

The Autobiography of a Fisherman



FRANK PARKER DAY

.....
*Author of *Rockbound**
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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF A FISHERMAN

BY FRANK PARKER DAY

Author of
ROCKBOUND



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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A FISHERMAN

CHAPTER I

MY FIRST TROUT

For I love any discourse of rivers, fish or fishing.
—IZAACK WALTON.

The year 1892 is my Anno Domini from which I work backward and forward to reconstruct my memories of early fishing. That date is fixed by an indelible memory related in time and place. The great World's Fair was to be held in Chicago, and children all over America were told by their schoolmasters to write copybooks in their fairest hands, for from these multitudinous copybooks the best were to be selected to be shown to the millions thronging the great exhibition. Perhaps it was only a shrewd device to advertise the Fair, perhaps only a trick to stimulate our interest in penmanship. Whatever the motive, I remember we were vastly excited, for the prospect of having an exhibit in the World's Fair worked upon our imaginations. I wrote my copy with great care and industry, with much bending of back and elbow, and at the end signed myself grandly, "Frank Parker Day, aged 11," for we had to give name and age. However, I was not quite satisfied with the two stiff uprights that made the eleven, and, by way of improvement, added strokes sloping downward from the tops of the ones to make them resemble the figures in the arithmetic book. Thus the ones came to resemble feeble sevens. When the master came around to look over my shoulder, he laughed: "Ha, ha, that's good! Frank Parker Day, aged seventy-seven." The boys and girls around me tittered, and I was abjectly humiliated. I wanted to destroy the book, but he gathered it up with the others; it was to be exhibited to the world as the work of Frank Parker Day, aged 77. I suppose the schoolmaster never gave the incident a second thought, but I will never forget it. Now, as I was born in 1881 and was eleven at the time of the competition, the year must have been 1892, the schoolmaster Lenfest Ruggles, an exacting but great master, and the place the four-roomed frame schoolhouse that stood on the bluff between the East and West rivers at Acadia Mines. As my father was a Methodist minister who migrated at the end of every three years from one mission to another, it is easy for me to work back from 1892, since that date is associated with a

place, and to note chronologically the development in my interest in fishing by a memory of the places in which I lived at various ages.

Working back from that date, I know that it was at Shubenacadie, in Nova Scotia, where I attained the age of four, that my interest in fishing was first aroused. One spring morning, I was mooning about in the yard looking up at the spruce-crowned hill that rose at the back of our white parsonage. The hill had peculiar interest for me: it was down its steep slope that I had coasted the preceding winter to cut my face on the barbed wire at the bottom; on its summit my brother had shown me what he called a bear's den from which we both retreated quivering with terror; at its foot my brother, sister, and I had recently built a throne for Mother on her first day out of doors after a long illness and crowned her with spring flowers. Father came out into the yard with a rod in his hand, went over to the fence near the barn, and rolled over a gray log. My curiosity was aroused and I watched him closely. I can still see that log very distinctly, and the clustering chickweed that grew around it. Father was so big and I so little that even his slightest action seemed heroic. He pulled up some fat worms and went down to the meadow through which a bright brook meandered. I pressed my face against the pickets and peeped through the apertures to see what he was going to do. He began fishing the stream, and I remember seeing the flash of trout as he drew them from the water. The glory of that spring morning, the light upon the yellow meadow grass, unlike anything I have since seen in nature or picture, has always remained with me as a precious memory. When my father came back to the yard and let me look in the basket and touch and handle the crimson-spotted trout, my cup of happiness was full.

It must have been soon after this we began our trek to the next place, for I have a dim memory of sitting on the top of a great pile of boxes and holding fast as horses drew the cart over the rutted roads. Working back again from my Anno Domini, I know that I reached Wolfville in my fourth year, where we temporarily abandoned the church and cure of souls to become farmers. It was in Wolfville that I caught my first trout.

A half mile above our house was a hollow through which, overhung by giant willows, ran a tiny brook fed by the overflow from a dam. The brook trickled down through a meadow, passed under the culvert of a railroad, and lost itself in the flat level of the dykeland. I have never passed by that little brook since I have grown up, without staring at it fondly and wondering at the way it has shrunk with the years. I believe, however, that it is a common experience with those who return to the places of their childhood, to find everything sadly diminished; remembered buildings once so lofty and

imposing are quite low and commonplace, and long weary roads to school over which little legs dragged are astonishingly short.

After school one afternoon, Harold Tufts and I went fishing to Willow Hollow Brook. He had heard, somehow, that the dam had been opened and confided to me as a secret, that, whenever that happened, trout came through into the brook. I have no idea how I became acquainted with this boy or what drew us together. He was the son of a college professor and lived in what then seemed to me a stately red brick house on College Row. He was a little older than I, and treated me with a certain condescension. I remember feeling even then—children are very sensitive to these things—that he was above me in the social scale, for his father was rich while mine was poor. Moreover, his father was a college professor and that seemed grand to me—I am not so sure now since I have become one myself. I wonder what has become of Harold Tufts in the forty intervening years. Perhaps he is a Standard Oil magnate and can still treat me with condescension; at any rate, I hope he has prospered, for he conferred a real boon on me in taking me upon my first trouting expedition, in what must have been my sixth or seventh year.

We left the road under the shade of the old willows that gave the hollow its name and fished down the brook toward the culvert. At first, we had no luck, though we dropped our worm-baited hooks into every hole. Midway down, I was ahead of my companion, and I came to a place where the brook sprang down a tiny runnel to a deep pool below. The brook had narrowed at this point so that there was but two feet from the grasses of one bank to the other. I stood well back—I knew that by instinct—and gingerly dropped my hook into the slit between the grasses. Almost at once I felt a bite and gave my pole a great jerk. I must have shut my eyes, for when I turned around to see what I had caught, an empty hook was dangling in the air. Then my eye fell on something that sparkled and glittered far back in the grasses. I dropped my pole and ran toward it; there, flopping among the rushes, was a lovely little speckled trout showing all the beauty of its crimson spots in the sunlight. It was a moment of ecstasy! I threw myself upon it bodily, got it in my hands, and thrust it into my pocket. Then I ran back to the hole, tossed in my line, and caught another that was like enough to be a twin brother to the first. Though neither was more than five inches long, I was full of joy. I could fish no longer, nor could I wait for my companion; I had but one burning desire and that was to get home as soon as possible and exhibit my fish to my mother. I ran all the way and entered the kitchen puffing. I got a plate from the sideboard, washed my trout, and laid them on it. Mother was ill at the time and lay in a downstairs bedroom that opened off a passageway

between kitchen and dining room. Though I have tried over and over, it is impossible to reconstruct the distribution of the rooms in that old farmhouse: there are in my childish memories too many rooms of too large a size and too odd a shape to fit into any architectural ground plan. With my fish on the plate, I ran through the dark passage and entered Mother's room. She lifted her tired head from the pillow to praise my skill and to say what fine fish they were. Then she instructed our maid of all work, Susie Dooks—what a grand stage name!—whom we had imported from Musquodobit, to fry the trout for my supper. Mother certainly knew how to enter into a little boy's triumph.

Some little time after this, Harold Tufts invited me to go fishing on a Saturday. I was to bring my lunch and go with him to the Gaspereau to fish the main river or some tributary brook. It was a long walk for little legs, and I wonder how I got permission to go so far afield. I slept but fitfully on the night before this grand adventure and arrived at his house promptly at eight, the set time, with bait can, rod, line, and lunch done up in a neat brown paper package. I could see no sign of Harold, and, as I was afraid to ring the bell, I sat down on the grass before the house to wait for him. I waited and waited; nothing stirred in the house; hours passed; the sun got high in the sky. I began to get hungry and at last ate one of my egg sandwiches, spending as many minutes as possible over each mouthful. Tears trickled down to mingle with egg and bread. Still I waited. About noontime a lady came out of the house, presumably Harold's mother.

“What do you want, little boy?”

“I'm waiting to go fishin' with Harold.”

“Why, Harold went off to the Gaspereau early this morning with his father.”

I was determined I should not cry before her; a childish feeling of revolt against the established order of things ran through me; I was in the presence of an aristocrat enduring my first social set-back.

“What's your name?”

I had a burning desire to give her an alias, some name out of *Robinson Crusoe* or *The Mysterious Island* that would astonish her, but my courage failed and I simply mumbled in egg tones, “Frank Day.”

“You'd better run home now. Harold won't be back till evening.”

I trudged home shedding bitter tears, my trust in mankind shattered, my humiliation so deep that I don't believe I ever confided the incident even to

my mother.

I never went trout fishing again in Wolfville, though I often went with my brother to fish for eels, smelt, and tommy-cods beyond the dykes that guarded the rich meadows of Grand Pré. Once, through my fault, we were caught by the treacherous swift-rushing Bay of Fundy tide and imprisoned for six hours on the rack of a haystack. As I was the littlest of the party, I had been set to watch the tide rise in the ditch and told to warn my brother when the water came to the widest point we could jump to reach the dyke. I sat down and invented some game of weaving salt hay into baskets, forgot that I was sentinel, and only gave the alarm too late, when I felt an ominous dampness in the seat of my trousers. Fishing for eels, tommy-cods, or sea bass never appealed to me, even when I was little.

Now, since I am writing the autobiography of a fisherman, perhaps it would be well for me in this first chapter to define what I mean by the term fisherman. A man may catch many fish, may play the lordly tarpon for hours, hook sharks with a junk of pork, or even harpoon whales, without being a fisherman in my sense of the word. A fisherman, a true disciple of Izaak Walton, is one who takes a delight in the art of angling, who loves to wander by silver lakes, rushing streams, and shining still-waters, whose heart warms to a yellow meadow flooded with sunshine and who is thrilled with expectancy as he drops a fly lightly, to lure from gravelly depths the speckled trout or gleaming salmon.

CHAPTER II

MOUNTAIN BROOKS AND LAKES

But for the trout, the dew-worm, which some also call the lob-worm and the brandling, are the chief, and especially the first for a great trout.—I^{ZAAK} WALTON.

The farm was a failure, and we went back to preaching, moving by train and then eighteen miles in carts over the Wentworth mountains to Wallace, a dreary place for a fisherman. The Wallace River was too far away, and no brooks were close at hand: I never caught a single trout while we lived there.

After three years, we moved on to Acadia Mines, the place of my Anno Domini, a little mining village set in a river valley between high hills that contained shallow deposits of low-grade iron ore. There were a blast furnace, a rolling mill, and pipe shop. The people were rough miners and mill hands, and with their children I played, fought, and fished. It was a fisherman's paradise; the two rivers that joined below the schoolhouse were full of trout, and in the near-by mountains were numerous lakes and trout brooks.

In March, all the boys in school began to talk fishing; furtively, under the desks, we traded hooks, lines, sinkers, and bait cans; in little groups we laid secret plans of action. At first, as I did not know the country, I had to go with others, attaching myself to any group that would have me. We usually fished in groups of three and on Friday nights went through the solemn ceremony of digging our worms, commenting gravely on the superiority of certain sizes and colours. It was a general belief that trout disliked the smell of worms dug too close to a manure pile, and though these were often fat, long, and succulent, the fish would have none of them. I joined up with two other boys, and on Saturdays of my first spring, fished with them the brooks of the East Mountain.

The nearest of these was Salt Springs, a brook that came out of the forest to flow through a railway culvert and on and on for miles till it joined the river above Great Village. It was a lovely sparkling brook that rushed down little falls to make deep holes under the roots of the beeches. How it acquired the name "Salt Springs" I cannot guess, since there were neither salt nor springs in its vicinity. Probably the name was a corruption of

something else and had been handed down by generations of boys. I often fished the brook from the deep pool below the culvert in which a fabulous great trout dwelt—many had seen him, some had hooked him or a stick on the bottom, but none had landed him—to the juncture with the river and always got a good string of trout. We seldom fished above the culvert, for the wood was haunted; only the bold hearts ventured there. Once, in company with Sam Davis, a boy older than myself and the best fighter in the village, I ventured upstream above the culvert into the haunted wood. There we found an unfished pool that was simply swarming with small trout. I stood on a log and cast in my hook again and again; always the welcome tug and the shining trout whipped out. When we counted our fish we found that we had twelve dozens. There was one feature of our fishing in those mountain streams that speaks for the plenitude of fish: we always counted our trout by dozens.

Far beyond Salt Springs on the East Mountain was “Sally Dabs.” I should like to know who invented that name or who Sally Dabs was if she even existed. Though to my childish mind it was simply the name of a good trout stream and aroused no etymological interest, the name now, rude and homely as it is, seems fitting and almost beautiful. There was three miles of almost steady uphill going to reach this brook—a long weary pull for eleven-year-old legs. Sally Dabs was entirely different in character from Salt Springs: it never danced or sparkled in the sunshine, but lowered and flowed sullenly out of the forest into the forest. It crossed the mountain road and ran for about half a mile through open country, and this half mile we fished. Fear and the conventions of generations of boys behind us restrained us from venturing into the upper reaches or exploring the lower part to find into what water it emptied.

One expedition to Sally Dabs I remember in particular, since on that occasion I was the hero. Three of us set out, one sunny Saturday morning, and climbed the long hill, made longer by our eagerness. We cut our poles, adjusted our lines, and fished the stream from road to wood. A little way within the forest the brook shallowed over a gravelly bar and swept sullenly under a deep bank of overhanging turf. I ventured in, my heart in my throat, and let my bait drift slowly under this overhanging bank; I felt a bite, gave a sharp tug, and out flopped a great trout. I picked it up by the gills and ran back along the bank shouting: “Look what I caught! Look what I caught!” My companions were pleased but somewhat envious. Into my canvas bag of dubious odour I stuffed the wriggling monster, but every few minutes drew it out to look at it or exhibit it to my comrades. We speculated on the

enormous trout that must lie in hidden pools within the wood, but we dared not venture in.

About noon that day, we began to get very hungry, and for some strange reason we had brought no lunch. We went to a farmhouse on a near-by hill and asked a woman for something to eat. Evidently, she liked little boys, for she gave us glasses of rich milk and ginger snaps fresh from the oven, and talked to us as we ate. I was tempted to offer her my big trout in way of payment but I could not. In the thirty-odd years that have intervened since that incident, I have thought of her often and always with a thrill of pleasure at the memory of her kindness to three little nondescripts. Old now, dead, perhaps, nameless to me, she was one of the kind earth spirits I met for a moment in my brief passage through time.

In a broiling hot sun, we had a weary walk home that day. We met other groups of boys returning from other brooks and to each I showed triumphantly my monster trout. It was the biggest fish caught by any of our gang that spring.

I was very tired when I got home, half starved and half sick. I ate inordinately of smoked herrings and was thereupon laid up over Sunday and Monday with a bilious attack. Through those two dreary days in bed, I was sustained by the memory of my great trout—I drew him out over and over—and by the knowledge that I was missing two of Dad's sermons that, even at the age of eleven, I knew pretty well by heart.

Far over the mountain beyond Sally Dabs was Schoolhouse Brook, obviously named from the little red schoolhouse on its margin. I suppose I never went fishing on rainy days, for I always remember those mountain brooks in the sunshine; strange romantic places, abodes of fairies, every dark alder clump a haunt of mystery. I fished Schoolhouse only once, and then in company with Harvey Smith, a big boy, and my brother, who were not very considerate and left me far behind on the long hills. When I arrived, they were fishing some way down the brook, but I cut my pole, tied on my line, and trudged after them. Later, I got a word of commendation from Harvey Smith for hooking and landing a good trout in a pool full of tangled sticks and alders. Strange how the memory acts: I must have been frightfully tired, yet I have no remembrance of the homeward walk. Only the high spots remain, the little incidents that touched one's vanity, the word of praise from a big boy, the rush for the alders to cut a pole quickly before the others got too far ahead, the selection of a well-coloured succulent worm, the flop in the grass of a fine trout.

One April day, when I was on my way to school after the noon hour, I stopped on the bridge a moment to watch Sam Davis, my erstwhile companion on Salt Springs, cast a line under a twisted maple that, undermined with the spring freshet, overhung the river. It seemed to me a silly thing to fish in such an obvious place in full sight of everybody. However, in a moment he drew out a trout much bigger than the one I had caught in Sally Dabs. In a moment my mind was made up: I was twelve and getting to be a big boy; I would abandon my brooks on the East Mountain, my first loves, and henceforth fish the rivers. Our schoolhouse stood on a V of land, and three hundred yards to the south of it the East River joined with the West to form the Londonderry that brawled on its way to the Basin. There were big trout in it and salmon as well.

I remember distinctly my first trip down the river. One Saturday morning in early May, Jack Sweeney and I set out, following the west bank. There was no road, and we scrambled through rough fields and clumps of alders or walked on the stones of the margin when the water shallowed enough to permit that. It is not a big river; a good salmon fisherman could cast across it in most places. Presently, we came to a promising pool below gray rocks where the river swirled to our side in a deep pool. Jack threw in his line and almost immediately pulled out a fine trout. "There's another in there for you, I saw him," he cried. Sure enough, when I cast in my line, I hooked and landed another almost as large as his. We were elated with that propitious start, and we followed the river for miles, fishing, with varying luck, every pool we could reach, till we came to a sparkling tributary brook that made in from the West Mountain.

We left the river and followed that brook up into the hills. I never visited that brook again, yet it has always remained with me as the most gracious brook of my remembrance, and I have dreamed of it a hundred times. Never was water so interwoven with silver; never brook glittered so in the sunshine! Ice cold, it came down from the hills in a thousand cascades; it was busy, it rushed, it chattered, it teased, it held out shining arms to welcome us as it hurried on to join the river. It became my brook of brooks. For brooks, like people, are varied in character: some are distant, threatening, forbidding, filling a boy's heart with distrust and a certain fear; some are languishing and sentimental; some full of love, hope, and daring.

From every whirling pool at the foot of cascades where foam and bubbles floated, we drew out four or five firm trout of moderate size, until our bags were full. Then we sat down by the side of a singing waterfall upon the thick carpet of last year's brown grass through which green shoots were

peeping, to eat our lunch. You can imagine how happy we were, the grass was soft and warm, the sun shone bright, meadow larks were piping, our bags were full of trout, and we were young, and just entering upon the dreaming, idealistic period of life. It was impossible to think that there was anything dark, ugly, or obscene in creation, or to believe other than that the world had been made by some beneficent spirit for our delectation.

The glory of the morning warmed our hearts, and we talked to each other about ourselves. Jack told me that he was going to be a priest, and I envied him a little, for to be a priest, the real spiritual head and dictator of a community, seemed to me romantic. I had no illusions about being a country minister; even then I sensed the terrible restrictions and degrading inhibitions that hedged my father round. There was no colour in our household and no fun or romance in living on a starvation salary half of which was paid in hay and turnips. But to be a priest, perhaps a Jesuit father in foreign parts, to voyage down great rivers like Père Marquette or live among the Indians like Father Maillard; there were colour and romance! I know that Jack, a tall, light-haired, blue-eyed idealistic boy, unlike any boy in the village, studied for the priesthood and, I suppose, became a priest. I wonder if he is happy, if he remembers our singing brook, and if he believes in the beauty and wonder of creation as we did that day. My plans, as we lay on the grassy bank, were not so well formed. Vaguely I wished that some day I might go to college—there was little prospect then—little beyond that. Heaven, in which I firmly believed, would be something like the valley in which we sat, a place full of sunshine where we could wander forever through bright meadows and fish trout streams.

It must have been the next spring, in my thirteenth year, that I first ventured up-river in company with Sam Davis, the most daring of my companions. "Fisher's," as we called this district, though no one of that name lived on or near the upper river, was a fearsome place in which, according to boyish legend, bears abounded. The river, its source in Sutherland's Lake, roared down a rocky forested gorge, a mere cleft in the hills. Snow still lay deep in hollows of the hills and the shade of the spruces, and I remember that we stood on crusted banks two or three feet deep, to cast our lines into that green, swollen mountain torrent. The trout bit well, we caught a good many, and I remember how red they looked as they lay kicking in the snow. There was colour, there was a picture: cold April sunshine overhead, blue-green cowering spruces, gleaming white birches with just a hint of pale yellow in their buds, an aquamarine torrent that lashed itself into a fury of foam, black rocks, and heaps of white snow on which scarlet trout danced!

After that excursion, I plucked up courage and went often to Fisher's alone; I was afraid of the legendary bears, but my love for the beauty of the green river overcame my fears. I might have found companions, but even at that early age I began to like fishing alone. I hated to race from one pool to another as one had to do in company, if one wanted a catch; rather I liked to proceed in a leisurely fashion, creeping silently to the head of a run to drop my worm quietly and let it drift into the calm of the pool, as a natural bait would have done, or, if the fancy seized me, to sit for a long time by some waterfall to watch the curious patterns foam and bubbles made and enjoy the beauty of the place. It was at such quiet times that I began to learn, by observation, something about the habits of trout: I learned that they are discriminating about what they feed upon and that they will not rise for any insect moving on the water. If a green grub or grasshopper fell from the bushes or a may-fly skimmed the surface lightly, there was a quick flash and the bait was gone; on the other hand, water sprites and whirligigs might skate all over the surface of a pool in perfect security. I observed, too, that trout in deep quiet water rise in a much more leisurely fashion than do those lying in a swift run.

