set about preparing supper.

Hardly had the sun entirely sunk from view, it seemed, before to the eastward, peeping over the shifting tides across the banks, came the great lopsided face of the friendly moon, turning what a short time previous had been a land of riotous colour into a scene of misty blue unreality.

We dined out in the cockpit. *Who* could stay below on such a night? The Victor sighed forth some soft Hawaiian melody. No other sound broke our solitude, save the faint chink of a knife on plate as three busy forks fed three eager mouths.

We went ashore that night to stroll along the King's Road, "like a ribbon of gold in the moonlight," which runs through Alicetown, Baileytown, and Porgy Bay, where the happy black population of Bimini lives and dies, on and on to its end on the great coral cliffs that face the sea to the northeast. As we turned in, long past midnight, we felt we had stepped for a brief instant into the pages of some long-forgotten romance.

But too much romancing is not conducive to the best o' fishing, and the morning found us up bright and early for a day of hard sport. When one's time is limited, and one's fishing must be had in a short time, it is best for the angler to take advantage of any guide-boats that are available. But when one's



## BIMINI THE ENCHANTED.

1. Monte Christo.
2. "..... where the Siren sings."
3. Robinson Crusoe's Isle.





## WHERE CORAL REEFS LIE BARE

time is one's own, the joy of fishing, to me, lies in exploring and finding the grounds oneself. And, as is often the case, by this method one discovers "patches" or grounds hitherto unknown.

We had acquired the services of a certain coloured gentleman named Tom, by birth a native of the island of Grand Bahama, a hundred miles to the north, but a resident of Bimini for many years. He had worked in the "States" and saved his money, so that at present he owned three sailing boats and a house facing the sea in Baileytown.

As we were finishing breakfast, his boat scraped against the side of the *Nepenthe*, and in the peculiar patois of the British West Indian, which appears to be a mixture of Southern United States dialect and Cockney-English, bid us good morning and inquired as to our health.

We assured him that it could not possibly have been better and counterqueried with a question asked by anglers the world over, "What dya think—will we get any fish to-day?"

Out through the turquoise channel, 'round the tip of the reef, and down the rocky shore of South Bimini we sailed, the clear water gurgling softly away from our stern. The boat carried a leg-o'-mutton sail on a mast which could be dismantled and laid aboard at a moment's notice. It had no centerboard and had no keel to speak of, for we often went in very shallow water. In the stern was a large crotch for the sculling oar. This oar, which was about fifteen feet in length, was used as a rudder when sailing, and as a

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

means of propulsion when the mast was taken out.

Billy and I dozed lazily in the stern sheets, Fred trolled. A mile down the coast he had a hard strike and hooked a big barracuda. Down the colourful tide he fought him, leaping and twisting, a lean gray wolf of the reefs. At last he slid him to gaff, and Billy and I awakened from our lethargy, paid our lines over the stern, and sent up a wordless prayer to Neptune.

He answered mine first with a forty-pound amberjack, and as jacks are of a very curious nature we soon had the whole school lying off and on our stern watching the antics of their captive brother.

Fred scored again with a forty-two pound jack and then Billy came to the fore with a fifty-six pounder. This was sport of a royal nature, and to say that we enjoyed it would be putting it mildly.

By the time the three fish were aboard, the sun had reached the zenith, so we let down the sail and munched our lunch, drifting idly across the warm seas. Beneath us the coral heads showed through the transparent depths, and from under many of them could be seen peeping the long slim feelers of crawfish.

The afternoon found us off the northwestern end of North Bimini—on the Moselle Shoals. Here was the feeding ground of the *big* kingfish, those long, slim warriors of the tropic seas that test the rodsman-ship of the finest angler.

## WHERE CORAL REEFS LIE BARE

Into the air they would go, in their mad rushes for the bait, often missing it, often seizing it on the way down, to be off in a smother of foam which made one's reel to sing and one's rod to nod a graceful accompaniment. From eighteen to thirty-eight pounds they ran, and, as Dusk spread her wings across the great solitude of blue sea to the westward, we fought them on and on. Naught to break the solitude, but the gentle flapping of the sail, and the deep breathing of our brother angler as he threw his weight against the rod and heaved—pitting his brawn and muscle against the wild fury of the captive of the deep, battling for his life.

Back, through the soft azure twilight, over the reef and through the palm-fringed channel out which the ebbing tide gurgled to the Gulf Stream, we gently purled our way, the wind, but a caress, filling the sail *just* enough to win through the tortuous passage. Back to the *Nepenthe*, to dream of the day's conquests and of the myriads of great game fishes "out there" that still awaited our rods.

One morning found us along the edge of the Stream trolling for sailfish. Tom, the night before, had procured us some fine fresh balao, the tidbit, the *pièce de résistance* of sailfish diet, and these we now trolled seductively some seventy-five feet behind the boat.

At eight-thirty we raised three. I saw them coming down the slope of a great wave, weaving purple and indigo in the crystal depths. One made for my

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bait, two for Fred's. At the first tap I slacked back fifty feet of line—out of the corner of my eye I saw Fred doing the same and knew he had also had a strike. As my line came taut, I struck swift and hard. But the hook did not catch. I had lost my chance.

Fred, however, hung his, and away, across the slow-heaving rollers of the Stream, bounded his quarry. I distinctly saw him bounce from one swell across the intervening valley to the crest of another. Now rolling on the surface in a smother of creamy foam, now leaping high against the skyline, "shadow wrestling," the sailfish looked like some creature of fancy, pirouetting in a wild barbaric dance.

To the gaff at last, a long colourful fish, topped by a keen rapier, with a great sickle-shaped tail, the personification of the spirit of that romantic land: the beauty, savagery, wilderness, and colour of it all. To my mind, the sailfish is without doubt the king of all fishes, both great and small, for gameness, that roam the southern seas.

Three miles off Turtle Rocks we raised two more. This time Billy and I made fast. Two fish hooked at once, especially sailfish or swordfish, is one of the most thrilling experiences, to my way of thinking, that can happen to a big-game angler.

We changed seats three time in the first five minutes. Billy seemed to be working his fish hard, so I held my fish out until he got him to that point where he commenced his last slow circling, too tired out for leaping. Then I got to work on mine. The job was more difficult than I had anticipated, and it

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was fifteen minutes more before I had him, belly up, alongside the boat.

Late that afternoon we ran into a school of dolphin, the rainbows of the sea, the swiftest, most gorgeous members of the finny tribe that swim. Lone dolphin are rare, anglers nearly always hook double. I never catch a dolphin but what I stop and ponder on the Great Omnipotent that placed such a thing of dazzling beauty on this earth.

As we were returning homeward along the shore of South Bimini, we saw a great devilfish, or manta, on the edge of the bank. We started after him, but he suddenly became frightened and started off at a great rate, waving his huge black wings like some monstrous bat. Before we could catch up with him he disappeared in the edge of the Stream. He was a big one, probably eighteen feet across the back.

The Biminis are great feeding grounds for the manta. On February 14, 1919, Captain Charles Thompson, with John Oliver La Gorce, of the *National Geographic Magazine*, harpooned a world's-record manta off Bimini. The giant ray measured twenty-two feet across the back and was seventeen feet one inch in length. Harpooning manta is to the deep-sea angler what elephant shooting is to the big-game hunter, with the possible exception that after you have placed your shot in the manta the fun is just ready to begin. I was once towed seven times around a small key by a huge manta before it tore free. One of the greatest authorities on manta in this country is Russel J. Coles, of Dan-

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ville, Virginia. He has hunted them for years, and was host to Roosevelt when that sterling sportsman harpooned his two big ones.

But the charm of Bimini does not rest wholly in the fact that it is a wonderland for big game of the sea, one of the greatest natural feeding grounds off our southern shores. Its charm is in its rocky coastline against which the long white breakers from the reefs offshore dash themselves, the wavy, graceful lines of cocoanut palms, the white coral beaches, and the rainbow shoals of Bimini Bay across which the moon flings her train of light in a shimmering path of iridescent silver.

I gazed out across the dancing waters, puffing dreamily on my pipe. Forward, on the bow, where he reclined on numerous cushions, one foot swinging idly over the glassy tide, Fred thrummed softly on a ukulele. He was singing. To the tune of "A Little Bit of Heaven," his voice floated back through the darkness:

"There's a little coral island near the good old U. S. A.  
Where the palm trees whisper softly to the moon-  
beams on the bay;  
It's a land of murmuring trade winds 'neath the  
glorious tropic sky,  
Where you'll forget your troubles as the hours go  
drifting by.  
It's among the fair Bahamas where the jasmine-  
scented night  
Makes a Paradise for lovers down the beaches smooth  
and white.