Having fished the brooks and rivers, I began to dream of visiting the mountain lakes, but they were hard to get to without a horse and carriage, which we did not possess. Once I walked seven long miles to Dominique's Lake and seven long miles home again with an empty creel, since I could find neither boat nor raft, and the banks were covered with dense timber. That was one of my most ill-fated expeditions, for I was thoroughly tired out and was sent to bed by my mother for a couple of days. However, I soon afterward fell in with a boy named Archie Murray, whose father owned a horse and two-wheeled gig. I had no great love for Archie and suspect that my interest in him was purely utilitarian. His father, a magistrate, was reputed by us to be the meanest man in the whole world, and some boyish genius had nicknamed him "Tebo" Murray—a name that always amused me, because, though I was quite unaware of its origin, it sounded as if it came out of the Old Testament and as if he might have been a twin brother of Cush or Peleg or Zepho. Somehow, Archie spurred on and excited by my stories of catches of great trout, got the promise of the horse and gig from his father, and we planned to go fishing on a Saturday. On the preceding Friday night, I slept not at all; I took an alarm clock to bed with me and watched the hours; one o'clock, two o'clock, three o'clock (would daylight never come? I was hungry for that mountain lake!), four o'clock, and I could stand it no longer. I was up, dressed, had packed my lunch, gathered my beloved fishing possessions, and was over whistling under Archie's window

long before he had stirred from bed. Then the horse had to be fed and the gig wheels greased and a number of things done, irksome to me, burning to be off. By six we were rattling along the river road that led up the mountain. We clattered over the plank bridge and came to the open grassy place on the left of the road, where the miners had their fights, since the river marked the county line, and the sheriff of the next county lived far away. Here I had once seen a desperate battle between “Tete” Cox and Jack Evans, noted rowdies and boxers, over some quarrel about a woman. It was a fight to the finish with plenty of gore and ended only when “Tete’s” hand was broken and he could hit no more.

The name Jack Evans recalls to my memory another terrible yet heroic event, and I must leave myself and Archie on the road to Dominique’s while I relate it. Sometimes, on Sunday nights, my father and I used to go to the Salvation Army service, after his Sabbath evening meeting was over. He was a great admirer of the Salvation Army, and thought that these poor people who stood on the street corners, praying, singing, and testifying, were more like the actual followers of Jesus than people in the churches. On one such night some rowdies, Jack Evans among them, were making a disturbance in the back seats. The captain, a frail, meek little man, spoke to them, asking them to be quiet, but they answered with noise and coarse laughter. Finally, he said:

“You are disturbing everyone. You must go out.”

Jack Evans and his followers slouched insolently from their seats, but, as they reached the door, Evans turned and called back to the captain:

“I’ll wait for you outside, you little son of a ——; you can’t insult me; I’m goin’ to beat hell out of you.”

The meeting came to an end, and my father and I went out together among the first. The meeting hall was over a grocery shop, and the stairs that led to it were built outside the building. Under these stairs, I could see in the half light Jack Evans and his followers. I wondered what was going to happen and was in mortal terror for the captain.

“Jack Evans,” said my father sternly, “what are you doing there?”

“Waitin’ for that bloody captain; he can’t insult me.”

“Don’t lay a finger on him.”

“Wait and see me knock hell out of him.”

“Then you’ll fight me first,” and my father took off his coat. “Come on.”

At it they went hammer and tongs. Did you ever see your father fight when you were a little boy? It is the most terrifying experience in the world! If I had been in mortal terror for the captain, I was now well-nigh paralyzed with fear lest my father should be killed. Why had he taken on a bully like Jack Evans, feared by half the countryside? I crept on hands and knees through the legs of those who formed the ring. I caught a glimpse of whirling fists, and covered my eyes with my hands. I heard blows and grunts of savage effort that made me shudder. All through the fight, I crouched, trembling, on the ground and did nothing heroic. How I have since envied little Joey Vance, who threw the bottle end that cut the eye of the butting sweep who beat his father! Now they were on the ground struggling frantically, and suddenly it was over. Some men separated them and held them apart. I don't know who won, but, at any rate, Dad had the moral and strategic victory, for he remained on the spot while Jack Evans went off cursing with his friends and let the captain alone. My father had been an athlete in his youth—a rowing man—and had thick powerful shoulders, and he was fighting hard for the right. I imagined and hoped Jack Evans had had enough.

Father dusted himself off, put on his coat, took my hand, and we walked home together. I had always loved him; now he was forever my hero. I was so proud of him that I couldn't speak a word as we walked along: I thought my heart would burst with joy. Perhaps he wasn't a great preacher, but he was a great-hearted man who dared face odds and strike a blow for some weaker one in trouble. In all my after life, I never talked with him about that fight; my feeling about it was too deep and wonderful, but I am sure he understood how much I admired his action.

“Don't tell Mother,” he said, when we got near home, “she'd be worried.” I bit my lips but could not utter a word. But Mother found out, though not through me, as did all the village next day, and it did him no good with the strait-laced of the community when it was known that he had been fighting in the street with Jack Evans of a Sabbath evening.

“And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other,” has always seemed to me one of the weakest things that Jesus is reported to have said. We fight in this world from the cradle to the grave, as do all the animals in nature of which we are a part. This text has often been used as a cloak for cowards, who fight in an uglier fashion by innuendo and cruel malicious words. Give me the downright, really God-fearing man who, when he believes a thing is right, fights hard, strikes straight blows from the shoulder, and beats down life's blackguards.

This is a digression, I know: I should have kept on with Archie Murray and me jouncing over the mountain road, but the thought of that old fighting green recalled memories too strong to resist. Moreover, as my father later became my inseparable fishing companion, I should like you to know something about him.

Archie and I kept the road till we were far above Sutherland's Lake, then turned to the left along a woods road, and at last reached the little gray tumbledown house that was Dominique's. He was a wizened, gray little Frenchman with a kindly but quizzical smile, as if puzzled with life. His wife was small and worn like himself, and there were numberless half-clad, half-wild children peeping around corners. Who he was, or whence he came, or how he got to that remote corner of the woods, or how he maintained himself and his family through the snows of winter, I have no knowledge, nor had I at the time of my excursion any interest therein. He let us put up our horse in his barn, and, in a sad, low voice, directed us to the lake.

This we found, after a half-mile walk through thick woods. It was long and narrow, without inlet or outlet, and set in a cleft of the hills, which were clothed to the water's edge with tall spruces and firs. As we stood at the lower end and looked up the lake, the deep shadows from the forested hills were separated only by a narrow streak of sunlit water. There was something mysterious and foreboding about the place, it suggested pirates, wild men, murder, bodies sunk weighted with chains, and it was not without misgivings that we launched our raft and paddled along the shore. Boyish rumour said, as boyish rumour does about all deep lakes, that certain holes in Dominique's had no bottom and could not be sounded. Later, when I read the *Beowulf* in college, and came to the passage where the hero went down into the dismal mere to fight Grendel's mother, under the stir of waters all stained with blood, I always had in mind this dark, silent, mysterious lake of my boyhood. What a subject for a painter is that epic fight of Beowulf: the water troubled and boiling with the struggles of the two grappling at the bottom; the hero's friends, themselves heroic, on the margin watching the water slowly encrimsoned:

“They leaned and watched the waters boil
With bloody froth. . .
The chop of the sea all churned up with blood
And bubbling gore.”

Is it Beowulf's blood or that of the monster?

Of course, I had none of these thoughts as we pushed and paddled our raft along the shore of Dominique's Lake—they came long afterward; but we were awed by the mystery and silence and loneliness of the place. When we came to a likely looking cove, where a giant fir tree had toppled over into the lake, we tied up to the fir tree and began to fish. There was no lack of trout in that lake, nor did it take any particular skill to catch them. In a couple of hours, we had filled our baskets with trout of a moderate size. There was no variation in them; they all ran about three quarters of a pound and were of a yellowish colour tinged with light pink.

My experience as a fisherman has taught me that every lake and stream has a variety of trout slightly different from the trout in other lakes and streams. This variation occurs even in brooks close to one another that empty into the same water. I am no scientist and do not know the methods by which trout are placed in categories and supplied with ugly names like *salmo iridius* or *salmo fario*—names that will, fortunately, never become real but only remain in musty books—but I have caught a great many brook and lake trout and observed them closely when preparing them for the table. I must, however, give some scientist who must have been a bit of a poet the credit for coining one fine name, *Salvelinus Fontinalis*, “the char that lurks in the cool rushing waters of spring and fountains.” Much as we regret it, we have to take the word of the scientist that our brook trout is a species of char, though we have always regarded the char as a common, coarse-fibred fish living in dull turbid streams. I believe that trout stick pretty closely to the stream, lake, or still-water in which they were spawned, and in the passage of centuries, evolve in each a variety that differs slightly from all others. Much, of course, depends in this process of evolution upon the kind of food they eat, upon the nature of the bottom, and upon the amount of sunlight that falls on the water. In a muddy lake or still-water, the trout are dark brown, almost black; in a rippling sunny brook with a clean gravel bottom, the fish are silvery and scarlet. Between these two extremes, there are infinite varieties marked by quality of flesh, colour, and patterns in marking.

In Dominique's Lake, for instance, where we caught these yellowish trout, there was neither inlet nor outlet, and centuries of inbreeding had produced a distinct type. Archie and I, two happy boys, drove home in the late afternoon and passed the fighting green at twilight.

Later in the same season, I was taken fishing by my father to Sutherland's Lake, named after a dour old Scotsman, who lived in the woods on its margin. This was my first fishing excursion with him, and it meant that I was no longer considered a little boy but rated as a companion. We set

out in the early morning with a hired horse that could not trot fast enough to suit me. I believe all true fishermen, even when they are great of girth, run over the last few yards to their favourite pool. Mr. Sutherland put up our horse and lent us his boat. We fished and fished in vain, though Sutherland's Lake was famous for its big trout. "Too late in the season," said my father, and I was almost ready to cry with disappointment, for I wanted to display my skill before him. Then it suddenly began to rain in torrents, and we rowed to the shore and fled to the shelter of Mr. Sutherland's house.

Now, my father had a great way with him of getting around country people. Though he was somewhat too downright for people in towns, he was what we call in our times a "good mixer" in the country. In an hour's conversation by the kitchen stove, he had softened the stony Scotch heart of old Sutherland, and that without any application of whisky. The old man began to explain the mysteries of the lake, and I listened, all attention.

"Don't you know, man, that in the spring, when the waters are cold after the melting of the ice, the trout are everywhere? They come in close to feed, and you can stand on the bank and catch them."

"Is that so?" said my father. "Well, well! I never knew that before."

"But in the summer season, when the days come hot, they lay in certain localities."

"Do you know where they lay?" He dropped into the old man's idiom.

"Do I, do I, man? I know the whereabouts of every bunch of trout in yon lake!"

"I wish we knew as much as you Mr. Sutherland."

"In every great lake, man, there are spring holes, cold springs that bubble into the bottom of a lake, just as they do among the hills. When the water warms in the heat of summer, the trout gather around these spring holes by hundreds. On a calm clear day, you look down and see regular schools of them."

"And you know where these spring holes are?"

"I do and no one else knows 'cept Donald Sutherland, my kinsman on the mountain."

There was a moment's silence and the old man took out a worn pipe with a charred bowl, filled it with shag, and lit it. I wondered what the next move would be. Then my father leaned back in his chair and began to hum an old tune, that mothers croon their babies to sleep with on Cape Breton, where he

had lived as a young man and picked up a little Gaelic. Old Sutherland's ears pricked up.

“Where did you learn ‘Fhir a Bhàta,’ you with the name of Day?”

“I lived a long time in Cape Breton; many of the Sutherlands there are my friends. They are good men. And how did you hear the old songs here alone in the hills?”

“Man, I sucked it in with my mother's milk. Come on, come on,” he cried, springing up and grabbing my father's arm, “you've no fooled me, but I'll show you the spring holes just the same.”

“But it's still pouring.”

“Don't be daft! Are you no true fisher after all? Don't you know they bite best in a rain shower?”

Out we went and clambered again into the boat. The old man rowed carefully, watching the shore. He had four landmarks for each spring hole, and where the lines joining these intersected, the trout lay. I noted for future reference the first line he got, from a drooping white birch to an old spruce stargon and was gaping about for his other marks, when he almost frightened me out of my wits by shouting:

“Drop the stone, gaffer.”

We anchored, and Father and I began fishing, the old man holding the landing net. Such fishing! We let out lots of line, for the trout only bit when the bait came close to the bottom, where they lay in the cold, bubbling spring water. In the bottom of our boat was about three inches of rain water, and in this the monsters flopped and splashed, as they were netted and taken off the hooks. Not one was under a pound, and some ran to two and three. The surface of the lake, pitted with tiny rain dents, sizzled like a steaming pot. In the stern, with a bag over his shoulders, water dripping from his whiskers, sat the old man, saying not a word, smiling not at all, but with a strange light in his eyes: he looked like a rustic Merlin risen from the depths or some strange old man of the sea. My father fished from the bow; I stood amidships, ankle deep in water, great trout barging against my feet. As fast as we threw in our lines and the bait sank to the bottom, a trout took hold. One gave a sharp tug to hook him, and in two more minutes, he was played and landed in the net. True, it was not the highest form of fishing—I knew nothing then of casting a fly nor the thrill that comes with the swirl of a rising fish—but it was truly a magic hour for a boy. Presently, the old gnome in the stern said in sepulchral tones:

“That’s enough, parson, you’ve got more now than you can use.”

Father and I had gone mad with the lust for killing and were a little ashamed of ourselves. In the bottom of the boat rolled, flopped, gasped, and splashed three dozen beautiful trout; no finer catch have I ever seen. We rowed shoreward, went back to Mr. Sutherland’s house, and later, when the rain stopped, started homeward. From the tail of my eye I saw my father offer the old man five dollars, a prodigious outlay, and to the credit of the old Scot I must record that, though he was as poor as a church mouse, he refused it. What a marvellous day to remember! I would rather have my fishing memories than great inheritance.

There is still one incident I should like to recount, though it has nothing to do with fishing, before I leave this place, so fruitful in happy memories. The manager of the iron works, Talbot, lived with his family in a fine old mansion halfway up the mountain, on the west side of the river. The Talbots had nothing to do with the people of the village, and I had much the same regard for them that a little French boy has for the grand people of the château. One son, Jack, reported to be a fine shot and fisherman and, as I knew, a splendid horseman, I worshipped from afar.

Now, on our last station, my father, who was fond of fast horses, somehow acquired a colt bred from a famous trotting mare. He had taken great delight in training this colt, named Evangeline and referred to familiarly as “Vange.” When we came to move to Acadia Mines, there was no immediate way of taking Vange, now grown into a three-year-old, and she was left behind with a farmer, noted for long prayers, who promised to feed and care for her but who, instead, worked her in the plough, half starved her, and abused her shamefully. When my father heard this, he was very indignant. “I might have known better,” he said, “than to leave a good horse with a professional Christian.” At considerable expense he had Vange brought over the mountain. On her arrival, she was a sorry-looking beast! She was shaggy with long winter hair and had apparently never felt currycomb or brush. Every rib stood out; I had no idea a beast could be so bony. Father kept her concealed in the barn for two weeks and fed her up on oats and warm bran mashes; she was clipped and combed and polished. Then I was allowed to take her out for exercise each afternoon after school. I must have been a comical sight, perched barefoot on that long-legged three-year-old mare without a saddle. I used to frequent the soft dirt road through the woods to the station, because I knew Jack Talbot rode there. I saw him nearly every afternoon, and presently he began to nod to me and look at my horse. One day, he stopped and proposed that we try our horses to the Salt

Springs bridge. I held Vange in at first, I knew she was fast, then let her out and showed him a clean pair of heels. The upshot of the matter was that he bought Vange from my father for a good sum, and we were happy to have her in the hands of a real sportsman and lover of horses.

Twenty-five years later, I met Jack Talbot again, in the Great War: he was a brigadier general and I a lieutenant colonel commanding a regiment, still two steps above me. He had developed into a fine, quiet man. We had many conferences together. He always listened to my opinions gravely, sometimes deferred to them, but, though he was very friendly, he never learned that I was the ill-clad little boy who rode Vange and raced him on the road to Salt Springs.

CHAPTER III

NEW WATERS AND A COMRADE

But I shall long for the month of May: for then I hope to enjoy your beloved company, at the appointed time and place.—IZAAK WALTON.

I was fourteen when we moved from my fisherman's paradise to Mahone Bay on the south shore, where for a while I had no trout fishing and, as a rather sorry substitute, began to learn something of ships and the sea. There were no lakes or trout streams within reach, and the fleet of vessels that sailed every spring to the Grand Banks and the Labrador to fish for cod became a new interest. The lives of the fishermen were romantic and adventurous. I made friends with one stout red-faced skipper, Enoch Mason, a giant man weighing three hundred pounds who sailed the stout schooner *Nova Zembla*. Once he brought me back from the northern Labrador a fluffy husky pup, whose lurid career, as he developed into doghood in a civilization he did not understand, would fill a whole book in itself.

Each vessel had to fish four months every season to get the government's bounty, and when the *Nova Zembla* came back with a fare, two or three weeks early, Enoch Mason would take me with him to fish on Green Bank, off our coast. How happy and miserable I was then! I was seasick most of the time. There was not the slightest convenience, and bobstays are cold and slippery when seas slop round your knees of a brisk morning, but I was learning to be tough and a sailor.

I became interested in my studies in school, took my Provincial examinations of the third class, and did fairly well. Next year, I went daily to the county academy at Lunenburg—seven miles there, seven miles back—sometimes on foot, sometimes on a rickety Hartford bicycle, a cast-off of my brother's, sometimes on the trolley with the section men. I had a fine old schoolmaster, McKittrick, who inspired me, and in the spring examinations of the second class, I led the county—an achievement of which I was inordinately proud. After that, I was fated to go to Pictou Academy, at that time the best school in Nova Scotia, though none of us knew how the necessary funds would be forthcoming.

Adolescence was upon me; I began to brush my teeth, select my neckties with care from my scanty store, and look at girls. Nature, in the matter of

sex, plays a scurvy trick upon us, or it may be that, in our social organization with its intricate inhibitions, we have tried to play a scurvy trick upon her. Nature always wins or takes her revenge because we refuse to face the fact that we are animals—fine animals, to be sure—in a world of nature. When we get over the extravagant fantasies about our souls that have arisen from man's own naïve egotism and are willing to face the facts of life, we shall get on much better. Hunger, the yearning to be a distinct individual seeking perfection, the desire for warmth and shelter, and the sex craving are the great urges in human life, try to blink the subject as we may. When boys are strong and healthy, the sex urge from the period of adolescence is a continual teasing torment. Nature sees to it that the race shall be perpetuated. One is ambitious, one is without money or profession and cannot marry till thirty; youth is idealistic, shy, and dislikes dirtiness: there are tremendous and very real stresses and strains in the mind; all kinds of protective inhibitions are born; *Sturm und Drang* tear healthy full-blooded youth; fear is added when elders imply that lunacy comes to those who yield to their desires. Yes, Nature plays a scurvy trick upon us in the matter of sex: how much better off are some of the higher animals! All these things interfered with the joyous clean business of trout fishing, which, when combined with a love of the beautiful in nature, gives an emotional outlet for the mind as does expression in music or painting.

Fortunately, we only stayed two years in Mahone Bay; the people there did not like us very much. My father, improvident and generous, was deeply in debt at the grocery store, and some complication ensued that I did not fully understand. I was only convinced that my father was essentially right and everyone who opposed him essentially wrong.

We moved on to Boylston, in Guysborough, a fine fishing country. There I first made my acquaintance with sea trout, a silver, scarlet-spotted fish that, like the salmon, lives in the sea and runs up streams in flood to spawn. We used to say that there were three runs a year—though I am not sure the observation was scientific—a run in late May or early June, a run during rains in July, and another when the rivers came full in August.

Boylston is on a narrow arm of the sea that stretches far inland. At the head of tide water is a valley with miles and miles of broad intervale famous for crops of timothy and clover; through this intervale, with their sources in the hills, run two clear streams in which sea trout spawn.

Sometimes, on warm rainy days, Dad and I used to fish the mouths of these streams just below the gravelly bar, where the fresh water meets the salt of the tide. On such a day, when sea trout are running fresh from the sea,

they will bite fiercely upon almost anything. It was at this time that I got a suggestion of fly-fishing, for I soon found that a bit of red flannel tied to a hook made a better lure than a worm. What wonderful catches we used to make! The warm summer rains streamed down on us. Let the rain pelt. What does it matter, if you are hooking big fish as fast as you can land them and get your line out again? Sea trout enter the streams with a flood tide, so that the time for taking them in the mouths of streams is limited each day. They are beautiful fish, scaled and silvered on back and sides like a salmon, and scarlet-spotted underneath like a brook trout. The flesh is bright pink. We used to take sea trout at the mouth of those intervale brooks running three and four pounds, as big as grilse and full of fight.