## WHERE CORAL REEFS LIE BARE

There it nestles by the Gulf Stream, only journey  
there and see:

You're a wondrous emerald memory—  
Little isle of Bimini."

Nassau, the capital of the Bahamas, and its only big port, is situated on New Providence Island, roughly two hundred miles distant from the Florida coast. For a long time the nest of pirates and freebooters who plundered the ships of the Spanish Main and fled back to safety among its treacherous reefs, it led a colourful and picturesque existence. With the passing of the buccaneers, or as the inscription on the Bahama postage stamp reads: *Expulsis Piratis Restituta Commercium*, Nassau, and the neighboring islands, became the base of operations of a wild and lawless crew known as wreckers, who lured ships to their doom upon the sunken coral heads, and then plundered and salvaged them, depending upon the mood of the sirens. During the Civil War, blockade-running for the Confederacy flourished and made the natives prosperous. Up to the time of prohibition in the States, the growing of sisal and the harvesting of sponges kept the native contented, but with the coming of the great drought, "blockade-running" flourished once more, and a steady and ever-increasing stream of gold poured into the coffers of the Nassau wine merchants. Withal it may be seen that Nassau has had a changing and varied history, and romance may be found on every lonely reef and palm-fringed headland.

## ADVENTURES IN ANGLING

We slipped out through the Government cut at three-thirty one morning. The moon, at its full, hung like a great yellow ball above us, the palms whispered among themselves in the night wind. Behind us Miami slept in the tropic night.

It was Billy's first watch, so Ed and I stretched full length in the cockpit and were soon in the land of dreams, the deck heaving beneath us to the gentle swell of the Gulf Stream.

I did not waken until seven-thirty when Ed gently touched me on the shoulder. It was daylight and we were alone on a boundless sea. On all sides the slow-heaving ground swell of the Stream rose majestically in the south and passed on in stately rollers to the north. I lashed the wheel, and going below made myself some coffee. Only two hours more and we should pick up the Biminis. I went on deck. The *Nepenthe* was holding to the course in the same trustworthy manner she had always done. Of Billy nothing could be seen but a blanket; Ed lay face downward upon his arms, his torn shirt fluttering in the morning breeze. I idly watched a school of porpoises as they paced us for a mile or so. Flying fish were again in evidence in great numbers.

At nine-thirty I awoke Billy and climbed to the top of the deck for a look-see. Vainly I scanned the limitless expanse of blue. No land! It should have been in sight for at least a half-hour. I took the glasses and carefully searched every point of the compass. We were off our course! We had missed the Biminis! As the *Nepenthe* lifted herself high on



## WHERE CORAL REEFS LIE BARE

the crest of a great swell, I happened to glance back of me, just in time to see, far to the south, the tops of cocoanut palms above the horizon—then they were gone.

“Land!” I shouted down to Billy, “We’re fifteen miles to the north of Bimini! We’ve missed it!”

Hard over he swung the wheel and in another hour the rocky coastline of that isle of dreams showed to port, still another hour and we had passed the reef and were wending our way up the blue-green channel. Here we came to anchor for two hours. Ed and I immediately dove over the side and revived our sleepy brains and muscles in the crystal depths of Bimini Bay. By the time we had finished our swim Tom, who was to pilot us, was aboard with his duffel, and we hauled in the anchor.

Giving the wheel over to Tom, the three of us went below and divested ourselves of our raiment, threw ourselves into our bunks, where we slept the sleep of the just. When we awoke it was late afternoon. Bimini had long since disappeared astern. We were crossing the Great Bahama Banks. Stretching in all directions to the horizon, as far as the eye could see, lay the great shallow reaches, covered with six to fifteen feet of crystal-clear water. Far to the east clouds, low down over the water, denoted the presence of land: the northern tip of Andros Island, the largest, wildest, and least known of the Bahamas, the last breeding grounds in the western hemisphere of the flamingo.

Dusk was followed shortly by night, as the

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*Nepenthe* slipped silently across the vast banks. A million stars overhead, on all sides the sea, a breeze wandering from nowhere, going nowhere. At eleven the moon showed in the east, a great red ball above the rim of the ocean. At one o'clock in the morning we anchored. The sea was like glass, not a ripple disturbed the surface. Objects on the ocean floor appeared as distinctly in the moonlight as if there had been no water there. The *Nepenthe* appeared to be suspended in air. We all turned in with the exception of Tom, who remained on deck playing the Victor. To the south the point of Andros Island showed ghostlike beneath the moon.

When I again awoke we were under way. It was just daylight. On the eastern skyline a rocky island, rising from the sea, showed dimly. From the cabin roof it was clearer: Whale Key, one of the Berry Islands. On the other side of that, New Providence and Nassau.

At ten o'clock we left the Berrys on our port and entered the Tongue of the Ocean. The chart gave 1869 fathoms beneath us.

"Long ways to the bottom," mused Billy. "I'd hate to dive it."

For the next three hours we devoted our time trying to see who would discover New Providence first. Billy won the prize, having the advantage over Ed and me with a pair of binoculars taken from a captured U-boat.

"Nassau, dead ahead off the starboard bow," he announced.

## WHERE CORAL REEFS LIE BARE

We celebrated by opening a bottle of champagne which, together with some crawfish salad, put us all in a very contented frame of mind.

Another hour and the ships in the harbour showed plainly, Hog Island with its lighthouse and break-water guarding the entrance. A little later we ran through the channel and tied up in a slip behind the Royal Bank of Canada, our journey at an end.

I would like to dwell on our glorious days in Nassau, but it would take a volume in which to tell of them. There were memorable days when we explored New Providence in quaint little carriages, our Ethiopian mentor pointing out the "places of interest" with his buggy whip. There were mornings spent on the bathing beaches of Hog Island, where the swimming is only equaled by that in Hawaii. There were nights in the gaily-lit ball-room of the "Colonial" or mingling with the gorgeous Birds of Paradise at the Bahamian Club, where fools risked fortunes and impassioned groups leaned breathlessly across the spinning wheels and watched them won and lost. And always back to the snug little cabin of the *Nepenthe*, while across the waters would come floating in the marvelous "close harmony" of the West Indian Negro the song which is known to all who have ever visited Nassau:

"My mama don't want no peas, no rice,  
and cocoanut oil—

My mama don't want no peas, no rice,  
and cocoanut oil—

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My mama don't want no peas, no rice,  
and co-coa-nut oy-il!  
All she want's a brandy champy after nine."

Or perhaps it was that stirring piece, whose tune by some strange freak of chance has wandered to these far-off islands from the streets of Paris, and whose rhythm sets the feet to tapping and the body to swaying, while along the wharves basses and tenors take up the refrain:

"Ballymena, Ballymena,  
Ballymena's in de harbour,  
Ballymena, Ballymena,  
Oh she's hove to in de harbour.  
Dey take Ballymena, put her on de dock,  
An' dey paint Ballymena black.  
Dey took Ballymena, hauled her on de dock,  
An' dey paint Ballymena bl-aa-ck!"

It was with our hearts filled with sadness and our minds with memories that we said farewell to Nassau one night and sailed out across the Tongue of the Ocean under a starlit sky. Two hours out the moon hid her face behind the clouds and the wind began to blow. Another hour and it had increased to a gale, the waves rolled out of the North-east Providence Channel mountain high, and the *Nepenthe* pitched and heaved like a thing in agony. We looked anxiously at one another; this was not to our liking.



## THE BAHAMAS

1. "There were mornings spent on the bathing beaches of Hog Island."
2. The "Nepenthe" in the harbour—Nassau.
3. The coral coast of Bimini.



## WHERE CORAL REEFS LIE BARE

We consulted with Tom and finally decided to seek shelter behind the reefs of the Berry Islands. So northward we turned. It was now so rough we had great difficulty in keeping our feet. At each pitch of the boat, things went crashing down in the cabin below. I dreaded the sight that would meet my eyes were I to go to investigate.

Shortly after midnight the moon suddenly came out from behind the clouds, and there facing us rose two huge rocks. Between them lay a stretch of open water some twenty feet wide, and beyond, the calm of the sheltered reef. On all sides the waves lashed themselves in sullen fury.

Tom swung the boat for the opening and we all held our breaths. For an instant the *Nepenthe* skidded sidewise on the crest of a big roller, then straightened out and rode down its slope and through the rocky portals. A hundred yards further and we came to anchor in still water while outside the baffled storm roared in disappointed rage.

"Whew!" muttered Billy, passing his hand across his forehead. "How about something to eat?"