Sometimes we drove along one of these streams over a hilly road into a wooded mountainous country, to the home of a fine old Highland Scot named Cameron. He had taken up land in this wilderness, cleared the forest, planted an orchard, and reared twelve stout sons. In his old age, only two of these were at home: Donald, whom I knew afterward at Pictou Academy, and David, who helped his father in the mill; the rest had wandered out into the world to seek their fortunes as their father had done before them. In the dam that supplied power to his mill lay plenty of spawning sea trout, though I could never understand how they scrambled and flopped up his rickety fish-ladder. Nature drove them up this steep and perilous climb to lay their spawn in quiet waters, as she drives youth through adolescence and early manhood.

In this dam, where they sulked by dozens near the bottom, they lost their silvery brightness and the fierce desire to feed that they had when newcomers to the brooks. Father cut gaps in the alders along the bank and used to sit for hours dangling his hook above them. I'm afraid he was always a bit of a pot-hunter; at any rate, he was content to sit quietly in the sunshine biding their time. When the sun shone they would never bite, but sometimes when it clouded over or a shower of rain came, they would rush for the bait. I had no patience with them and used to wander for miles to lash whirling pools above and below the dam, to take smaller brook trout. Often I would return with my creel half filled, to find that, in my absence, Father had landed some thumping beauties and I would be sorry I had not stayed with him.

Mother used to complain that Father's fishing interfered with his sermonizing, but I am sure he felt that sermonizing interfered with his fishing, for he never liked reading theology or writing sermons. After one of our long Saturday excursions, there used to be a terrible scramble on Sunday

morning, when he had to give three sermons, preaching twice to the same congregation. He used to consult feverishly his books of sermon skeletons, sometimes tearing out whole pages to take with him into the pulpit and conceal in the pages of the big Bible. He liked best the straightforward narrative of the Old Testament and the sweet simplicity of the Gospels, the intricacies and theological juggling of St. Paul were too much for him. Old Izaak Walton gives an interesting opinion relative to this: "Compare," he writes, "the affectionately loving, lowly, humble epistles of St. Peter, St. James, and St. John, who we know were all fishers, with the glorious language and high metaphysics of St. Paul, who, we believe, was not." Mother used to scold him for his friendship with Jews and wandering Armenians, since these queer friendships did him no good in the community. He always referred to the Jews from the pulpit as "God's Ancient People," and I too began to be uncomfortable and wriggle in the dark pew at the frequent repetition of this stereotyped phrase. He used to rejoin, in our arguments at home, that the Jews were an ancient and most honourable race and that it was inconsistent and foolish to hate, despise, and revile them, since they had given us a noble religion and since Jesus, the founder of Christianity, was one of them.

There was one sermon of my father's that I used to admire greatly as a little boy: I had heard it many times and knew it almost by heart. It was about David and his mighty men who, after some hard battle, stood in the cave of Adullam looking across the dreary valley of Rephaim, toward Bethlehem held by a garrison of Philistines. His text rang out in a mighty voice:

"And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate." Then he would tell how David's friends, three mighty men, broke through the hosts of the Philistines and filled their goatskin with water from the spring near the gate, that had been sweet to the great soldier king in his boyhood. Back the mighty men fought their way, shoulder to shoulder, one shielding the water bag from sword slashes, till they came, covered with dust, blood, sweat, and wounds, to offer the longed-for water to their friend, King David. The heart of David the poet almost burst within him at such love and loyalty: he could not drink that water made sacred by the blood of friends, but poured it out as a libation to God. Dad, a fighter by instinct, used to glory in the description of that sally against the Philistines: he told of each blow, thrust, counter, and parry on the shield, and I as a little boy in the shelter of the great dark pew used to thrust, strike, and parry with him. Now, alas, one of the mighty men is down; he is on his feet again slashing as before; they are at the spring, two

guarding while one fills the goatskin; there is all the anticipation of the return fight; only two to slash with swords now, one must guard the water bag, and can only thrust with his spear.

When the sea trout stopped running it was time for me to think of going to school. It was rather discouraging, for there was no one in the district with whom I could study and no money was forthcoming. Then, unexpectedly, my brother, who was earning, wrote offering me two dollars and fifty cents a week to go to study at Pictou Academy, if I could live on that amount. I was willing to try and did. I got board and lodging for two dollars and a quarter and had twenty-five cents a week over and to myself.

How I studied that year! Sunshine and clean air absorbed in the summer on the banks of brooks stood me in good stead. We had an incredible amount to accomplish: books of Cicero and Virgil, a difficult French novel, Hall and Knight's *Higher Algebra*, the twelve books of Euclid, Norrie's huge *Epitome for Navigators*, Physics, Chemistry, Zoology, several plays of Shakespeare, Lounsbury's *History of the English Language*, Smith's *History of Rome* and his *History of Greece*, both in big volumes, Green's *Shorter History of the English People*, which was anything but short, and other books I have forgotten. Only as a great treat I allowed myself to think of past fishing and of new fields that Father and I would explore next spring. I had no social engagements; I had but one suit of clothes, a hateful brown suit, the coat too short, that Father and I had bought in Guysborough for ten dollars. How I hated that suit! I was a tall boy, and as I strode about the streets of Pictou that year I felt terribly uncovered in the rear: when I had to talk to someone, on rare occasions, I stood like Haig's army in 1918, with my back to the wall.

Classes lasted from nine until one, and as there were no sports we used to begin to study in the early afternoon. At six came supper, and by seven we were again at our books. I lived with a number of penurious but industrious Scots, who knew how to work, great raw-boned farmers' boys from the hill farms of Cape Breton, destined for the university and perhaps later the Kirk. They were even poorer than I; someone at home was pinching to keep them there. I used to keep all my books piled on the table of my little attic room and often looked at them in despair. Then, thinking that I, perhaps, could do as well as the raw-boned Scots, I would begin and study on through the night, sometimes till two and three in the morning. When I wearied of one book, I took a rest by plunging into another.

Sometimes, in the early hours of the morning, when I was very tired, I would look up to see my familiar spirit, the Lady of my Dreams, smiling

down at me from the dusk of some corner. She was with me a great deal that year, and without her comfort I could have done nothing. You see, like all true fishermen, I am an incurable sentimentalist.

I had first seen her as a little boy. Then we lived on a rough coast in a low gray house that stood on a narrow strip of green that man had reclaimed between forest and sea. Both were my enemies. The sea was fierce and implacable; I had seen boats broken and bodies washed ashore: the forest was melancholy, dark, and foreboding; a boy of my acquaintance had been lost in it for a day and a night. I remember Dad setting out with a lantern to join in the search. Both were things to be feared by a little boy! The strip of civilization, or rather semi-civilization, on which the fishing village straggled was so narrow, so slender, so weak between these two pressing primitive forces that I feared, some day, it would be crushed. I used to bless the kindly fog bank that rolled in about four each afternoon to cover both sea and forest. In this gray fog bank I first saw dimly the shining face of the Lady of my Dreams.

I should never have pulled through that year in Pictou without her: when I was heartsick and in despair, she came to smile benignly upon me; when it was very late and, tired out, I threw myself upon my bed, I would be conscious of her presence until the last moment before dropping into that heavy sleep that only wearied youth and soldiers know. Years afterward, when I walked the galleries of Europe, I found her type in the women of Botticelli, my favourite painter. I knew that I should see her some day in the flesh; I sought and sought in crowded streets of foreign lands, and at last I found her.

But what has all this to do with fishing? Nothing very much, except that it was the sombre background of my life that made the silver summer relief all the brighter.

Spring came at last; I wrote the government examinations, and as I would not know the results for some weeks, I came home. I was a wreck after that winter's work and had a deep booming cough, the much-dreaded "summer cold." I was tall and weak, thin and pimply, and when the country people looked at me, they shook their heads as if to say, "not long for that lad." Father, worried by my condition, took me everywhere with him on his circuit visits; there were always two rods in the back of the carriage, and prayers and hymn singing were cut short when we were near a likely stream.

During my absence, he had discovered a wonderful place for fishing, only a mile from home. It was a little lake set in deep wooded hills and quite

unvisited by fishermen. This little unnamed lake was about three hundred yards long and perhaps a hundred wide. The pebbly shores were bold, the water, fed by springs at the bottom, was deep and cool. On the banks stood virgin spruces and firs, so tall that the sun touched the lake for only two or three hours at midday. At its upper or northern end were patches of lily pads that made a wonderful pattern on the blue, where the water was too deep for the roots of lilies. In these holes among the lily pads the biggest trout used to lie, but we did not fish them often, as it was necessary to wade waist deep in the icy water to reach them with the longest cast. Our favourite place was a grassy plot beyond a brush fence, where the shore was bold and the water deep. Here we lay and talked through many afternoons watching our corks bob until twilight came down over the lake. I have never fished since with a cork, but it is a fine lazy style of fishing, a grand method for friends who want to talk and enjoy each other as well as to fish. You fasten your cork six or eight feet above the baited hook, let out plenty of line, hurl your float as far out into the lake as you can, lie back, and with half-closed eyes watch the cork bob on the little waves. When your cork goes under, you give a sharp pull and your fish is hooked. We never hooked many fish of an afternoon, some twenty-odd that hardly varied in size; they were firm and pink, and delicious when fried to a rich brown.

I had one unforgettable afternoon at our nameless lake. Father and I set off one day at about four to get the evening fishing, and Mother promised to put off supper till we returned. We tramped down the wooded road as eager as two schoolboys, crossed the draw bridging the deep arm of the sea, where long streamers of kelp whipped themselves into fantastic forms in the swift run of the tide, and climbed the grassy hill to reach our lake just as the cool of evening was beginning. We baited up, threw out our floated hooks, and settled back on the crisp grass. Dad got out his pipe, stuffed, lit it, and puffed away in contentment. Smoking was a secret vice—all the sweeter because it was secret—that he indulged in only when far away from his parishioners by some lake or trout stream. I used to buy his tobacco for him, and the storekeepers used to think me a desperate fellow and wonder at my request for the strongest. How he procured his supply before I was grown, I cannot guess; perhaps my elder brother was his agent.

The trout bit well, for we had brought a box of grasshoppers, a bait they love above all others; the corks kept bobbing under, and with each pull out flashed a shining trout, to kick for a moment in the grasses before he was popped into the creel. The mellow afternoon air became chilly as the sun's last promise, a streak of lemon yellow, came in the sky above the pointed

spruces. We made a fireplace of flat stones, built a fire, and lay there talking and idly watching our floats.

Father asked me what I was going to be.

“I think I’d like to be a monk,” I said, to his great surprise.

“Why?” he queried.

“To escape the world and myself; the affairs of men and women seem so common and messy.”

“They are common and messy, but you can’t escape them.”

“In a monastery?”

“No, not in a monastery or anywhere else. Happiness doesn’t depend much on outward things, but largely on yourself alone and your inward life.”

“But it’s all so complicated, getting married and having children and going to church and having to put up with fools as you do.”

“No, it’s not complicated, it’s simple; get money and property so that you’ll be no man’s slave as I’ve been, have a few friends, be kind to people, bear with fools and fanatics, love horses and dogs and go fishing.”

“It’s not so easy to get money or property.”

“You can do it! You’re young and have some brains and can struggle through college. Don’t be either monk or preacher, but go out into the world of men and engage in the struggle. Look at me: I’ve never been out of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. What do I know about life? Sometimes, on long afternoons in these sleepy sordid villages, I see people crowding the streets of New York, London, Paris, and life seems to be slipping away from me as I stagnate here.”

We talked thus for a long time, feeding the fire with sticks; the fish stopped biting, trees mingled with the deep blue of the sky, stars peeped out, frogs croaked, and a wandering night breeze made the spruces sigh. We lingered on, loath to leave such peace and solitude: there are a few moments when one wishes life might go on thus forever.

Then Father sprang up with:

“Come, it’s dark, and we may have trouble getting out of here, and Mother will be worried.”

We left the lake, brushed through the wood, and descended the hill to the seashore. In the open, it was not so dark, for the sky blazed with stars. I have

never revisited that little nameless lake in thirty years, but I often dream of it lying there in the hills placid and unvisited, and recall the naïve joy with which my father revealed to me the secret of his discovery.

When we got to the turn in the road below our house that night, we saw that every window was lighted.

“Whatever can be the matter?” said Father. For a moment we thought the house on fire and we both began to run. Mother met us at the kitchen door.

“Your certificate’s come, you’ve passed high, and there’s a letter from the principal that says you’ve won the silver medal.” Afterward, a red-headed Scotsman named McLeod talked the principal into giving him the medal on some technicality, but for that night, at any rate, I was silver medallist in a class of thirty-five picked men, all older than myself. Mother had pinned the certificate on the kitchen wall and made an illumination, a lamp in every window in honour of the event. I threw rod and creel on the floor, sat down in a chair, and cried as if my heart would break. Mother busied herself about getting supper, and Father went out into the yard to be alone. Presently, she said in her gayest tones:

“Now, you two, wash your wormy, fishy hands and come and have something to eat.”

I sat at the table but I could not eat or speak, and such was their understanding that they urged me to do neither. That night, in bed, I had grand dreams: I would some day be a professor, a college president, a famous lawyer, a judge, yes, premier of Canada. Rich I should certainly be, and build a great house for Father and Mother, and there should be no more petty worry about debts and money. I slept not at all, but lay open-eyed through the night, telling my plans for the future to my fair unknown, the Lady of my Dreams, till gray light peeped in at the window and morning birds began to twitter.

CHAPTER IV

I BECOME A FLY FISHERMAN

O, Sir, doubt not but that angling is an art; is it not an art to deceive a Trout with an artificial fly?—*IZAACK WALTON.*

I was seventeen and ready to enter my sophomore year in the university, but as I could not go until I had some money, I got a position as under master in the dreariest of boarding schools, at a salary of one hundred and fifty dollars a year with board and lodging. At this school, which was well run by a heavy-handed, old-fashioned schoolmaster, were gathered boys who were backward or unmanageable at home; some were feeble-minded and obscene, others downright rowdies. Corporal punishment was the order of the day. I used to teach all day and have charge of study hours and a dormitory every other night. The boys in my dormitory, many of whom were older and stronger than I, had to be in bed and all quiet by nine o'clock. Of course, there was a scuffle nearly every night, and it was hell, simply hell for me. To console myself, I used to reason thus: "Well, I've stood it for five weeks, therefore I can endure it for thirty more." In my narrow room that was miserably heated, I kept up hope and courage by thinking of trout streams and still-waters and by recalling every detail of some happy fishing excursion. I used to say to myself: "This will make me tough, anyway. I need never be afraid of anything in the future, for I shall never endure anything more unpleasant or irksome than this." That was a sound conjecture; the war was not half so soul-degrading.

In the long summer vacations, I followed the sea, to enlarge my budget, pounding up and down the rough Nova Scotia coast in smelly forecastles at eighteen dollars a month. All these things interfered with the joyous business of fishing: I was seldom at home and I suppose, during this period, Father fished alone. Then, after two years of drudgery, we moved on to Lockeport; I won a scholarship, got into college, and had a little leisure.

Lockeport marks a distinct stage in my fishing career: it was there that I learned to fish with a fly and began to turn up my nose at all those who baited hooks with worms, grasshoppers, or minnows. I remember when and where I first saw a fly well cast. My father and I were driving over the bridge that crosses the inlet at the upper end of Wall's Lake, when Enos Churchill, merchant of the village and noted fisherman, stepped out on the

rocks on the edge of the stream where it empties into the lake. There was a deep pool there. He adjusted his light pole with great care, trying every part, fastened his reel securely, strung his line through the guides, and tied on his casting line. Then came the serious business of selecting a fly! Out came a great leather wallet into which he peered, after glancing up at the light in the sky and the buds on the alders. The selection was made; the ritual seemed to me rather ornate; I was ready to laugh! He let his line trail for a little in the water at his feet to soften and make supple the leader, then began short preliminary casts along the shore, lengthening his line with each cast. His split-bamboo rod bent in a semicircle. I began to be interested in the beauty of his action. When his line was the required length and his fly lightly touched the centre of the pool, a great trout rose with a splash, missed the fly, came clear of the water, and plunged again in a swirl of foam. Enos Churchill calmly reeled in his line and waited: he took out his pipe, filled and lit it.

“What’s he doing, Dad? Why doesn’t he keep on fishing?” I whispered.

“He’s giving the fish a rest. You should never cast back quickly when a big trout has missed.”

Then the fisherman began again, with short casts along the shore till he got the requisite length of line. When he dropped the fly again in mid-pool, the great trout rose, the reel flashed silver, with the turn of a powerful brown wrist, and the fish was struck and hooked. I jumped out of the carriage and ran down to see the trout landed, an operation that took three or four minutes, as the fish was big and the fisherman’s gear light. When the fish lay gasping and flopping in the net, Mr. Churchill gently twisted from its mouth a dainty fly with a yellow body, scarlet hackle, and white wings. I did not know the name of that fly then, but I know it now for my favourite of all flies, a number twelve *Parmachene Belle*. I climbed back into the carriage, a convert; no more bait-fishing for me; I must have the peculiar ecstasy that comes from dropping a fly thistledown light, and of seeing the splash and swirl as the trout sucks it down.

Somehow, I got flies and casting lines and began to practise this higher branch of the angler’s art. I had little luck at first, for I had the fault of many young anglers. I used to be so thrilled with excitement when the trout rose for my fly that I would forget to strike, and before I recovered my wits, master trout had discovered that the fly was artificial and spat it out. To this day, I have not completely overcome my slowness in striking; it is still a fault in my fishing. In grouse shooting, I have the same embarrassment; I am so astonished at the unexpected whirr of the flushed bird that I often forget

to throw up my gun till he is far away through the trees. Moreover, my first flies, picked up at hazard—none of your expensive Hardy Brothers' dainty midges for me in those days—were gaudy and large, falling in the pool with a splash. Sometimes I was tempted of the devil to go back to bait fishing, but I said "Get thee behind me" and stoutly withstood the tempter.

It is wonderful how little phrases that strangely excite your interest or tickle your vanity stick in the mind forever. One fine evening, I was fishing the upper still-water of the East River. There had been heavy rain and a subsequent run of sea trout. I was lucky that evening and had landed two fine fish, when I saw two men coming down through the woods on the far side of the still-water. I knew them for Mr. Enos Churchill, famous fisherman, and his friend Mr. Winston Johnston, a worthy second. They stood still and watched me, for it was the etiquette in those days that when one gentleman was fishing a small pool, no other gentleman cast his line therein. I fished in my very best form and in their presence raised, hooked, and landed a third sea trout. I heard Mr. Churchill say to Mr. Johnston in a low voice (sound carries easily over still-water), "The boy knows how to fish." That commendation I shall never forget! To equal them in courtesy, I waved my hand as a signal that I was through fishing for the evening and sat down to watch the two masters whip the pool.

A few days after this, they paid me a great compliment by inviting me to go fishing with them to the Sable River. These two famous fishermen were both in business and both unsuccessful. Mr. Churchill owned fishing vessels, wharves, and a mixed country store, cured and sold cargoes of fish in the West Indies, and was forever on the verge of failure. Winston Johnston, his bookkeeper at that time, had formerly suffered losses in his own business. About store and wharves they assumed a manner of aggressive, hard-voiced, stony-hearted business men; in the woods and along the rivers, they fell into their natural rôle and were simple, soft-voiced, and gentle. What is all this confusion and bustle about in the world of business? Is not business a delusion and a snare? Is it not a trap that men have made to be caught in themselves? Are not employer and employee in cities but slaves of the gigantic machines they have created?

As for me, I endure the city in winter in order that I may live through three long summer months. In the city, I write endless letters in my office, I am busy over executive work, I rush about day and night getting only half enough sleep, my mind full of ambitious and often angry thoughts. But in summer, all is different: in a country almost untouched by man, I get up fresh and clear-eyed to watch the sun rise out of the forest and chase the mist

wraiths from the lake, I take my canoe and paddle over to the still-water for trout, I swim in the cool clean water, I gather pond lilies and berries in season, I cut wood or hoe my garden or drive back the forest of alders that is forever encroaching. I explore some new part of the forest, boil my kettle by some singing brook, and lie in the sun for hours. A lazy life, you say, yet life, after all, with one's head full of sweet dreams and fancies. At night, I build up a log fire, for it is always a little chilly in the evenings, and by the light of a shaded oil lamp settle down in my armchair with a book I love. Thus I should like to dream away my days!

Now, these two men, Enos Churchill and Winston Johnston, with whom I went to the Sable River, were tangled in the net of business, but not completely enmeshed. They escaped the world of affairs whenever they could, to wander in the woods like boys on a holiday. Neither, as I have said, was successful in business, and what sportsman wishes to be successful in business, to buy for as little as you can and sell for as much as possible, to crush out small competitors and "do" the other fellow generally? How can one adjust one's self to such ideas without being something of a cad?

We left home together early one June morning and drove twelve miles to the Sable River, which, in its lower reaches, is black and sluggish as its name suggests. Then came a wonderful walk of four miles through the sweet-scented wood, still wet with dew, along a wood road that skirted the eastern side of the river. My heart was full of pride and joy to be in the company of these men. We came at last to the head of the great still-water and crossed the rushing torrent by leaping from rock to rock, where the water was no longer sable but silver. I watched every movement of my companions, and, as their learner and disciple in this great peripatetic school, listened to their talk as they gravely discussed the colour of the sky and the buds on the bushes before selecting their flies for the day. Mr. Churchill looked over my fly book and said: "Those will never do; they're too big; try one of mine," and he gave me a tiny well-shaped Montreal with which I fished all day till I caught and snapped it in the fork of a tall maple. There was no hurry, time meant nothing; they fished with deliberation; business was forgotten, fishing a matter of dignity and importance. With almost every long cast, they raised and hooked a fish; I did not fare so well, since I could not cast so far or so skilfully; or strike half of the fish I raised. Toward noon, as the sun got high, the fish stopped feeding, and we put up our poles and lay down on a grassy sward for lunch. It was a beautiful place; above us roared the little white water, before us stretched the broad dark still-water on whose banks young white birches and crooked swamp maples pushed out among the evergreens. It seemed to me that I could stay there

forever, watching the dragon-flies skim the pool and industrious water rats pull down grasses for their underwater homes. After lunch, the two men lit pipes and talked of other days on the river and recalled bright memories of great trout, taken when they were young. I wish I could remember all they said—it was real fisherman's talk and well worth recording—but it is long ago and I have forgotten. About three in the afternoon, we moved down river for the afternoon fishing, following the west bank. We sauntered along in Indian file till we came to the foot of the great still-water where the river swirls in a right angle, to roar into the lower pool. This pool was comparatively small but deep, limpid, and silver clear. The sea trout fresh from the sea were lying there, revelling in the clean rushing water and rubbing their bellies against the gravel. Into this pool we cast and the fish rose savagely; some of the older and wiser came with a great splash to flick the fly under with their tails before taking, others in their eagerness shot clear of the water. It was there I learned that in such water you can never strike too fast. A lively trout is so much quicker than a man, and so quickly detects the fraud of the artificial fly, that you are most sure of hooking him if you strike at his flash without waiting for the break. We fished till our creels were full, and then wandered slowly homeward in the twilight. A wonderful day of happiness to remember. When I am old, a worn and useless graybeard by the fireside, I shall not dream of times spent in cities, but of days of real life such as that day upon the Sable River.

CHAPTER V

SWALLOW POOL

Give me again all that was there,
Give me the sun that shone!
Give me the eyes, give me the soul,
Give me the lad that's gone!

—R. L. S.

Then college and football absorbed me. I was suddenly a man tall and strong; I used to glory in my strength in those days, and get a thrill out of bursting through the line and sending lesser men spinning like ninepins. I fell in love, fishing was almost forgotten! In my college there were no fraternities and few social functions; we led rough, vigorous lives and did a little thinking. I remember I used to feel that my brain was growing, as I sat at my little deal table and tried to solve in my mind some complicated syllogism in the back of Jevon's *Logic*. But college is not, as many people suppose, a place where one learns a great deal, it is rather a place where one gets an initial introduction to many things that, in later life, when maturity and development have come, may be followed to some rich conclusion.

College was worthwhile to me if only for my introduction to Wordsworth. Here was a poet who really loved nature and in whose work I found many of the things I had already felt. Literature pleases us when we find in it an expression of our inarticulate selves. I had not been sure of many poets, especially those of the Eighteenth Century, who described Nature in stilted and artificial language and made of her a kind of frame upon which to hang their dainty and rather flimsy emotions. They seemed armchair lovers, writing by candlelight in some snug London room, and I had grave doubts whether many of them had ever waded knee-deep along a trout stream or lain all night beneath a spruce tree and felt the chill and terror of the woods. But Wordsworth had experienced and felt all that I knew and much more. Such passages I could have written myself, had I had the art:

“These beauteous forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man’s eye:
But oft, in lonely rooms, and ’mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart”—

or

“For nature then . . .
To me was all in all—I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite, a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied.”

I was sure from the first that Wordsworth was one of the elect, an angler, “an honest, civil, quiet man,” as the milk-woman in Izaak Walton says. One day in turning over his poems I found with great joy his sonnet written upon a blank leaf of the *Complete Angler*.

“While flowing rivers yield a blameless sport,
Shall live the name of Walton; Sage benign!
Whose pen, the mysteries of the rod and line
Unfolding, did not fruitlessly exhort
To reverend watching of each still report
That Nature utters from her rural shrine.
Meek, nobly versed in simple discipline—
He found the longest summer day too short,
To his loved pastime given by Sedgy Lee,
Or down the tempting maze of Shawford brook—
Fairer than life itself, in this sweet Book,
The cowslip-bank and shady willow-tree;
And the fresh meads—where flowed, from every nook
Of his full bosom, gladsome Piety.”

Later I found in the Prelude this allusion to his boyhood:

“The rod and line
True symbol of hope’s foolishness, whose strong
And unproved enchantment led us on
By rocks and pools shut out from every star,
All the green summer, to forlorn cascades
Among the windings hid of mountain brooks.”

Not once, in his most maudlin or sentimental mood—for sometimes his Muse nodded—did he refer to the cruelty of fishing or the agony of the trout upon the hook, and surely he was the most tender of all those who have loved nature.

Just here we might as well face the moral question of fishing for pleasure, that sometime or other comes to the mind of every sensitive fisherman. I do not believe that we can go far into this question without becoming sentimental. Half our mistakes in life, especially in our reasoning about religious beliefs, come from the fact that we forget that we are a part of nature. In this world of nature we can live only by killing: this is a law that is none of our making. The noble maple is chopped down for firewood—who knows but that it too loves to live, and feels a thrill of joy when its sweet sap surges upward in the spring. Our boots are made from the hides of cattle, our clothing from the wool of sheep, and we batten on their flesh. Whose ear is attuned fine enough to hear the plaintive sigh of the reluctant beet or carrot torn from the garden mould? Death comes apace to all living things, for no matter how we avoid killing, “all men kill the thing they love.” Death, the end of everything we understand, is, after all, one of the minor incidents of life. Who knows but the rising trout flashes through one moment of ecstasy at the gay multi-coloured fly, the like of which he has never seen before! No true fisherman ever takes more fish than his family, friends, and relations can use. It is a selfish crime to waste fish: the hook is tenderly removed from the jaws of small adventurous trout, and they are put back in the stream. While no sensitive person kills wantonly, fishing to supply the home table satisfies some primitive instinct inherited from the early hunter. Fly fishing is a gentle art and gives us infinite pleasure: truly, it may be little fun for the trout, but, at any rate, one gives him quick and decent dispatch; and if he be not taken by a fisherman, he becomes the prey of the great hawk hovering in the air, mink or otter dart upon him, or he is scooped out on the bank by the dexterous paw of the brown bear.

It was in June after my graduation from college that a number of us who had been chums together decided to have one last holiday before we were lost to one another in the world. We took tents and canoes and went to

Maxwellton in southern Nova Scotia where we crossed the great lake and pitched our tents by the brawling stream that flows down from Clear Water. It was a wonderful place to camp for there were many level grassy places among the tall virgin hardwood timber. Below us was the great lake and an ancient broken sawmill, long since abandoned; a hundred yards above us Clear Water Lake, so named because, on a bright day, one could see every stone and pebble on the bottom at its greatest depth. The brook sang always and made a strange harmony with the night wind in the tops of the maples. The camp fire flared up merrily: we lay within the flaps on our beds of fir, watched the sparks dance up and fade, and talked of things once so dear and important and already almost trivial.

To get trout for breakfast, we used to employ a strange method that we discovered by chance. In late June, when the lake waters begin to be warmed by the summer heat, trout leave the shores where, during the cold spring months, they have lingered to feed in the shallows on minnows and insects that drop from the bushes, and retire to deep places where cold springs bubble up through the oozy mud. They become sluggish and lazy and no longer rise to the fly readily. At the foot of Clear Water Lake, whose waters were cold, was a gate placed there by men on the lower Salmon River, to keep up the water for grinding their wheat and oats in September. We used to open this gate and let a torrent rush down the brook for half an hour. This stream of cold water poured into the lower lake, trout roused from their stupor congregated to feed, and we could cast into the pool and take as many fish as we needed. Little cared we whether or not the grist mills turned in the autumn.

We stayed there a fortnight and lived carefree as feudal barons; day succeeded day of infinite delight, the only shadow cast by the cloud of our imminent separation.

I remember one bright day, brighter than all the others, when we made a long excursion through the forest to Swallow Pool. Four carriers were assigned to our big canoe, a poor craft to take over rough country, but nothing mattered in those days! Just after dawn, we carried up to Clear Water, paddled across it, saw the pebbles on the bottom, and fish scurrying from our shadow through its depth. The forest was drenched with dew and silence. Two loons in the upper end sent out their melancholy warning cry, and a flight of ducks splashed, rose, and circled the tree-tops. We landed and carried our canoe through half a mile of fragrant firs, our feet wet with dew. Then came another lake whose name I have forgotten, along whose shore we paddled for a long time seeking the outlet. None of us knew the country,

though Lawrence Killam claimed he had been there with his father years before. At last we found a small sulky stream that meandered through logs, windfalls, and the brush of old tree-tops. It was an outlet but a sorry apology for a brook. Down this we blundered, wet to our knees, dragging our canoe as we went. At last we reached water that would float us, and, after a short paddle, caught a glimmer of a still-water through the tree trunks. We beached our craft and crept up through the trees, awed into silence by the mystery and beauty of the place. The pool, untouched by sunlight and unruffled by a breeze, was a blue jewel in its forest setting. It was placid and eternal. Around it were towering monumental spruces. Strange wood swallows with gleaming iridescent necks skimmed its surface. A trout rose to shatter the turquoise plane into an infinitude of circles. A yellow water snake in search of unwary young frogs slipped from the moss and sculled his way across the surface. The pool might have been unvisited for years; without definite knowledge of its location, we had reached it by a kind of intuition. For a long time, we lay watching, till the young animal overcame the sentimental and we began to fish.

It was a natural place for fish to congregate for it was the upper deep still-water of a chain of brooks and tiny lakes that emptied into Salmon River Lake. Fish were there in abundance, and they rose freely, as if they had never been fished over. On my first cast with a small Montreal, I hooked a trout that scaled more than two pounds. All of my companions fished with bait and eventually made so much noise and splashing that they fared better than I, for trout will take a fat worm or squirming minnow dangled above their noses, when they are too shy to rise to the surface for a fly. The fly fisherman, if he desires to hook the big and wary trout, must creep carefully behind bushes, and above all things take care not to jar the bank, since trout are very sensitive to earth vibration transmitted through water. We fished to our heart's desire, till our creels would hold no more.

In mid-afternoon we took to our canoe again, paddling down the still-water, which, gradually swollen by tributary brooks, widened into a little river. The banks were hung with ferns and great blueberry bushes from six to eight feet high, laden with clusters of unripe berries. We drifted along leisurely, singing as we went, and in a semicircle of ten miles came back to our own lake again.

That excursion marked the end of our irresponsible youth, a fitting climax to four years of leisurely, friendly college life. I never dreamt then that there was a still greater college life before me. We all felt that it was the end of all we had enjoyed together, though we said nothing about it.

Henceforth, life would be a matter of buckling down to business, of making money, of getting married, begetting children, and these new interests would separate us. So they have! Two manage coal mines; one is a prominent man in the Bell Telephone Company; one has made a million and is president of the Royal Securities Company; one, the cheeriest of all, ever with the gay word and the laughing eyes, after a distinguished career at home and abroad as a mathematician, was drowned mysteriously while bathing in the shallow water of our lake. Never again shall we together see Swallow Pool as we saw it that June morning. Some day I must make my grand tour and revisit Swallow Pool, the mountain lake Dad and I used to fish, Dominique's Lake, Fisher's, Sally Dabs, and the flashing stream Jack Sweeney and I discovered long ago.

CHAPTER VI

IN FOREIGN PARTS

I might tell you that Almighty God is said to have spoken to a fish, but never to a beast.

—IZAAK WALTON.

I won a Rhodes Scholarship—it was easier to get one in those days—went to Oxford, and for four long years was separated from my lakes and still-waters. I wrote little poems about them in the seclusion of my rooms with my thick oak barred, and sustained myself by dreaming of them in many hours of loneliness, since I made friends with the English slowly. Once, on a holiday excursion, I fished in County Wicklow with Bobby Barton, a mild-tempered young fellow, who since has become a furious Sinn Feiner and languished in prison for his convictions. The stream wound through a meadow and looked a likely place for trout, but we caught nothing. Once I was invited to try for salmon in a Welsh river but the plans miscarried; only once I fished in English waters, and that under such odd circumstances that I must tell you about it.

In my third year at Oxford, I was invited by a Miss Crompton of Somerville College, whom I had met at picnics, teas, and dances, to spend a week-end at her father's country home in Surrey. I could not imagine why I was invited, and was sorely puzzled about it, for I was given to devious and complicated thinking in those days. What fools we are not to accept things at face value! How we inhibit and defeat ourselves through life by cunningly analyzing the motives of others! I know now that she invited me because she wanted me to come. She had no designs upon me. I was to her simply a big naïve colonial, who might add a touch of fun and colour to her week-end party.

I arrived, was shown to my room, and began to dress for dinner, when, to my dismay, I found that I had brought neither pumps nor black shoes with me. We were to dance after dinner, and I had nothing but the stout brown shoes in which I stood. I summoned the butler and asked him to blacken my brown shoes. Like all good butlers, he appeared not in the least astonished, but departed, shoes in hand, as if my request were a matter of everyday routine. What dubious mixture he applied to them I cannot guess—it looked to me like stove polish—at any rate, when returned they were still brown, mottled with bluish-gray blotches. In this outrageous footwear I appeared in

the drawing room to dance and dine. To be a colonial was bad enough; to be a colonial shod as I was, was impossible; my only happy moments were those when my feet were hidden beneath the table. At dinner, I sat next to a dumb, trustful young Englishman, one of the breed who won the Empire, who had aspirations of some day becoming a politician, and who was anxious to acquire some first-hand information about the Colonies. The sense of inferiority developed in me through my mottled and disgraceful shoes as I sat with these calm and well-groomed people awoke a desire to appear great by boasting of the land of my birth. Into his eager ear I poured a fearful tale of prairies with black soil fathoms deep, of immeasurable forests with trees of fabulous girth, of coal seams twenty feet thick on the banks of the Mackenzie, of boggy lands where petroleum seeped from the ground and oozed about one's ankles. My imagination caught fire, and I gave him vivid descriptions of fortunes made by growing wheat in Manitoba and fruit farming in British Columbia, though I had never been west of Montreal.

Later in the evening, I missed the trustful young man, and on inquiring for him, was informed by the lady with whom I was dancing, that Mr. —— had been so impressed by my descriptions and statistics, that he had foresworn the dance and gone up to his room to write down our conversation while it was fresh in his memory. I set this narrative down by way of leading up to fishing in England, because it made such a great impression on my memory; to my knowledge, it is the only occasion when anyone retired to write down anything I had said.

In the morning, my host, Mr. Crompton, asked me to walk with him about the estate, and this I was glad to do, in order to conceal from the general gaze my mottled shoes, that appeared more hideous than ever in the garish light of day, and to escape the inquisitive young politician, who might seek to check my facts and figures of the night before. Mr. Crompton was by way of being a sportsman—at least, he wanted to appear as such. From the summit of his highest hill, he pointed out his duck ponds and private trout pools. He was clad according to the rules in baggy “knickers” and Norfolk jacket, but his accent discovered that he had been reared within sound of Bow Bells. He was a type of city man who, having made his pile, buys an estate, builds a villa, and retires at middle life to pretend that he understands hunting and fishing; his vocabulary is perfect, but his seat is insecure and his flies land with a splash. G. D. Armour has immortalized the type in *Punch*. I didn't understand all about Mr. Crompton at that time, but, looking back through the years, I see him very clearly now. When he had finished showing me the wonders of the world from his mountain-top, he asked me if I knew how to fish and I replied that I did. He then suggested that we might

try the pools, stocked with wary rainbow trout, and we returned to the house for rods and fishing gear. We had whipped all the pools without success when a sharp shower of rain came on and he returned to the house, leaving me alone. Shortly after his departure, the fish began to rise, as they often do in a sudden rain. I noticed that there was a tiny black fly on the water, and, selecting the darkest and smallest Montreal in his book, I put it on and cast out among the feeding fish. In half an hour, I took ten trout, all well over a pound. The shower soaked me to the skin, but I fished on, quite forgetful that I was not at home. Then the rain ceased and the trout stopped rising. I strung my trout upon a switch and returned to the house with my fine catch, to be met with black looks from my host. I could not make out the ground of his displeasure; was it that I had caught trout when he had failed, or that the trout were strung on a stick and not laid neatly in a creel, or was there some deeper code that decreed that trout were to be angled for in private waters, but never taken? What with my mottled shoes and ill-fated fishing, my week-end was a failure.

I took a year off from Oxford, after getting my degree, and went on to the University of Berlin, to learn something about the *Beowulf* from that gracious old professor Alois Brandl. Born the son of a postman in Thuringia, he had risen to the top of the academic world, and though his manners were naïve and bucolic—he used sometimes to stop and spit in the middle of a lecture—he remains in my mind as the finest product of that kindly *gemütlich* pre-war Germany that so many people loved. With the daring impudence of youth I arrived in Berlin with two pounds ten to spend a year, and so I did, for by sheer luck I got a position as *Haus-Lehrer*—helping two boys of a wealthy household with their lessons—and after a few weeks, Brandl made me assistant in his seminar, at ten marks an hour. I lived in opulence and paid off a rascally dentist.

In Germany, I did no trout fishing, but I have one precious memory, vaguely connected with trout, that I must recount. At the time of the Easter vacation, a young German friend and I decided to make a walking tour through Thuringia. We got off the train near Jena late one afternoon, and walked up the valley of the Schwartzta. Darkness soon came, but, after a little, the full moon rode in the sky, flooding the valley with silver light and glittering on the rough black water of the river, that brawled over rapids all the way beside us. I shall never forget the wonder of that night! We paced along with great strides as if some glorious adventure were around the next bend. About ten we came to a fine old inn on the banks of the Schwartzta, and there, standing on the steps, was the innkeeper's daughter, a pretty, yellow-haired girl. Moved by the beauty of the night, I threw my arms about

her and gave her a hearty kiss, and my companion followed suit. On ordinary occasions, one would have received a sounding slap, but she made no demur; she, too, had been looking at the moonlight on the rapids and dreaming of adventure. She led us into the house and plied us with cheese, ham, eggs, black bread, and good dark beer. Did she receive every traveller in such gracious fashion, or was she but a part of that bewitching night? It is wonderful how much people are the reflections of our own spirits: on some days everyone seems friendly and amiable; on other days, dull and inimical. On this journey through Thuringia, we met none but gracious and amiable people who welcomed us with smiles. Our spirits were in tune with our surroundings: we were young, healthy animals, and it was springtime. Our reception by the golden-haired girl at the Schwartzathal inn was but a prelude to a whole symphony of greetings.

After a week of wandering, we came, one night, just as dusk was falling, to the top of a precipitous hill and looked down into a deep peaceful valley in which a hamlet nestled by the side of a gray stream. Three or four years ago, while walking through the galleries of an International Exhibition in Pittsburgh, I came upon a picture by some German artist called "To Wander, to Wander," which was almost a duplicate, at least in mood, of that Thuringian valley into which my comrade and I looked so many years ago. It was a picture of a deep valley, through which wound a gray river full of shadows. It recalled all that golden Thuringian spring and memories of my bright young companion who fell fighting for his country at Amiens.

We stood for a long time looking down upon that village, our haven for the night, which our maps told us was Luisenthal. We followed the winding road that went down the steep hill and came to a rambling old inn half covered with trailing vines. Lights twinkled from the windows; within, fiddles were scraping, horns tooting, and there was a noise of dancing feet. We entered, blinking, to find a dance in progress and a whole bevy of pretty country girls seated partnerless along the wall. Some sort of a local festival was going on, and when we learned that it was to last for three days, we booked rooms for that period, flung our parcels aside, and engaged in the dance. There was no lack of partners and no need of introductions; any girl would dance with you if you had the necessary ten-pfennig piece to give the floor master at the end of the figure. Furiously, we danced all the evening, whirling rosy-cheeked peasant girls through the schottische, waltz, and Rheinlander. In a near-by room were beer, baked meats, stout cheeses, and pyramids of black bread; thither we repaired frequently to slake our thirst or to attack a second, third, or even fourth supper. I remember that, late in the first evening, I was on cordial terms with a handsome young cadet officer,

and that one of my smiling buxom partners asked me what costume I wore. Now, before leaving Berlin, I had borrowed for the expedition a pair of golf breeches from a stout German friend—I was a great borrower in those days, since I had little of my own—and these breeches hung in bagging folds halfway to my ankles like a kind of exaggerated Zouave trouser. I had torn them and my stockings on stones and bushes in our progress over the mountains and mended them in fantastic darns with thread and yarn. I replied to my curious smiling friend that I was wearing the national costume of Canada. Satisfied with this information, she retailed it to her friends, whose giggles at the oddity of my dress were turned into glances of interest and almost admiration. It is always a relief to the minds of country people when they are able to classify you, no matter how shoddy the classification. On went the dance, the music, the feasting, the merry laughter, till it was very late, and we got to bed thoroughly tired after a day's walking in the mountains and a night of revelry.

Next morning, I was up betimes and made friends with the fat, good-natured host of the inn. In the course of conversation, I mentioned casually that the country was well watered and that there should be trout in the mountain streams. His eyes flashed; I had struck a chord that vibrated in him. He began to talk volubly, and I soon learned that trout fishing was his great passion in life. When I told him that I, too, was a fisherman, he put on his hat and coat and took me by the arm.

“Come with me,” he said, “and I'll show you something.”

Out we went through a pine wood, till we stood on a little bridge that spanned a deep pool at the foot of a rushing white water.

“Look!” he cried. “See them!”

The water was crystal clear, and looking down I could see the brown backs of a dozen fine trout, some darting to and fro in the eddies, some rubbing their bellies against the gravel, so like to them in colour.

“A month from now,” he said, rubbing his hands together, “a month from now, and the inn can go hang: my wife and the girls can look after that; I'll have business along these streams.”

I recognized the disease and walked back arm in arm with mine host to cement our friendship over a morning mug of beer. Then we boasted long over trout we had caught, and I became the white-headed boy among the guests, and for two more days of feasting and festivity the inseparable partner of his daughter, Gretchen, a pretty, dark-haired girl of eighteen. We

used to dance together for a while, when I would say: “Come, Gretchen, let’s go look at your father’s trout,” and off we would wander through the sweet-scented wood, to stand on the rustic bridge and gaze down into the depths of the pool. It is well-nigh impossible to see trout in the moonlight, but, after all, the trout were a matter of secondary importance.

How pleasant it is to remember an unexpected interlude in a journey, where time and place were fitting, where one did not arrive too soon or linger a moment too long, where there was nothing unseemly or unpleasant but everything a memory of laughter and light-hearted friendliness! At a number of concerts I have heard this winter, the singer has had *Die Forellen* on his programme, and with the opening chords I get a picture of Luisenthal, my magic village, and Gretchen leaning over the rail of the rustic bridge in the moonlight. I shall never again venture near that village nestled in the Thuringian hills lest the inn has crumbled, the old fisherman is dead, the laughing boys and girls gone, and all its magic and glory of remembrance departed.

Now I am glad that I had those pleasant years of wandering, though through them all I yearned for my still-waters; pleasant, poverty-stricken years in Berlin, Heidelberg, and the hills of Thuringia, when friends took you for what you were worth. It never seemed to rain in that sunny summer I spent in the Necar valley with Trantham, Railsback, and Brehaut. We used to lurch homeward along the Anlage, in the small hours of the morning, loving one another and all the golden world. From some corps house on the hill floated the musical voices of German students, “*Sind wir nicht für Herrlichkeit geboren,*” and we, putting our heads together, would reply antiphonally: “The old gray mare, she ain’t what she used to be, Ain’t what she used to be.”

Then they would sometimes call from their windows: “Come on up,” for they were good fellows and knew us as a strange brand of Oxford men, recently swarming on their continent like the potato beetles in New Hampshire. Then, after deep libations, we made laudatory speeches to one another in bad German and halting English and got home somehow later, and were scolded in the morning by Frau Harrer for leaving the front door open, or stumbling on the steps, or waking the other guests with ribald songs. She often threatened to turn us out, but never did so, for she was a kindly soul who loved boys, and we could always win back her heart with a bouquet of flowers or some little kindness.

CHAPTER VII

ALONG GREAT RIVERS

For she and I both love all anglers, they be such honest, civil, quiet men.—IZAAK
WALTON.

At last I was free of Europe and came home like one returning from exile. As I paced the deck of the steamer, my heart was almost bursting with eagerness, though I knew it was too late for fishing that season. Still, I could explore through September and locate likely pools and streams. I was to be professor of English at the University of New Brunswick at Fredericton, which I knew to be the centre of a well-watered district. I was travelling second class on a boat that moved with the speed of a sick whale: fourteen knots was the most that could be got out of her: I stared as eagerly as had Columbus for the land, or stout Cortez for the sea. At last, the brown rocky cliffs of Labrador peeped up above the ocean's rim, then Newfoundland upon the port bow. As we sauntered leisurely through the Strait of Belle Isle, I looked longingly at those two paradises of fishermen, Labrador and Newfoundland, where salmon swarm in the rivers and sea trout come by tens of thousands after the summer rains, and wondered if I should ever be rich enough to fish those blessed streams. Certainly, the savings from my salary of a hundred dollars a month would not carry me far afield. Twenty years have passed since I dreamt that dream, and I have achieved neither Newfoundland nor Labrador. Perhaps some day yet, I fondly think.

I left the boat at the first stopping place, Father's Point, and travelled by train along the northern shores of New Brunswick, crossing the Metapedia, Restigouche, and Miramichi, great lordly rivers, with sweet-sounding Indian names, known to all anglers in eastern America. Then came Nova Scotia and the Bay of Fundy with its miles upon miles of brown, glistening mud flats; when I caught the smell of Fundy mud mingled with a tang of salt, a whiff of seaweed, the ancient odour of fish houses, the bilge of fishing schooners and lobster shells upon the fields, the fragrance of miles upon miles of spruce and fir forests, I knew that I was home again, and suddenly my eyes were full of tears. Again I had that experience, when returning from four years of war: the strange smells of home evoked a thousand memories of the past and touched me more deeply than anything else.

It was strange to become a professor, but as I had spent eight years in universities studying language and literature, I was fitted for nothing else. I had always been a natural and somewhat industrious student, yet I knew singularly little and found myself in a curious predicament; in my first lecture, I told my students everything I knew and could not imagine how I could fill in the time during the rest of the year. I wonder if that is a common experience with young professors! But classes lasted only from nine till one, so that in September and October there were long golden afternoons of freedom to wander through the woods and explore the streams. Fredericton beside the majestic St. John, at this point almost a mile wide, is built on a flat intervale encircled by ridges clad in multi-coloured woods. I bought a double-barrelled gun, began to shoot as I had done as a youngster, and came home nearly every afternoon with a brace of woodcock or grouse in my pockets. I explored the valleys of the Nashwaak and Nashwaaksis, looked with adoration at all the fine brooks that ran into them, and prayed that the spring might come quickly.

In January of that year I married an artist who loved wood and stream as much as I. With the optimism of youth, we fell back on the time-honoured maxim “that two can live more cheaply than one.” At first, we almost perished in a ramshackle mansion that we named, “The house Fred Bliss used to live in.” It was not proof against the winter winds that sifted through every seam. Later, we moved into a flat above a grocery store which we grandly named “Eardley’s Heights” after the browbeaten little Englishman who ran the store below, and for whom we used to pound furiously on pipes and register to induce him to apply more coal to his scantily stoked furnace. Snow lay thick everywhere; day after day came with the glass thirty below zero; ice four feet thick fettered the great river.

I waited impatiently for the spring. In late March, the snows melted but the river ice held firm; in April came a few days of struggling sunshine with a nipping wind; clumps of violets greened, but no buds dared peep out till the clumps were dug up and set in pots along the window sills, where they sent out long-stemmed flowers. At last, at last the river broke and the ice swept out to sea with savage snarling and grinding, white masses crowned with yellow brown, beautiful against the angry blue water. So wild and fierce was the rush of the ice that it formed a jam above the highway bridge and shoved a heavy stone pier ten feet down stream. Then the ice was released from the tributaries, brooks began to sing, and it was time to fish again.

The Nashwaak, which empties into the St. John opposite Fredericton, is a good fishing river—the brown Nashwaak trout is famous for its quality—and the streams that empty into it are full of lively brook trout. Never shall I forget that day in May when, after four years' absence, I stood on the banks of a free-fishing Nashwaak brook and first cast my line across a deep black pool. It was a glorious spring morning; the May sun was warm on my back, though the air was clear and nipping cold. There had been frost in the night, and shell ice formed glistening patterns along the margin of the brook. The alders were pushing out their dark green buds; in the slim white birches on the hill was a promise of tender yellow; in the maples, a hint of magenta. The trout were hungry and rose greedily in every pool, where the brook had caved the bank beneath root of beech or maple. I soon filled my creel with firm, well-coloured trout of about three quarters of a pound, and then, putting up my rod, wandered on and on through the wood toward the sources of the brook. That day I would not have exchanged my state with kings.

And this was but one of many brooks I fished that spring: as when a schoolboy, Saturday became the day of all the week. How glorious it was to tuck away books and papers of a Friday afternoon and reflect on fishing some brook on the morrow. For big trout, I used to go to Stone Lake above Stanley. This was reached by a little train that ran over a narrow-gauge road, the locomotive fed with pieces of old mill wood. By watching Stone Lake carefully, I soon found where the big fish lay. I could reach the hole nicely by standing on a thickly branched maple that had toppled over and fallen full length on the southern side of the lake. There I could stand, and with a Coachman—a fly the Stone Lake trout seemed to prefer—take as many trout in two hours as I could conveniently carry. For the most part, I fished alone, for I hate to be hurried and rushed from pool to pool, preferring often to sit and watch some choice still-water for half an hour before ever casting a line over it.

After I had had my fill of trout fishing, I tried for salmon in the big pool on the St. John five miles above Fredericton and later in the pools of the Tobique near Arthurette, but in neither of these places did I catch or even raise a salmon, for I was poorly equipped and had not learned the art of salmon fishing.

College closed in June, and presently examinations were over, reports handed in, and I was free for the long vacation. My wife and I had neither money nor inclination to make the right and proper trip to Niagara Falls—I suppose Niagara, with its swift, smooth waters, gathered slyly together and

hurled over a sheer precipice to roar through miles of whirlpool and rapid, is a kind of symbol of newly married life, and in this symbolism lies its attraction—and in lieu of this pilgrimage, we elected to buy an old canoe, sound in timbers and planking, but with torn and well-rubbed canvas. We recovered parts, and with an application of white lead and copper tacks, made our craft as sound as if it were new. We put canoe, tent, and provisions for a fortnight on the train and set out for Grand Falls on the upper St. John, where the river drops in a great sheer fall. For the first night, we camped on a rocky ledge at the foot of this great fall: it was impossible to drive tent pegs but there were plenty of flat rocks to hold down guy ropes and tent flaps. We got little sleep, for the fall roared in our ears all night. Next morning, we were off in the early sunlight feeling our way cautiously through little runs and rapids. The upper St. John flows majestically through a deep gorge, high hills wooded with spruces on either hand; sometimes it sweeps deep and strong through a narrow gap, sometimes the hills open out and the river widens and brawls and shallows till the stones of the bottom race by only a few inches beneath the keel. Our canoe was big and well trimmed with dunnage, so that, in very shallow runs, I could sit astride on the gunwales and use my feet as brakes by dragging them on the bottom. One is always fearful in swift, shallow water lest some jagged stone rip a hole in the canvas.

On a great river, it is remarkable how few good camping places there are; sometimes the banks are stony and precipitous, sometimes clad in trees to the water's edge. The mouth of a brook or small river tributary is the likeliest place to find a level grassy sward for the night, for there is usually a bit of flat interval, washed down in ages, half hidden in clumps of alders. Into the mouths of all such tributaries we used to pull and beach our canoe, and while my wife made a sketch, I used to lash the upper waters for trout or a lurking grilse. The fishing in those streams was not so good as I had expected; perhaps the season was too far advanced. Of course, I always caught far more than I could use, putting all back carefully except a couple of fat fellows for supper.

One evening, however, I explored one of these tributaries, and about a quarter of a mile above its mouth, I decided to try a deep, dark pool. I put on a dry fly—a small Cinnamon Sedge—greased my line and leader, and cast out on the water. At first, nothing happened. I tried lower down, at the bottom of the pool where the water swept in a smooth, greasy run into the rapid below. Darkness was just falling; I stood leaning my left hand against a small white birch tree, making short casts because the alders were so thick behind me. The second time my fly floated down the run, a strange wave

gathered under it, and suddenly I was fast to the heaviest fish I had ever had on a five-ounce rod. Whatever it was, it rushed upstream; I checked, and he showed himself in a flash of silver, a big grilse, almost a salmon, a fish of between five and six pounds. I had a merry fight and was in mortal terror lest he should run down into the rapid, where I could never have followed him. He kept going upstream, and I followed him with a short line lifting my rod over the bushes. Presently, after three leaps, he was tired and I worked him in toward the gravelly bar on which I stood. I had no gaff, and my landing net lay on the bank fifty yards below me, where I had dropped it in the excitement of hooking the big fish. The grilse turned on his side and showed signs of complete exhaustion; he allowed me to guide him where I wished. I worked him in close to my feet, shifted my rod to my left hand, and turning the salmon's head toward mid-stream, bent low and, grasping him suddenly just above the tail, flung him kicking on the bank. That thrilling adventure was worth any amount of trouble. I returned to our camp triumphant. It was many years before I hooked another grilse.

One night we came to the mouth of the Aroostook and found a delightful camping place on a little grassy plateau, high up in the angle between the two rivers. We camped late—always a mistake; one should begin looking for a camping place by four in the afternoon. It is hard work pitching a tent and getting supper in the half darkness, and very trying on the temper when you are tired. This night, the moon was full: below us the river brawled over two miles of rapid. From our tent door we could see up and down the St. John and far up the Aroostook, a noble river in itself. There we stayed a day and two nights, partly because it was such a beautiful spot and partly because we dreaded tackling the long heavy Aroostook rapid that lay below us.

Before running a big rapid, we used to climb a high hill, look over its whole length, and decide what course to follow; from such a height, the blue thread of channel is usually obvious in the white water. It is necessary to lay plans carefully beforehand and to come to firm and unchangeable decisions, for there must be unanimity between both paddlers, and in the rush of a big rapid shilly-shallying or indecision is fatal. My wife swung the light bow paddle and I the heavier stern, and with the rashness of youth we ran all the heavy St. John rapids without a guide, though neither of us had ever been through heavy white waters before. On the Aroostook rapid we learned our first practical lesson in negotiating white waters. A swirl of water and a flash of foam is a thing to be avoided; it means an unseen rock just below the surface. But the rock is not where one sees swirl and foam; in proportion to the swiftness of the water, it may be eight, ten, or even fifteen feet above it.

One need not avoid the swirl and foam, that can be run through in safety; it is the rock higher up that must be dodged. If both paddlers are working in agreement and harmony, a quick twist of the stern-man's paddle will put a canoe anywhere in swift water. As in all critical situations in life, one must command and the other subordinate himself or herself. If a rock is to be avoided the stern paddler shouts "Right," "Left," or "Straight ho," and to these directions the bow paddler must give way, sometimes against his better judgment. One second's lack of harmony and the canoe is over, and there is no joke about being spilled in a swift heavy rapid. There is about one chance in ten for the stoutest swimmer, who may be battered against great rocks or sucked under in swirls and whirlpools.

We negotiated the Aroostook rapid without mishap, though we came near disaster at one point, where we swept over a sheer fall of four feet, and bow paddle made one false panicky stroke for the safety of the shore. On the roaring Tobique we had great luck, for an Indian who knew the channel as a New Yorker knows Broadway went through in front of us, and we followed close in the wake of his canoe. Just above the great Meductic, shortest but fiercest of all, we camped for the night on an island in the river. There an old fellow was making hay and piling it in cocks. I asked him for an armful for our beds, and to this he readily agreed. After we were settled for the night, he came over to inspect our home and to find out who we were.

"What's your name?" said he.

"Day."

"Any relation to the Days up along the river?"

"Not that I know of, though my father came from St. John. He was an only child, and the only relations I know of my name are my brother and his little boy."

"Well, I'm glad to hear you're no kin of these Days."

"Why?"

"They're the wickedest people to curse and swear on the whole river. One of them cursed so bad that the Lord took his voice away from him for three years."

It used to be nipping cold at night, sometimes with frost, and I often had to crawl out at three or four in the morning to light a blazing camp fire, to warm the tent and surrounding air. When we reached the mouth of the Nashwaaksis a mile above Fredericton, after a long last paddle of twenty-five miles in smooth water, we ate the last of our rations.

Twice after that we canoed down the Nashwaak, a beautiful river for canoeing, with swift runs and swirls but no rapids. There is better fishing on the Nashwaak than in the main St. John, for the Nashwaak trout is large and well coloured and the tributary streams swarm with smaller brook trout.

There are two places of great beauty on the Nashwaak: one where a swift run of water sweeps your canoe close under a cliff of red sandstone, over which a brook trickles, blown white by gusty winds. Every canoe man will recall the joyous movement of the canoe when it strikes the rough choppy waves at the foot of a swift run. Such a motion has the canoe at the foot of this Nashwaak white water, as you slip swiftly along, your gunwale just grazing the red sandstone, blown brook spray in your face, deep green beneath your keel.

The other place of beauty is at an elbow in the river, where a flat, richly grassed level is shut in by high, precipitous hills, on which white birches grow. There we always pitched our tent for the night, no matter what time of day we arrived. We were completely cut off from the world, by the wooded hills behind us, by the brown river in front. In this place, it was a delight to watch night come down over hills and river valley. Feeding trout splashed lazily in the pool below us, far off some farmer's dog barked. It was a place where one felt a little of the peace that passeth all understanding.

CHAPTER VIII

A LOST COMRADE

And it is yet more observable, that when our blessed Saviour went up into the Mount, when he left the rest of his disciples, and chose only three to bear him company at his transfiguration, that those three were all fishermen.—*IZAACK WALTON.*

It was while I was in Fredericton that I made my last fishing excursion with my father, who had retired from the mission field and was living on his slender pension with my brother in Pictou County. I went down to visit him in early June, and after a long day of talk, Father proposed that we go fishing together on the morrow. He had, he informed me, already explored some good lakes and streams. Though old, weak, and half sick, he was still full of good cheer. For fifty years, he had bumped over rutted roads or travelled in sailing boat or dory from island to island, through rain and wind, frost and snow. Eventually, these hardships had broken down even his vigorous constitution. My mother demurred at the proposed fishing expedition—he was not fit to go, she said, and I was doubtful—but the old man was firm and had his way.

Next morning we were off bright and early, soon after sunrise, and drove along the dusty country road and watched the light catch the tops of the blue mountains. The air was fresh and cool, and birds were calling everywhere in the tree-tops. I was delighted to be again in his company; I hope some young fellow will be glad to go fishing with me when I am old. He, too, was happy, smiling approval at all about him, though he said little. As we drove along, I told him all I could remember of the details of my life in Oxford, Berlin, and Heidelberg. Not dry details of books and lectures and dusty dons, such as sons retail to fathers whom they do not trust, but stories of the full-blooded youthful life I had led, tales of races on the river, of drinking parties, of love affairs, of how I had beaten the Cambridge heavyweight and won my blue by punching him hard in the throat and belabouring his Adam's apple when he ducked and swerved, of horses and of how I had ridden in the ranks of the King's Colonials and learnt what "swearing like a trooper" really meant. One can boast freely to a father who loves him. Sometimes he would say when I recounted some particularly juicy anecdote, "Tell that part over again," just as little Donald does now, when a phrase in a story tickles his fancy. I knew that I could tell him everything, for once, when he had been

very ill and I had come home to see him, he had on his recovery summoned me one day to the carriage house, where he mysteriously produced a roll of bills, fifty dollars in all.

“I want you to take this,” he said.

“I can’t, Dad.”

“Why not? I’ve lots of money now, and no debts or expenses. I don’t know what to do with it.”

“My scholarship gives me plenty of money.”

“Nonsense; a youngster worth his salt never has enough money. You know you’re in debt.”

I could not deny that.

“And, look here, don’t spend this money on anything instructive or useful. Have some fun with it: buy a rod, or hire a horse, or stand your chums some good dinners.”

It was ten miles to the stream, but as we laughed and talked pleasantly all the way, we were there in no time. I put up the horse at a farmer’s barn while Father rigged up his pole and fished the pool below the highway bridge. He landed a few small trout and continued to fish, three or four hundred yards downstream, for the banks were open and the going easy. Then he lay down and said, “I’m tired now, I can’t go any farther.”

“All right, Dad, then we’ll start back home.”

“Indeed we won’t! You’ll fish the stream to the dam and I’ll lie here on the grass and watch the water; I’m much better off here than lying about the house at home.”

He insisted, and I had to leave him, going back first to fetch the carriage rug to spread on the grass for him. I fished downstream and lingered longer than I intended. You know how the hours slip by when you are fishing and how you plan to try just one more pool ahead that always looks better than the one you are casting over. I found one grand deep hole, where an icy mountain brook made into the main stream, and took some fine trout there. I pushed on to the deep waters of the dam, where the fish were rising and took my fly eagerly. I tried below the dam, in the deep hole where sea trout lurk, and though I could see several great fellows lying on the gravel, they were sluggish and would pay no heed to my fly. On my return up brook, I could not resist casting into some choice pools where I had missed a fish on the

way down. When I looked at my watch and discovered that I had been away for three hours, my heart sank and I hurried back.

I found him lying where I had left him, looking at the water and listening to its music. He looked up and gave me a smile when he heard my step.

“I’m afraid I’ve been away a long time, Dad.”

“It didn’t seem long; you have to take time to fish. Did you try the hole at the mouth of Miller’s Brook?”

“Yes, I got seven or eight good ones in that pool.”

“Were they rising in the dam?”

“I took most of my catch there.”

“And the sea-trout hole below the dam?”

“Nothing doing, there were sea trout lying there, but they wouldn’t look at my flies.”

“Let’s see the fish.”

We took them out of the basket, commented on their size and colouring, and I told him, as far as I could remember, where I had caught each of the bigger ones and what fly I had used. After we became fly fishermen, Father always swore by a dark Montreal or a Parmachene Belle, and I, his disciple, employed these two largely. Years of experience have taught me that, if one had to choose two flies from many, they are the best for Nova Scotian waters. For some years before our last excursion, Father had become interested in tying flies, and had made hundreds of them in the long winter months. The children of the neighbourhood, knowing his hobby, used to bring him bright-coloured feathers from the hen coops. He classified all these flies, gave them strange names out of his own fancy, and bequeathed them to me, as my share of the patrimony.

I made a fire at the brook’s edge, boiled our kettle, and we ate our lunch in the sunshine and talked of fishing together in other days. We spoke of our silent little lake hidden in the hills above Boylston, the place we had loved best of all, and wondered if anyone went there or if it lay lonely and forlorn.

“It’s a pity you’re not young and strong, Dad! Now that I’m earning and Fred is established, we could have had such larks.”

“It’s a pity, but we all have to grow old, and I’m not sorry I’m almost through; I’ve had all the fun out of life I could. Moreover, I’ll keep on living in you.”

“Do you think there’s a future life, Dad?”

“Who knows! I’ve preached it all my life, but who knows! If there is some place of immortality, I hope there’ll be a pleasant meadow and a stream that sings along like this one.”

Then I remember I told him the story of the golf addict, who arrived in hell and was conducted by Satan to a marvellous golf links with close-shaven greens and supplied with a caddy and a bag of clubs. When the enthusiastic golfer, overjoyed at his reception, was ready to drive off from the first tee, he asked Satan for a ball.

“Ah,” said the devil, “there are no balls, that’s the hell of it.”

Dad took his pipe from his lips and laughed heartily.

“I suppose,” he said, “if the story were told of a fisherman, there’d be no flies in hell. Well, laddie, if you and I get to heaven and find no fishing gear, we’ll snatch some feathers from an angel’s wing and tie a fly in the shadow of a golden wall.”

We packed up our things and moved slowly homeward, Father limping along. He had one more try at the pool below the bridge. He tied on a dark little Montreal and at the first cast hooked the biggest trout of the day, which I easily landed in the net. Surely some kindly earth spirit urged that trout to rise, for the catching of it filled the old man with complete happiness.

“Now we can go home,” he said. “This has been a perfect day.”

It was but a few months after this happy excursion that my brother called me on the long-distance telephone to say that Father was dead. He had gone to bed well and happy, slept peacefully, and never wakened. His sleeping into death recalled to my mind a phrase from Cicero’s *De Senectute*, “What if it be but a dreamless sleep!”

I went down to his funeral on a chill, windy, cheerless November day. The local man who dug the graves was sick or away, so another man and I did the work. It gave me great pleasure to perform this simple office for my father, for I have always abhorred undertakers and professionally sad people, who deal with the dead we love. Their bodies should be touched and prepared for the grave only by loving hands.

My father was not a great success as a minister, though the poorest people always loved him: he was a good man, but restraint and enforced inhibitions irked him. He might have made a jolly old monk in some monastery of the Middle Ages, for along with his religious and humanitarian

instinct he loved eating, drinking, good stories, and hearty laughter. He was Rabelaisian. Preaching, making sermons and prayers bored him; he loved fishing, trotting horses, and full-blooded people. Socially, he never made friends with the right people; Jews he fraternized with because he thought them a race endowed with a genius for religion and worthy of respect; the livery-stable keeper of the village was always his first crony, for, no matter how poor we were, he always kept a good trotting horse. How well I remember the succession: Palmer, Evangeline, and Israel Junior, who could trot the mile in two twenty-five. In winter, he used to race his horse against others on the ice of the harbours, and in summer on the hard-pounded sand beaches that, banked with the curve of the shore, made perfect race tracks. For these misdemeanours, some old Christian frump was always up in arms against him and running with tales to my mother, who led a worried life. He was intelligent, but his college training had been dreary and depressing: a little Greek, some church history, exegesis, and the lives of the fathers. He had asked for bread and been given a stone. He had been taught nothing of literature, music, or pictures, or the marvellously beautiful things men have made, though he had every capacity for their appreciation and enjoyment. He had been taught that it was wasteful of time and well-nigh wicked to read novels and poetry. He sought a draught of the sweet juices of life and found his mouth full of bitterness. Neither precisian nor puritan, loving life vigorously, like his Master, he sought, loved, and made friends with the poor and lowly. He was a good fisherman and a good fellow, and I am mighty glad I had him for a father.

He slept peacefully into death, dreaming not at all of golden streets, gates of pearl, and angels chanting hallelujahs, but rather of singing brooks, little lakes half full of lily pads hidden in the hills, and of sleek trotting horses. If there be a hereafter and I achieve eternal life, I shall seek him out first of all—no, that will not be needful—he will be waiting for me at the gate, and he will take me by the arm and lead me to some shining meadow where he has found a trout stream and kept it secret from all the angels.

CHAPTER IX

WAR TIME

For anglers and meek, quiet-spirited men are free from those high, those restless thoughts, which corrode the sweets of life.—IZAAK WALTON.

I was in Pittsburgh at the Carnegie Institute of Technology when the war broke out to carry me off from quiet and peaceful pursuits to four years of restless worried life in which I had no time to fish and scarcely time to think of fishing. From my father I had inherited a love for horses, and, while at Oxford, I had joined a yeomanry regiment, the King's Colonials, now the King Edward Light Horse, so that I might have a horse to ride for nothing. But one seldom gets something for nothing in this world. After three years' service, I found myself by a strange stroke of fortune a second lieutenant, and on my return home, from England, I was made a major in a newly formed cavalry regiment, the Twenty-eighth New Brunswick Dragoons. I was carried on the reserve when I went to Pittsburgh, and so the war enmeshed me.

I caught no trout in war-time; in fact, as we say succinctly in Nova Scotia, "I never wet a line," but one night as I lay in a little hut on a branch of the Somme, I smelled a strangely pleasant and familiar odour. Presently, my orderly brought me a fine browned trout for my supper. When I asked him where he had got it, he became very mysterious and showed me, by his attitude and indirect answers, that I had asked an unfair question, an answer to which might incriminate others. It was bad form in those campaigning days to question a cook closely about unexpected and unusual rations: they had simply dropped down from heaven and been gathered as manna. Once, the same orderly, Pierre Surette, who had brought me the trout, offered me a roast loin of young goat for supper. It was astonishingly good, and I asked no questions but took it for granted that there was a shortage of beef and that the British Government was issuing rations of goat meat. Pierre is a barber by profession, and we have many a long talk over war days together as he snips off my hair in the summer; he is a better barber than a cook, but he redeemed his lack of skill as a culinary artist by his skill as a salvager of rations. There is a long sad story in connection with that loin of roasted goat but the gist of it is this: We once entered a village named Bien Villers just as the inhabitants were leaving and found the Irish Guards there. On the third

day of our occupancy, the mayor of the village turned up from somewhere and presented me with a bill for twenty thousand francs, claiming that my men had broken into and looted the houses. I said to him: "My dear man, you know that the Irish Guards are notorious thieves; I sympathize deeply with you for the necessity of entertaining such rascals in your beautiful village; beyond a doubt they have caused all the damage." I suppose the colonel of the Guards said something like this to him: "You know what you can expect of the Canadians, who are quite devoid of morals. Nothing is safe when they are about unless it is spiked down or padlocked."

My heart sank a little, however, when, on inspecting the bill more closely, I saw an item, "Madame Poirier's young goat 100 francs." I had a vivid picture of Pierre, bayonet in hand, stalking a young billy in the twilight among the apple trees of Madame Poirier's orchard.

But to return to the well-browned trout that I ate with such delight on the banks of the Somme and which is my only excuse for telling this part of my story. I soon found out where the fish were coming from. There were deep clear pools in the streams that flowed from the hills into the Somme, and from these pools my men were getting their fish, not with rod and line, but in the poacher's way, by bombing them out with explosives. They used to throw a couple of Mills bombs into a pool, kill every fish therein, and gather them up as they floated to the surface. It was the last word in destructive methods of fishing, but I had not the heart to stop them. They had little enough to eat at times, dear gallant lads that they were, and had neither rod nor line to take fish with, decently. At last, when one of them was wounded by a fragment of bomb which he had thrown and which exploded before it hit the water, the brigadier got word of our poaching and issued an order against it.

It was truly wonderful how many hares and partridges were about our lines in late summer and autumn. Home and nesting habits must have been strong in these creatures, to keep them for four years in the place of their birth, in the midst of the noise and havoc of war. But I suppose they got used to the racket and thought it the normal state of affairs, if they thought at all. Our men on leave in the quiet of England often could not sleep because uproar and confusion had been established in their minds as the usual. The men used to knock over these hares and partridges with rifle bullets, and many a savoury stew was cooked in the shelter of a trench. This sport, however, came to a nominal end, by an order from headquarters, when one of my soldiers almost bagged a brace with one shot, a plump partridge and a shining young imperial staff officer inspecting the lines.

Only one other incident of the war has a vague connection with fish or fishing. When we were in the Neuville Vitasse sector in front of Arras, the commander of the artillery behind us moved up two eighteen-pounders alongside our headquarters, so that we might have some immediate protection against enemy tanks that threatened to attack. Tanks are *bêtes noires*, a nightmare to the infantryman; he has no adequate protection against them for they are impervious to rifle bullet and Mills bomb. In that sector, the men in our front line were on the face of the ridge facing the enemy, a position that could not be reached by our guns in the rear. Though the enemy never attacked with tanks in that area, our observers had reported for a fortnight a steady movement of black objects in the enemy's rear, which their imagination translated into the most hateful and dreaded instruments of our opponents. The two eighteen-pounders had been brought up at our insistent request, and placed within two wooden huts about three quarters of a mile in front of our most advanced gun positions in the railway embankment. They were well camouflaged and were fired only at night through a screen. However, the enemy spotted them, and one hot afternoon sent over two low-flying planes to observe the shots of their artillery on this new advanced gun position. There were no planes of ours about to chase off these low-flying spotters, and as it was a slack afternoon, I went down into the dugout, got my rifle, and indulged for a while in one of my favourite sports, sniping at aeroplanes. They were about fifteen hundred feet up, swinging, flying fast, swerving. Though I could often distinctly see both pilot and observer, I fired round after round, till my rifle was hot and my shoulder sore, without the slightest apparent result. I shot above them, below them, and well in front, as one fires at a flying duck, but not a feather flew.

In the midst of this minor excitement, I saw a fresh-faced young officer advancing along the trench toward me. He was so trim and clean and buoyant, so different from our hard-bitten men of the infantry, that my heart warmed to him at once. He recalled the almost forgotten days of the parade ground, with the regiment standing clean and steady as a rock. He introduced himself as Treblecock of Toronto, and informed me that the section of advanced guns on our left was part of his battery. He had left Canada early in the war, joined the English artillery, and risen to the rank of major. He had come up from the battery behind the railroad embankment, when he suspected that the enemy's planes were trying to spot his guns: his men were sheltered in a deep dugout underneath the hut, that hid guns and piles of shells, and there was little or nothing he could do on his arrival. The two range-finding planes swooped lower and lower, signalling back the

shots to their artillery: their shells came nearer and nearer to the hidden guns.

He was so frank and ingenuous and I was so taken with him that I asked him to come down into our dugout and have a talk. He agreed; my orderly boiled us a pot of tea, and we sat for a while drinking tea, smoking, and chatting. He was a graduate of the University of Toronto, interested in education, and we discussed the relative merits of the Canadian universities. Somehow, we got on to trout fishing, and, to my delight, I found him an enthusiast. It was his ambition some day to bring out a new edition of *The Complete Angler*, which he thought the most satisfying book in the world. He sang the glory of trout streams in the hills of northern Ontario, and I countered with tales of the beauty of Nova Scotia's lakes and still-waters. He boasted of great brown trout that lie in the swirls below the rocks of the streams he loved, but I pointed out that salmon and sea trout, kings of their respective tribes, could never by any chance reach the rivers of Ontario as they did those of Nova Scotia. We discussed fishing gear, flies, rods, and their famous makers. He was indeed a handsome young man with a gentle soul—just the type for a true fisherman—I should have known it by intuition when I first saw him in the trench.

“The shack is on fire,” called someone from the trench, and Treblecock and I rushed up from the dugout to find that the enemy's guns had got on and that the building was in flames.

“Fourteen of my men are in that dugout: I've got to get them out,” said Treblecock, and he sprang out of the trench and ran quickly down the slope toward the blazing building. It was a dangerous situation, the enemy's shells were detonating everywhere about the hut, and some five hundred eighteen-pounder shells, piled near the entrance to the dugout, began to explode from the heat of the fire. The men down below were in no danger from the enemy's guns, but were afraid to leave their shelter because of the intermittent detonation of their own piled shells. Treblecock crept close to an old ramp, called to his men and encouraged them to dash out. Out they popped, like rabbits from a warren invaded by ferrets, to seek safety in a near-by trench. We counted them, one, two, three, four—till the fourteenth and last man was safely out. Then Treblecock stood up to return—it was impossible to get the guns out of that blazing, explosive building—and at that very moment an enemy's shell detonated near him and a jagged piece of shell case caught him in the stomach. Some of my men and his own gathered him up and carried him to the ambulance that always stood in the sunken road behind Mercatel. As we shoved his stretcher carefully into the

ambulance, I gave the usual parting salutation, "*Bonne chance*," and he smilingly returned the appropriate reply, "Cheerio! I'm all right," but I learned from the ambulance man next day that he died before he got to the railway embankment. Many a time I have thought over my half hour's acquaintance with that gentle fisherman met by chance amid the confusion of war. His personality made a distinct impression upon me and I felt that I knew him better than some people I have talked with year after year. It is too bad that one so young, fine, gentle, and courageous, did not get back to feel again the thrill of the first rising trout in the swift run of some brown Ontario river.

It was near this place that old Whitmore, afterward killed at Amiens, and I used to creep out on moonlight nights of June, to listen to the nightingales in Agny wood. We used to lie on the dry crisp grasses at the foot of some giant half-shattered tree, gaze up at the stars, and listen to their full-throated singing against the staccato crack of field artillery and the dull rumble of distant heavy guns. I used to imagine that it was an orchestra of flutes and violins against intermittent rumbling drums.

CHAPTER X

PEACE

We have had a most pleasant day for fishing and talking and are returned home both weary and hungry; and now meat and rest will be pleasant.—IZAAK WALTON.

The war was over: I came home tired and worn-out, obsessed with one idea—I wanted rest, quiet, and peace; I wanted never to speak again without necessity or to give or receive an order. I wanted to live in the woods, and be alone along my streams. A puny hand that reached up and clutched my forefinger warmed in my heart a hope, but even that faded in the memories of the war. “Poor little chap,” I thought, “he, too, may march away proudly in twenty years, to fight in a horror that some perverted madman has initiated.” What sorry hopes has poor humanity—War or Famine—to preserve a foothold on a soon overcrowded world! “Still,” I thought, “I can perhaps teach him to be a fisherman and to love brooks that brawl down from the hills.”

Before the war, I had built a little bungalow at Lake Annis, in southern Nova Scotia, the centre of a splendid fishing country for both trout and salmon. After the war, I bought fifty acres more of rough land with a half mile of river front and built a studio of rough boards from an abandoned lumber camp across the lake. I made these boards and timbers into big rafts, waited for a fair wind, and rafted them across the lake and imagined myself Robinson Crusoe or the heroic father in *Swiss Family Robinson*. Lake Annis soon became the centre of my life, the place of all my real interests. The placid calm of the lake, the song of running brooks was medicine to my sick mind; I began to believe in the world again and I went back to my work in Pittsburgh knowing that I could always be home for the June fishing.

Let me tell you something of my lakes and streams. First there is the little Salmon River—there are innumerable Salmon rivers in Nova Scotia, some known simply as Salmon River, some as French Salmon River—that leaves the northern end of Lake Annis, to flow in a semicircle of ripples and still-waters, till it is swollen in Boni’s Meadow by Burnt Brook and Three Branch Brook—both famous trout streams—and later by the brook from Lake Edward and Lot’s Lake near the old mill. Under the plank bridge it swoops, to dance for half a mile behind Harry’s and Elmer’s wood lots. In Cossar’s Meadow, it is deep and sullen, till it comes to the log bridge where

it begins to smile and ripple again. Harry and I always put in our canoe by that old bridge, where the twisted maple stoops from the bank. Fishing from a canoe, when an expert like Harry wields the stern paddle, is a joy and delight. We drift along without a sound; first I cast over the deep water under the fringe of alders where the little brook from my land makes in. If a fish rises, he stops the canoe dead with a silent twist of his paddle; a ripple tells him that a trout is moving; his interpretation of little signs on the water is uncanny. I cast into every pool, till we come to the short, sharp rapid called Lannigan's Falls. Now Harry takes his pike pole, and we run the rapid, checking and fishing as we go. Sometimes we take our best fish in the midst of swirl and foam. Below Lannigan's the river splits into several channels, and flows lazily between grassy banks under which fat trout love to lie. Still farther on, the right bank rises to a little knoll, covered with white birches, where some lumbermen built a shack long ago: here we always pull in for lunch though Harry stoutly maintains that we should not, as noon is the best time of the day for fishing that meadow. But I want to look around and enjoy the glory of it all and he yields to my persuasion.

We beach the canoe and Harry makes a tiny fire—never win the scorn of a woodsman by making a big fire in the woods—and boils the kettle. He is the best of companions and knows all the lore of wood and stream; he lost his boy Arthur at Ypres, and that draws us very close together. Forty years ago, he came as a pioneer to Lake Annis to make a home in the forest. A bankrupt mill owner gave him a hundred acres of forest land in lieu of years of back pay. He had nothing but his great hands, a stout back, an axe, and a crowbar, and with these he attacked a great ridge of birch and maple. The tops of the trees wavered, bowed, and fell as his axe rang; with infinite labour and patience he burnt and dug out the stumps and piled the stones into lines of fence, straight as an arrow. After years of labour he cleared a farm and built house and barn. He married the young schoolteacher and they had three children, two boys and an invalid girl. Arthur, the eldest, was close to his heart, and him he taught everything he knew of nature. Then came the madman's war, reaching its foul tentacles even into the green forests of remote Lake Annis, to draw into its maw the brave and generous-hearted. Arthur went first of all, and was killed by the blast of a shell, as he carried a great beam on his shoulders across a cobbled roadway. Harry's second boy is off in the States: his wife has died since the war; he is alone with the invalid girl who sits by the window in her rocking chair all day long watching for a stray passing team. But Harry is not beaten, he still carries his head proudly: he did not cut down the forest and clear out stumps and stones for nothing, though with Arthur the great light went out of his life.

Sometimes, when we are together about his place, he will say, pointing to an ox yoke or some farming implement, "Arthur made that; no one could make them like Arthur"; and then, with a great sigh, "I wanted to go after they killed Arthur, but I couldn't leave the women folk alone." Though he has had no schooling, I have never known any man more observant, more appreciative of nature, or more truly wise. Association with Harry makes me more and more suspicious of what we college-bred call education.

After lunch, we fish the lower still-waters almost to Pleasant Valley and then turn homeward. I walk round the portage, while Harry poles the canoe up the rapids, no easy task for a greenhorn, but for him a matter of ease and speed. I get home in the twilight, and as I step into the deep shadow of towering beeches about the bungalow, I hear a shrill little voice, "How many did you catch to-day, Dad? Let's see!"

CHAPTER XI

BONI'S MEADOW

Trust me, scholar, I have caught many a trout in a particular meadow, that the very shape and the enamelled colour of him, hath been such as hath joyed me to look on him.—IZAAK WALTON.

Boni's Meadow is my favourite near-by fishing place; I can go there, fish the pools, and be back home in three hours. The name in itself is alluring, for no one in the country knows who Boni was, or whence he came or when he owned the meadow. I am fortunate in the names of all my fishing places, Boni's Meadow, Burnt Brook, Three Branch Brook, Dean's Brook, Black Water, Brazil Lake Brook, Clearwater Lake, Lake Jesse, Lot's Lake. To get to Lot's Lake, one has to pass Obb's Camp, and I never go there without getting a thrill out of the mystery of that name. Who was the original Obb? Surely a mighty man, with such a mouth-filling name, or a fuzzy-haired giant who sprang out of the spruces to catch wandering children!

The best fishing in Boni's Meadow is at early morning or toward evening. I usually go there of an evening after I have potted about all day reading, writing, cutting wood, or hoeing the garden. Toward three in the afternoon, I begin to get restless though I have promised myself to be virtuous, to work all day and forswear the pleasures of fishing. Furtively, I collect rod, creel, landing net, and fly-book and say casually to my wife, as if the idea had just struck me: "I guess I'll go up and fish Boni's Meadow; don't wait for me for dinner." She smiles a kind of wise Mona Lisa smile, the kind of indulgent smile that women adopt toward children, as if she had known all along that I would be led away by temptation. I can drive a mile in my car, as far as the little red schoolhouse, and I park in the school yard: it is great to have a car waiting for you when you are tired at the end of the journey. I get through the wire fence, go down a short wooded trail to the railroad, and walk north along the track for a hundred yards, past Jones's to the big gate that opens into his pasture fields and wood lots. Then comes half a mile through the wood, a half mile that seems unendurably long, because, once started, I am so anxious to reach the meadow. In the deep boggy place, where a flock of young grouse often whirrs up at my approach, Jones, the section hand, has thrown some sleepers, so that I can cross dry-

shod if I am careful. I believe most fishermen hate to wet their feet before the song of reel and line begins. If it is late in the season, the roadside beyond this swamp is lined with laden blueberry bushes, and I snatch some clusters as I hurry along and eat them from my palm. I am reminded of those in the Old Testament story who as a test of keenness lapped and those who stooped to drink. Then my ears catch the music of the run, where the brook tumbles over rocks and through a broken dam, to a pool flecked with foam and bubbles, still hidden by alders and young spruces. Half running, I catch a glimpse of blue water below the big maple that bends over the stream. It is hard work casting into that pool from the lower end because of the low-hanging maple branches, but one can wriggle through the bushes and let his fly trail down with the current. Once, I hooked a very big fish by that method, but abandoned it forever after because I so nearly lost him in weeds and bushes.

When I am near the pool, with its water foaming, swirling, and bubbling, I begin to fuss with my rod; it takes an endless time—two minutes in reality—to get it together, fasten the reel firmly, loop the line through the leaders, and adjust the cast. I am glad that I am alone, so that no one can cast into the pool before me. Then comes a moment of real pleasure; the moment of selecting a fly! I open my book and examine my treasures: they are all so well made, so beautifully coloured, so dainty and seductive that it is hard to make a choice. I usually end by selecting a tiny *Parmachene Belle*, a fly that is good in our waters at all seasons. Into this pool I cast and nearly always raise and hook a fish on the first or second trial. If he be a big fellow, I play him a little and land him in my net; if he be medium or small I jerk him out and watch him flop for a moment in the grass before popping him into my creel. Playing a fish in mid-stream and stooping on the margin to net him frightens the other fish in the pool, but a trout taken out quickly without the net seems hardly to disturb the other fish. Below this pool is a gravelly bar over which the water goes softly at a depth of three or four inches. I wade out on this bar and feel for the first time the cold water about my feet; I have long since abandoned waders and rubber boots; they are heavy to carry, hopeless to walk in, and after a few weeks' use, always leak; I fish in rough, low Oxfords and am ready to go through anything to my waist. In my car I have extra pairs of trousers, socks, and shoes, so that I can change if I am cold at the end of my fishing. From the gravelly bar, I can cast into deep water, downstream along a fringe of alder bushes. In July and August, trout love to lurk in the shade of lily pads or alder bushes, that, rooted on the bank, reach far out over the depths of a pool. Here I usually take a fish or two, and then, reeling in, walk down another wood road toward the meadow

proper. Halfway down is a deep hole by an old spruce, where one may take a trout with a short cast, if he wishes to run the risk of fouling his fly. If I resist the temptation of that pool and follow the wood road, I come first to a little gray shelter shack, built by farmers who with patient, slow-moving oxen travel many miles to cut the meadow hay in these forest glades in late August. Below the shack is a pole bridge, near the juncture of the Salmon River and Three Branch Brook.

As I come out from the trees and stand on the knoll above the pole bridge, the glory of the meadow suddenly bursts upon me. There is a flat expanse of perhaps twenty acres, covered with coarse yellow meadow grass. It is full of sunshine, the breeze ripples and darkens it in spots, and shadows of little swift-moving clouds chase one another across its surface. On all sides is the forest, solid ranks of spruce and fir and gleaming birches, with outposts of alder clumps. In a crooked thread through this golden meadow trails the deep blue still-water. I always expect to see nymphs running through the grasses or slim white-skinned girls flitting from one clump of alders to another. I squint up my eyes to see things less sharply, and try to imagine that I am a young Greek in the days when the world was young and dryads haunted wood and grove. There is absolute silence; the water makes no sound here. High up in the sky a hawk circles, a black spot against the blue.

Then I begin to cast, wading through meadow grass above my knees, though there is little chance to take a fish, till I come to the pool where a little meadow brook makes in from the northward. There the good fishing begins and increases in quality to the point near the head where the still-water turns in a sharp Z, and the water deepens among lily pads and clumps of alders that hang from the banks.

One June evening, I came to the lily-pad pool and cast in carelessly before my leader was thoroughly soaked and softened. I was fishing with two flies, a method I used as a beginner but have long since abandoned. At the end of my leader was a Silver Doctor; higher up, a Montreal. I dropped my flies lightly, and trailed them with a dancing motion along the edge of the lilies; in a flash, a great trout came savagely and took my Silver Doctor. I had no sooner struck him than he dashed down the pool with such a jerk that he snapped my brittle leader in two. Perhaps I had overlooked a bit of frayed gut. I was deeply chagrined, and with a half-hearted cast, dropped the Montreal, the end of the leader trailing, over the water from which the big fellow had risen. Before I knew it, I had hooked the mate of the first fish. He was a big heavy fellow, and, to avoid my first disaster, I gave him plenty of

line, whereupon he ran under the lilies and tangled my line in their strong stalks. He was well hooked and the lilies held him fast. It took me ten anxious minutes to get him clear, dip him up in the net, and hear him thumping in my basket, but he was well worth the trouble. In and about these pools, I can always take fifteen or twenty trout of an evening.

With my creel half filled, the fever to fish suddenly leaves me. There is a dry grassy mound near a clump of alder outposts, where I can lie and watch twilight creep over the meadow. The sun is getting low behind the western ridge, a beam of light pierces through an opening between spruce trunks and catches on the thick foliage of a young beech, gray stubs, remnants of a forest fire, are silhouetted against the sky. It is warm and balmy; frogs begin to whistle. I light a cigarette and lie there absolutely happy, thanking God for the man who discovered tobacco for fishermen. Then in the midst of this beauty so far removed from the racket of the city, it seems impossible to believe that there is such a thing as evil in the world. Yet, even here, I cannot get it out of my head that there are some people who radiate an uncanny evil and malicious influence. Malicious tongues are, perhaps, the greatest evil in the world and are often wagged most fondly by those who consider themselves virtuous because they have inhibited that which is natural. Good and evil, I am sure, have nothing to do with the great force that animates all things, the great force that I feel throbbing beneath me as I lie stretched out on Boni's Meadow. This great force which drives nature of which we are a part, just as much as that hawk hovering about the pool for an unwary trout, is beneficent for the most part but quite indifferent to us and to what we call good and evil. Good and evil only exist between Smith and Jones, between you and me; they are abstractions of our own making. The theologians have confused and befogged us; they have identified good with the life-impelling force, called it God, and made it entirely beneficent and omnipotent. Logic therefore compelled them to create the devil, a power responsible for all wickedness and disease. Here they fell into a hopeless dilemma from which they have never extricated themselves. Why has not the beneficent force God, if omnipotent, destroyed the evil that relentlessly fastens upon innocent children? No, the great life force of nature booms along, regardless of us, regardless of good or evil, which are purely of our own invention. God is not a wrathful old man upon a mountain desiring endless praise and foolish adoration, but rather the sum total of all human idealism, æsthetic and moral desires, and the craving for perfection. Whence these desires arise in the wondrous creatures we call men and women, neither you nor I can say.

Lying in Boni's Meadow as the sun's disk touches the top of the spruces, it is easy to fool one's self into believing in a beautiful world, where all is

made well and all things move beautifully. Then the hawk, that has been long hovering, darts from the blue, splashes in the pool, and rises with a wriggling piece of silver in his claws; the owl sitting so silently on the gray stub is on the outlook for a covey of young partridges; a trout rises and sucks down a dragon-fly that has skimmed the pool too closely; nature is preying upon itself, and we, a part of nature, are involved in the wholesale destruction and re-creation.

I get up and look around, the hunter instinct revived. Have I time to try Lone Pine Pool on Burnt Brook, the best pool of all? Night hawks and other night-feeding birds are now flitting over the meadow in swift circles, but there is still an hour of afterglow. I shall get a friendly scolding for overstaying my leave, but I will risk it.

Without a canoe, it is impossible to cross these meadow still-waters that are eight or ten feet deep with soft muddy bottoms; so I thread my way among the alder clumps till I hear the brook at the head, and then, turning sharply to the left, cross with water about my knees, where an old wood road dips to either bank. Then comes a stretch of meadow and a deep tributary brook that must be crossed by balancing on three slim poles. The wood begins again; I follow a dried brook bottom for a hundred yards, till I find the old lumber trail leading along the ridge that forms the watershed between Burnt and Three Branch Brook. This I follow till I can see the conical-shaped spruce on the bare hillside, and, leaving the trail, I go straight up the hill, top it, and, descending, plunge into a matted thicket of alders. The alders grow thick in the valley of Burnt Brook and the opening to a cow path is hard to find. I push in and, by searching right and left, get on the path and always come unawares upon the brook that, crystal clear, creeps silently over its mossy pebbles. I wade the brook without a sound, and, keeping well back, crawl down in the shadow of the alders to within eight feet of the pool's head. I do not begin fishing at once, but light a cigarette and sit down by a rotted pine stump to watch the fish rise and enjoy the evening beauty of the place.

At the head of the pool, which is only a hundred feet long and perhaps thirty feet broad, is a lowering lone pine tree that never looks altogether green and healthy. I suspect that there is too much water about its roots in spring and fall; our pines grow best on light, sandy upland soil. At the lower end, the pool narrows to a patch of water-lily leaves. Trees and alders with crinkly olive-green leaves and crooked stems surround it, making deep black shadows: in this evening glow there is only a streak of light down the pool's

centre. There is a good chance to cast from the western bank, though if I strike and miss a fish, I nearly always foul my fly in the bushes.

No one fishes this pool but myself, for no one seems aware of its existence, except a farmer's boy who showed it to me years ago. Now he is married and too busy to fish, and the pool belongs to me alone. Last summer I revealed my secret to a wise man, a philosopher, who was visiting me, and was half sorry for the revelation. For a little I felt toward him as Captain Kidd may have done toward those who helped him sink his treasure shafts on Oak Island. I considered his annihilation, but, remembering that he was a mere child in the woods, I knew he could never find my pool again.

Now there is scarcely any light in the sky, only a glow of crimson and yellow beneath a patch of apple-green. I take from my book a white-winged Coachman and replace my worn Parmachene Belle. The pool is full of feeding trout of medium size, and as fast as my fly touches the water a fish rises, is hooked, and in a minute flops and rattles in my creel. First, I fish the upper end, where the brook makes in; when the fishing slackens there, I creep along the bank to the lower end and trail my fly along the lilies, where there is a good chance to cast from a smooth, grassy turf. I always hook a couple of big fellows that have been lying under the lilies. Suddenly, the fish stop rising; they have grown tired of my fly or are through feeding for the night.

Lone Pine Pool is one of the most extraordinary and prolific still-waters I have ever fished, for I have never gone there without taking at least twenty trout. It is the last of the still-waters, and as the summer progresses, the trout, working upstream toward the cool water of the forest brook, keep the pool continuously stocked.

It is high time to be off home, for slight paths through brakes and ferns are hard to follow in a half light. I go down the still-water a little, and cross it on the submerged trunk of an old maple that has fallen in the stream, plunge through the thicket of alders and strike briskly along the ridge, till, having made a complete circle, I meet the brook again at the point where I first put my rod together. Again the wood road and the swamp bridged with sleepers, and I find my car waiting for me and I am home. As I look up through the beeches, I see that the sky is full of a multitude of burning stars—I never notice the stars in Pittsburgh—and that the Milky Way is glowing like a dull nebula. Some dinner has been saved for me, and a fire crackles on the hearth.

CHAPTER XII

BRAZIL LAKE BROOK

I envy not him that eats better than I do; nor him that is richer, or wears better clothes than I do: I envy nobody but him, and him only, that catches more fish than I do.—IZAACK WALTON.

In the early morning, just after sunrise, I take my fishing gear in one hand, sling my canoe on my shoulder, and go down to the lake. The canoe is light but broad of beam, for Arch built it for me a few winters ago, just as we had planned it. Arch, one of my best country friends, is rather trapper and hunter than fisherman; he can make anything in wood with a hatchet and jack-knife. He is proud and silent, quick to take offence but a prince of good fellows, a perfect companion in the woods. If he accepts a gift, he always gives a better one in return.

I slip my canoe in the water and put three big stones in the bow, so that she will trim with me in the stern should a head wind come up. I like to start early, for, in the morning, mists always lie on the face of the lake, and when sun and morning breeze strike them, they begin to writhe, twist, and float upward, dancing upon the waters like filmy sprites. No wonder the Greeks peopled wood and stream with nymphs and dryads; no wonder tired soldiers on the retreat from Mons saw in the smoke clouds above them a multitude of the heavenly host. One understands all this after an early morning on my lake. It is too bad that we have become so realistic and unimaginative, that we have lost all power of seeing earth spirits, unless we are sick with fever or worn with fatigue.

I paddle along briskly; though the shore is hidden, I keep my course by the breeze upon my cheek. Suddenly looms up Herron Hill, lately crowned with lofty maples and yellow birches; now that the wood-cutters have rudely handled it, a jungle of broken boughs and tree-tops, tangled with blackberry and raspberry bushes. Then comes the long shoal over which I paddle slowly, black rocks almost grazing the canvas. In the early spring, big trout lie along the edge of this shoal, to feed on the minnows that lurk for safety in shallow places, and one can get a good catch by trolling to and fro along its outer edge from cove to cove. Then comes on the right a deep reedy bay where ducks feed in September; a famous place for cranberries and high-bush blueberries. I paddle on, and come at last to the inlet, the mouth

guarded by wide patches of white and yellow lilies, through which the canoe drags slowly with a pleasant swishing sound. The inlet narrows; on either hand are broad flats covered with pitcher plants, where gray stubs of trees, killed by the annual overflow, stand up stiffly. Someone puts a plank or two in the dam of the outlet, so that there may be water for the grist mills in September, but this floods the flat lands and kills the trees. Thus, ever, beauty suffers through utility. Now, the bank is high and wooded on the right, and there is a grassy place, where a wood road strikes the still-water obliquely. It is one of my favourite retreats: I often lounge there on midsummer days. The wood road leads to a deserted lumber camp; the buildings have fallen down, but beams and timbers are sound. There I came years ago, when I was building the studio, to get boards, to make rafts, tow them downstream through the lilies and float them across the lake.

At last the water shoals, so that I can take my canoe no farther. I step out on the meadow and put together my rod, for the first pool is just above my canoe's stopping place, where the brook makes its first swirl. The trout are never plentiful in the lower part of this brook, but they are of good size, dark but well coloured. The next pool is a hundred yards farther on, and here I have to stand well back in the laurels, for the deep part is on my side. The bank is so steep and the laurels so high that I cannot see my fly, but strike at the splash of the rising trout. Two hundred yards above this is a deep round pool surrounded by thick woods that make casting difficult. It looks an ideal place for fishing, but I have never had much luck there, though report says that big trout lie in it. The place always depresses me, for it is dull and sombre; the evergreens shut out the sunlight, no place for fairies—rather, a rendezvous for witches. Beyond this great pool, the brook meanders from Little Brazil through five miles of thick forest. No one ever fishes it, for the undergrowth is dense; what giant trout must lie undisturbed in those wooded still-waters!

I usually get back to the canoe with a dozen good trout in my creel and paddle to the old wood road from the lumber camp. The sun has dried the grasses by this time, so that I can stretch at length and munch whatever breakfast I have stuffed in my pocket. Afterward I smoke lazily and watch the sunlight on the water, or the wind squalls dusk the lily pads. Sometimes an owl or a big hawk wings heavily past me; out on the lake some loons are getting their breakfast, and giving long, mournful hoots as they rise from the depths.

Here I often put up a prayer for the dead that I have loved, a fine practice of the Roman Catholic Church, which we Protestants for some theological

quirk have illogically abandoned. I have no desire to hasten their release from cleansing fires, but merely to cherish their memories and to be not unmindful of them, when most happy. First I pray for the soul of my father, George Frederick Day, great-hearted fisherman and lover of horses; then for the soul of Ethel Clarke, a young girl long dead whom I scarcely knew; then for the gallant light-hearted Douglas, who perished mysteriously in this very lake; and for my old soldier friend Spurr, whom I found lying dead, but unmarked, in the slit trench before Neuville Vitasse; for the soul of Alpheus Marshall, pioneer shipbuilder, whom I admired as a boy and whom I think of as seated in his armchair in the morning sunlight reading the Psalms; for Ivan who fell at Amiens, and Whitmore who gave his life to save another, and for Frances Parry, bright spirit who died in the midst of her greatest usefulness. I do not think of these with sadness, for dying is nothing, and to be remembered with tenderness, immortality enough.

The mists are long since gone from the lake, and a strong breeze has come up from the westward, so that I need hardly paddle at all on the homeward voyage. I am at the bungalow before nine, to attend to some duties of the day.

CHAPTER XIII

SALMON FISHING

The Salmon is accounted the King of freshwater fish; and is ever bred in rivers relating to the sea, yet so high, or far from it, as admits of no tincture of salt, or brackishness.—
IZAACK WALTON.

Salmon fishing is a kind of postgraduate course to trout fishing. When one has caught a great many trout and has become convinced that he has mastered the art, his heart may turn for a little toward salmon fishing, though he never forgets his first love. Several years ago, I was infected with the virus. There are two good salmon streams near my bungalow at Lake Annis: the Tusket that rises in inland lakes and dashes through many white waters to the Atlantic, and the French Salmon River that flows out of the big lake at Maxwellton to Saint Mary's Bay.

I began by fishing the Tusket at Renarton, where the river rushes over a gravelly bar, to empty into a great lake. It is a famous pool but I had no luck. My gear was inadequate; I fished with a heavy trout rod and medium-sized reel, and moreover I had no skill in the art. A successful trout fisherman often makes the mistake of thinking he knows how to angle for salmon, whereas his knowledge may be totally inadequate. If one casts in a pool in which trout lie, the fisherman nearly always gets a sign that they are there. Perhaps it is a ripple on the water, the flick of a tail, or a half-hearted rise. Trout are voracious feeders and always on the lookout for a fly, except in the deep water of lakes. A salmon, on the other hand, will lie indifferent for hours while a fly is drawn over him, and then rise sharply, as if in a flash of anger. Such fishing takes endless patience; he is a lordly fish, one must pay court to him and kick one's heels in his anteroom for days on end. The most serious fault of the trout fisherman beginning this new sport is to fish too fast. Nothing maddens a salmon so much as to rise for a fly and have it drawn too quickly from him: his aristocratic sense of the fitness of things is apparently injured, for if he suffer such indignity he will sulk at the bottom of the pool the livelong day. For trout one strikes quickly with a turn of the wrist at the gleam or break, but many authorities advise never to attempt to strike a salmon lest the fly be drawn from him before he has got it in his mouth. My advice, however, to any fisherman who may read this book is to strike and strike hard when you feel his weight on your line—though not too

soon—and to drive the barb well into his jaw. There are a thousand ways in which you may lose him, and it is a great comfort to feel from the first of the battle that he is, at any rate, securely hooked.

No one seems to know why a salmon rises for the fly since it is a matter of pretty general agreement that he rarely, if ever, feeds in fresh water. There are two theories—either the fly awakens in him a memory of some luscious shrimp he had eaten in the sea, or he is bored and angered by the bright-coloured thing that keeps trailing across his nose, and rises in his dignity to destroy the annoyance.

Unaware of all these facts, I tried the pools at Gavels and the deep run above the iron bridge. I fished all summer without success, never hooking or even raising a single salmon though fishermen took fish in the pools above and below me. I was thoroughly piqued and almost determined to abandon so tiresome and profitless a sport.

Next summer, after an orgy of trout fishing, I again tried for salmon and had one success that sustained me. I was fishing the upper pool at Renarton, where, at the foot of a short still-water, the water rushes smooth and oily to form the rapid below. I put on a small Cinnamon Sedge, the best dry fly for salmon in our rivers, greased my leader with vaseline, dipped the fly in the paraffin preparation, and stepped out on the rocks to cast. I snapped my fly to and fro in the air a few times to dry it, then dropped it on the smooth swift water, and let it drift down with the current. I had been casting only two minutes when a big fish rose and rolled in the water within a yard of my toes. He had not seen my fly and was only amusing himself, but I was so overcome with excitement that I almost slipped off my rock into deep water. The salmon is an aristocrat; I actually felt as if that fish had risen in derision, looked me over, and snubbed me. With the visible evidence of fish in the pool, I cast with greater zest. For some minutes nothing happened; then a silvery mass rolled from the smooth sucking water, and my dry fly was gone. In my excitement, I struck with all my strength; my rod bent like a willow in the wind; it is a wonder I broke neither cast nor hook. Everything held, and I was sure after that strike that my fish was hooked securely. I did not know what I should do if he turned downstream into the boiling rapid: I had only seventy yards of line and, with the height of water, it would be impossible to follow him along the boulder-strewn bank. Luckily, he turned upstream and I let the reel sing as I struggled to the shore from the isolated rock on which I had been standing. Wet to my waist, I reached my gaff that I had left leaning against a bush. The salmon rushed up into the pool; I checked him, whereupon he darted straight for me and leapt clear of the

water. Had he jumped away from me I should probably have lost him, but by darting and jumping toward me, he gave himself plenty of slack. My gear held: he made three lesser jumps, but in ten minutes I reeled him in and had him gasping in the shallow water near my feet. Now came the critical moment! I was alone, I had never gaffed a salmon in my life, and it is no easy matter to support a rod in the left hand and wield a gaff in the right. I slipped the gaff noiselessly into the water, manoeuvred my fish until he was in a broadside position, then working the gaff cautiously along the bottom till it was well under him, I drove the point into his side with a sharp jerk and lugged him ashore kicking. After all, he wasn't a real full-grown salmon but only a grilse, as young salmon up to about six pounds in weight are called, but he was big enough to encourage me and whet my appetite for further sport.

It was in the next summer that I got to know Joe Charles and that my salmon-fishing career really began. Joe Charles is a full-blooded Micmac who lives in a little cabin he has built in the woods a mile below Hectanooga. He is a big fellow weighing two hundred pounds and standing six foot two in his stockings. His face is bronzed and handsome, his hair grizzled, he has a most engaging smile, and he is a devout hunter and fisherman. He is tireless, time means nothing to him, and he knows how to be silent. He has a great deal of useful knowledge in his head and thinks more clearly than most men. After a day spent with Joe or some of my backwoods friends, I cannot but think how much more interesting and intelligent they are than most of the college professors I know. Of course, the backwoodsman knows nothing of pictures and music and books—nor, as a matter of fact, do most people in cities, though they babble about them—but to tackle and solve an original problem, I believe that he is better fitted than many so-called educated people. A lot of our education does nothing but befog and apparently addle the brain. We laugh at Chinese education and go on with as musty a programme, because we are used to it. If I were a boy again I believe if I had my way I should go to neither school nor college but search the world over for some great-minded person with whom I might associate. A city dweller will criticize glibly a book, a picture, a symphony, about which he is entirely ignorant, substituting words he has picked up like a parrot, for feeling and knowledge, almost unaware, in his conceit, of his own folly. His knowledge is, for the most part, hackneyed, worn, tawdry, secondhand, but Joe Charles, on the other hand, never ventures an opinion about anything that he has not weighed for a long time and based upon real knowledge and personal observation. One day, for instance, Joe and I visited

a pool on the river and went down to the punt that we used for crossing. When I got my rod together and took out my fly-book, Joe said:

“We’d better fish the lower pool.”

“This is the best pool on the river, Joe.”

“No good fish this pool to-day.”

“Why, Joe?”

“No good fish here.”

“But why?”

For a long time he was loath to tell me, for the river men are his friends and he is loath to speak evil, but when I pressed him, he pointed to a little gray stick at my feet.

“That stick come from bottom of river last night, someone had net in here, salmon all gone or scared.”

I had not even seen the tiny gray stick, while, after a single observation, he had pieced together a whole story. When some great disaster happens such as the losing of a big well-hooked salmon, Joe bows his head, swears softly, and murmurs: “Is it possible! Is it possible!”

With Joe Charles I began to fish the French Salmon River. I used to drive over to Hectanooga at break of day, pick him up, and trundle down the river road. First we used to try Meuse’s Bridge, or Mayflower as some call it, and if there were no signs of fish there, go farther down to whip the pool at Melanson’s or the long pool near tide water, returning later in the day to Meuse’s Bridge or Indian Mound.

Indian Mound is a picturesque place and a likely looking pool, though I have never hooked a single fish there. It is so named because, on the bit of rising ground near the river, are the obvious remains of a Micmac village. It was here that the Indians shattered masses of flint carried from a distance—for there is no flint rock in that neighbourhood—and chipped the fragments into spear and arrow heads. The earth of the mound is full of flint chips. It was here in their favourite fishing place that they twisted hooks from the bones of birds and with lines of moose hide drew salmon from the pool.

At Meuse’s Bridge, I hooked my first big salmon. There we can drive the car almost to the water’s edge and park under an old apple tree that leans from a hayfield. Near by is a pile of bark and chip where river men have been peeling pulp wood, first-class material for a fire to boil our kettle. The

bridge itself is a rude affair of poles that farmers use in hauling hay from the meadow. At either end are masses of wild rose bushes among the rocks. Above the bridge, the river runs swift but smooth, to swirl under the abutments into the deep pool below, edged on the southern side with tall yellow reeds and on the northern by a crooked leaning maple and clumps of alders. Farther down, the pool widens into a still-water and river-lake.

Slightly below the bridge is a huge hardwood log that lies stranded among the yellow reeds. I stood on this log one late afternoon and cast into the pool toward the crooked maple, drawing my fly, a small Durham Ranger, slowly across the current. Joe was on the bridge coaching me. As my fly drifted down with the current through a little swirl a big fish rose short with a mighty splash and missed it. "Don't cast again," cried Joe, taking out his watch. "Now we wait twenty minutes." That is the Indian's rule for salmon fishing. We sat down on the stones and waited: it was the longest twenty minutes I have ever known. At the end of ten minutes I said to Joe: "Surely he's rested enough now." But he was firm and replied, "No, wait twenty minutes." He smoked his pipe and said nothing more: he is an artist at waiting patiently.

Presently, I was allowed to cast, and at the very first trial, I hooked my fish. He came clear of the water and we saw he was a big fellow, anywhere from fifteen to twenty pounds. After his first leap he sulked for a little and then began to thrash up and down, my line cutting the water like a knife's edge. Joe stoned him away whenever he came near the logs of the bridge's abutments. I stood on the log, my knees trembling, praying that I might land him. After what seemed an interminable time, the salmon made a sudden rush straight across the pool.

"Look out," cried Joe, "he's going to jump."

Sure enough, out of the pool flashed a flying mass of silver. I gave him all the slack I could. He leaped three feet clear of the water, turned over, flicked his shining tail, tore the hook from his mouth, and was gone. It was a moment of deep disappointment and humiliation, I almost burst into tears; no such calamity, it seemed, had ever before happened to me. I had made one terrible mistake and at the same time learned one unforgettable lesson about handling a big fish. I had not lowered my tip at the critical moment. When the great rush comes before the jump, the tip must be held high, the pole as nearly as possible perpendicular to the water. Then, when the salmon leaps, the fisherman must slam down his tip toward the water, since, in that way alone, with the great drag of the current on the line, can he give him slack quickly enough to allow for the sudden strain of his jump.

In spite of this disappointment and humiliation, I was at the lower pool at Melanson's shortly after daybreak next morning, when I hooked and landed a grilse. I had one thought in my mind: "Somehow, I must get a better rod and gear to handle big fish, for big fish I'm going to take." Presently, I noticed a young man fishing some two hundred yards above, his rod bending in a beautiful even curve, his fly dropping without any apparent effort on his part to the farther bank of the river. He attracted my attention because I saw that he had but a stump to the elbow for his left arm. "A soldier," thought I, "perhaps one of the Twenty-fifth." He came downstream toward me casting beautifully, the butt of his pole against his body, his right hand about two feet above the reel, employing the whip of the rod with a well-timed snap to straighten out the last yards of the line.

"You ought to have a better rod," he said as he got near. "You almost lost your grilse. Don't you want to buy this one?" It is curious how often desire and opportunity meet. I had been coveting the rod from the moment I saw it in action, but as I was in Nova Scotia where we still barter, I tried to simulate indifference. "It looks like a pretty good rod, but I can't afford to buy one this summer."

"I'm broke; I wouldn't sell, but I'm broke and it's near the end of the season. Try it."

I took his rod and cast out with it. It worked beautifully, though I could not cast as he did.

"What kind of a rod is it?"

"Green heart."

"Who made it?"

"I did."

"What's your name?"

"Melbourne Deveau."

Then I knew him as a famous salmon fisherman on the river and as a skilful workman who made rods for the best anglers in the country. I knew I had to have that rod.

"How much do you want for it?"

"It's worth twenty-five dollars but I'll sell it for twelve. I've got to have some money."

"Have you another tip?"

“No.”

“I’ll give you twelve if you make me a second tip.”

“Twelve fifty,” he said.

“All right. I haven’t got that much money on me. Can I take the rod now?”

He looked me over carefully.

“Pay me as much as you can and take the rod now and give me the rest when you come down for the tip.”

With the bargain completed we sat down on the grass to talk.

“I don’t see how you cast so well with one arm.”

“I’ve got to have a rod with a good snap in it and I rest the butt against my body. I can gaff my own fish, too, though it’s not so easy. When the fish is tired and reeled in close I hold the rod squeezed between my side and the stump of my left, and use the gaff in my right.”

“Did you get hit in the war?”

“No.”

And then he told me a little story that shows how far-reaching is the curse of things men make to kill one another in war.

“My father was in the States at the time of the Spanish-American War and joined some infantry regiment and went to Cuba. He got through all right, and when he came home here to Salmon River to get married he brought along for a souvenir a little shell that some gunner had given him. It used to stand on the mantelpiece in the parlour when I was a kid, and visitors used to pick it up and look at it when Dad talked about Cuba. After a while, Mother got tired of it on the mantel and threw it out and it stood on a beam in the barn. I used to play with it out there. One day, when I was ten, I pounded it hard on the barn floor, and it exploded and blew my arm off.”

On the late afternoon of the day I acquired my salmon rod, I was back at Meuse’s Bridge and there, above the bridge in the smooth oily run where the water goes sucking over patches of weeds, I hooked and landed a big salmon. I raised him with a Black Dose on my second cast, and after twenty minutes fight up and down the stream Joe drove the gaff into him and lugged him out. I have never had a greater thrill of satisfaction in my life than when I saw that great silver monster lie panting in the grass of the river bank.

CHAPTER XIV

DEAN'S BROOK

Nay, let me tell you, there be many that have forty times our estates, that would give the greater part of it to be healthful and cheerful like us, who, with the expense of little money, have eat and drunk, and laughed, and angled, and sung, and slept securely, and rose next day and cast away care, and sung, and laughed, and angled again; which are blessings rich men cannot purchase with all their money.—*IZAACK WALTON.*

After the fever and excitement of salmon fishing, I always go back to my trout streams. Salmon are temperamental fish; sometimes you may see a dozen great fellows in a clear pool, rubbing their bellies against the gravel or darting to and fro in the current; sometimes the river is full of playing fish that leap from the water or roll out to expose a silver side, and, though you whip every kind of fly you possess over them all day, not a rise will you get. Days like these are sources of disappointment and irritation to the fisherman, who sustains himself only by the expectation of that half-hour's thrill that comes with hooking a big fish. Trout fishing is, on the whole, more gratifying and restful: if there are trout in a pool, they will always rise to some kind of fly at some hour of the day.

So I go back to my trout streams, and most often to my favourite, Dean's Brook. In looking back over my narrative, I find it difficult to speak with more enthusiasm of this brook than of other streams I have loved. Perhaps, too, I have cloyed the reader with tales of trout always taken. Well, if you are a fisherman, you will understand that I have come home many times wet, cross, hungry, and with an empty creel. It is most fortunate, in life, that we remember vividly only pleasant and successful events and forget, or remember but dimly, our affronts, humiliations, and inglorious little cowardices.

To fish Dean's Brook, I get up betimes and in the fresh morning air drive in my car over a rough country road—only a road in name, for passing seems impossible—to Hectanooga, where I pick up Joe. He is always ready to go fishing, no matter what apparent duties are pending, and he requires no elaborate preparation. Sometimes he is not altogether sober—Joe has no escape through books or art, and drink is his method of illuminating life and escaping the tragedy of actuality—but an hour on the road and he is as right as a trivet. We leave the car and, after following down the railway a little,

plunge into the forest along a lumber trail that skirts the northern end of a big lake. Trees meet overhead; the woods are full of sweet balsam smells and strange rustlings. Joe, pipe in mouth, laden with basket, rods, and landing net, swings silently along, and I lumber behind him. We get our first glimpse of the brook where it swirls under a pole bridge we must cross, but we do not stop to fish there, for we are after big trout that in summer haunt the upper still-waters. Then, after another half mile of sweet-scented forest, we come to a great open barren that an old man has cleared for a sheep farm. Sometimes we meet this gray-bearded, silent old man, who every day of summer or winter, come rain or snow, trudges through the forest to tend his sheep, and on such a meeting I always think of Wordsworth's Michael and wonder whether this old man has an errant son, with whom he long ago began to build a sheepfold. Sheep blink at us in the level morning light and, with a stupid "Ba," dash off together, wagging their silly tails. We come to the old man's shack and broken barn and sheepfold, a place sadly overgrown with thistles.

"Halfway," says Joe, breaking silence for the first time. "Here I rest canoe when I carry in."

We push on over the barren, the sun getting hotter on our backs, and after a long time—wood miles seem twice as long as city miles—turn off to the right through a tangle of brakes and ferns. I am always astonished when Joe makes this turn, though I have visited Dean's Brook many times. We wade through a swamp and at last come to the Dean's Brook still-water just where the Long's Lake Brook enters it. Here lies Joe's canoe that he keeps there for me all through the fishing season. It is a dainty craft built by Joe himself, covered with green canvas and ribbed and timbered with light strong spruce. The broad still-water, unruffled by any breeze, is deep blue in the middle and dull gray under the shade of the forested banks. The morning light catches tree trunks and bushes, but has not yet touched the water. Except for some song sparrows calling to one another from the tree-tops, there is silence everywhere. Faint, scarcely perceptible lines on the water show that fish are moving in the pool; once in a while, one rises lazily to suck down a fly. I light a cigarette and stand still, enjoying the beauty of the place. Joe is as silent and inscrutable as a Chinese idol; he could stand half a day without speaking or moving. I wonder if he loves beauty. Whether he does or not, he fits into my mood; surely nothing is so desirable as a companion who understands and is silent. When I crush my cigarette deep into the damp mould, he begins to put together my rod, while I select the fly for the day. Before we launch the canoe, I begin to cast from the bank. First I stand well back and drop my fly close to the bushes on my shore. That I

learned from Joe! Young fishermen always throw out their lines as if they thought all fish lay in mid-stream or in the shadow of the farthest bank, whereas the biggest fish may be lying in a deep hole within a yard of their toes. Some of my best trout I have taken where the grasses of my own bank hid the rise.

At our launching place, an old gray log runs out into the still-water from a tangle of alders. On my first visit to Dean's Brook, I stood on this old log crouching beneath the alders and landed ten fine trout before we had put the canoe in the water. I forget the name of the fly I used that day and I have never been able to get a similar one since. It had a dark blue, almost black wing with a dull brick-red body.

We launch the canoe and push up the still-water. I sit in the bow casting steadily as we steal along; in the stern, Joe paddles silently without a ripple from his paddle, and checks dead when a fish rises. This is truly fishing *de luxe*. He knows where the trout lie and urges the canoe more quickly over unlikely stretches. After we leave the mouth of Long's Lake Brook, the next best place is a round deep pool in an elbow of the still-water. Some seasons the trout are plentiful here; sometimes they have been scared out by mink or otter and there are no signs of fish. Beyond this is another pool where a little nameless spring brook makes in from the hill. Around the mouth of this cold brook, trout always lie; here I hooked my biggest fish in Dean's Brook, a trout of about two pounds, on a tiny MacGinty. We drift along; the still-water is only thirty feet wide with a rank growth of trees, alder bushes, and brakes to the water's edge. Water plants trail their leaves along our side with a gentle rustling sound: an old duck and her fledglings dart out of the lily pads, and with frantic splashing and flapping of wings, she encourages her little ones to keep ahead of us. We come to the broad pool at the head of the still-water where the brook foams in. It looks an ideal place for fishing, but I have seldom taken many trout there.

Now we must carry. As Joe is old and I am young, he takes basket, kettle, rods, and net, after some persuasion, and I sling the canoe on my shoulders. It does not seem fitting to him that I should carry the canoe, but as I insist, he makes no great protest. He knows how to slip paddles between shoulders and thwarts so that everything rides easily. For a quarter of a mile we tramp through an alder swamp, and I am always glad when I can tip up the bow and see the little birch-clad knoll that marks the beginning of the meadow, at the foot of the second still-water.

Trout swarm in this still-water; once I took seventy here after having put back all the small, uninjured fish. In the lower end, the water is shallow, and

we slip along over a lovely bottom of shining gravel and small moss-grown stones, an ideal spawning ground. I suspect that the trout haunt this brook in such numbers because of its bottom and its cool clean water and I recall old Izaak's phrase: "And in summer, they love the shallowest and sharpest streams; and love to lurk under weeds, and to feed on gravel against a rising ground."

Then the water deepens and I begin to fish. Halfway up is a fine deep pool where the still-water bends in a sharp angle. On the right is a flat muddy place covered with a few inches of water and overgrown with tall arrow-headed water weeds; on the left, the water is deep and overhung with alders. Joe works the canoe silently along and runs her up on the muddy flat where, hidden by the weeds, I can reach every part of the pool. I trail my fly gently along the edge of the alders, and out flops a great greedy trout from the cool shadow of the bushes. The rogue has been lying in wait for a grasshopper or grub to drop from the leaves above him. Another and another come and are silently landed by Joe to thump against the ribs of the canoe. Presently the fish in that pool, wearied of the lashing fly and disturbed by the splashing of taken fish, will rise no longer, and we push on up the still-water. I cast steadily and Joe checks at every rise; the fishing is perfect all the way.

At the head of the still-water we always pull in at a mossy bank beneath tall maples for lunch. I enjoy lunch with Joe; he is businesslike and does things quickly without hurry or unnecessary movement. In a twinkling, he has a fire going, the fire stick adjusted, the coffee-pot filled with clear brook water and slung. I divide rations with him, half and half; a cut of beef and two thick slices of bread to each, and perhaps a piece of cake, if the home larder has been ample. Do you remember, fishermen, the taste of corned beef sandwiches washed down with a mug of hot coffee in the woods? Then we stretch out and smoke and listen to the birds and the murmur of the stream, and look up at the sky to see little patches of blue among green leaves. Sometimes I recall, not without a shudder, life in cities, lines of honking automobiles, people crowded at the curb waiting to cross congested streets, men and women elbowing their way in and out of subways, factories belching smoke, workers in the mills handling with tongs long coiling snakes of red-hot iron, the ugly rows of miners' houses set upon ash heaps, the denuded hills and vile yellow rivers of Pittsburgh. Once, as we rested, I said, after a long silence:

"Joe, what would you do if you had fifty thousand dollars?"

He thought a long while before answering, and I could see how his mind was working. He had no desire for a grand house or an automobile or articles of luxury. He loved roaming the woods with gun and dog in fall and winter and canoeing along rivers in spring and summer. Already he possessed everything he needed, a snug cabin, a rifle, shotgun, rods, a canoe, a dog, enough to eat and drink and clothes to wear. What else could he desire? He scratched his head and reflected. Finally he said, grinning broadly:

“I guess I go on one big drunk.”

There is yet a third still-water, but this I visited only once, when we proceeded on foot and left the canoe at the lunching place. We had with us on that occasion my friend the professor of philosophy, who had never caught a trout in his life and who had not been allowed to fish from the canoe, partly because he might have upset our craft—he would certainly have caught his fly in the alders—but chiefly because I wanted to fish myself. We walked along a narrow gravelly ridge that had been pushed up by some pre-historic ice masses, until we came to a poplar-clad knoll that looked out over a wide laurel-covered barren through which the third still-water crept in a silver bow. The country is open and fishing from the banks easy. I told Joe to take the professor, whom I had equipped with a stout steel rod, to some pool where he could surely take a trout. Joe led him to the best pool on the still-water, and there the philosopher began casting with a Royal Coachman I had tied on for him. With each cast he struck the water with his tip but in spite of this the fish rose. He dragged the fly away from them savagely: it was a distressing sight. What availed him now, his notions of time and space, his categories, his theories of objective and subjective reality, his treatise on æsthetics?—He could not hook a fish! Finally, one determined fellow that we have since named the “suicidal trout,” rose, rose again, followed the fastest of all flies either living or artificial into the reeds, and hooked himself. The philosopher gave a mighty heave that almost broke the steel rod, flung the trout fifty yards behind him, where it kicked silver among the laurel, and, stepping back swiftly to retrieve his prey, fell into a bog hole to his hips. For a moment Joe’s taciturnity was strained.

One evening, Joe and I were paddling down Dean’s