We stayed there for three days, exploring the reefs and channels in the "putt-putt" until such time as it would be safe to once more cross the banks. On the ebb tides I collected small fishes from the tide pools in the rocks, and, much to my gratification, discovered two new species which my dear friend, Dr. J. T. Nichols, of the American Museum of Natural History, later flattered me by naming *Eupomacentrus nepenthe* and *Labrisomus heilneri*.

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In due time we set sail once more, and touching Bimini made the crossing to the States in fair weather. When next you pick up Gun Key from your masthead, and a little later the Biminis, as you skirt those coral islands with their colourful reefs and picturesque shore line, cast your eyes along the coast of North Bimini. Toward the northern end you should see a little white-and-green shack nestling on the cliffs among a group of cocoanut palms, a tiny American flag waving from its roof. This is "Paradise Point," where all good sportsmen are always welcome, and if I be at home I will mix you the finest planter's punch that ever passed your lips, and we will have a smoke together and discuss that old world-absorbing topic, than which there is nothing more fascinating—fish.



## APPENDIX

IT HAS been suggested many times to the author that he tell in this volume how, when, and where to fish, and what tackle and baits to use when angling for the big game fishes of salt water.

Conditions under which the angler fishes, such as boats, currents, weather, water, and principally the different species of fish, vary so widely and so greatly that it would be impossible to give any set rules.

Tackle is like a motor car—each to his fancy, and the outfit with which one angler may have had great success may be taboo with an equally successful fisherman.

Therefore, it is the author's idea to give a list of the tackle used by him *personally*, and on which he has taken all the fishes mentioned in this volume as well as a great many others. The list is by no means a criterion, but with it he would not hesitate to use it for salt-water game fishes in the four corners of the world.

### HEAVY TACKLE

Broadbill swordfish, marlin swordfish, tuna, jewfish, black sea bass. Split bamboo rod: length O. A. 7 ft.; weight of tip, 15 oz; length of tip. 5ft. 6 in. Reel: 9-0. Line: 24 thread.

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### LIGHT TACKLE

Tarpon, marlin swordfish, sailfish, medium tuna, barracuda, kingfish, wahoo, amberjack, yellowtail, albacore, white sea bass, chinook, etc. Split bamboo rod: length, O. A. 6 ft.  $4\frac{1}{2}$  in; weight of tip  $5\frac{3}{4}$  oz; length of tip, 5 ft.  $3\frac{3}{4}$  in. Reel: 4-0. Line: 9 thread.

### "LIGHT-HEAVY" TACKLE

For grouper and general reef fishing where quarry seeks rocks. Same as light tackle, substituting 18 for 9 thread line.

### SURF FISHING TACKLE

Channel-bass, striped bass, shark, stingray, and all surf fishes. Split bamboo rod: length, O. A. 8 ft.  $9\frac{1}{2}$  in; weight of tip, 14 oz; length of tip 6 ft. 6 in. Greenhart rod: length, O. A. 8 ft. 4 in.; weight of tip, 12 oz.; length of tip, 6 ft. 3 in. Reel: 2-0 and 3-0. Line: 9 thread and 12 thread.

### "3-6" TACKLE

Yellowtail, amber-jack, barracuda, medium tarpon, baby tuna, bonefish. Split bamboo rod: length, O. A., 7 ft.; weight of tip  $5\frac{1}{2}$  oz.; length of tip 6 ft. Reel: 1-0. Line: 6 thread.

The author has taken many tarpon up to fifty-six pounds, and barracuda up to forty-four pounds, as well as numerous fishes (snook, grouper, snapper,

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muttonfish, etc.) such as frequent the cuts and passes of the Florida Keys on the following outfit, which conforms to no standards and is merely a whim of the author's.

Heddon Two-piece split bamboo bait casting rod. Length, O. A. 5. ft.; weight, O. A. 4½ oz. Reel: 3-0 surf reel without drag of any sort. Line: 9 thread.

The author has taken baby tarpon on a fly rod with salmon flies, and this is indeed royal sport, under the right conditions, but his pet outfit is described in the second group under "light tackle." It is his sincere belief that with proper handling, the largest fish that swim, except the broadbill, giant tuna, and shark, can be killed as quickly and as skillfully with light tackle as with any other. This has been proved beyond all shadow of a doubt by many anglers, chiefly perhaps by Mr. James W. Jump, whose largest marlin, among *many* on light tackle, weighed 314 pounds.











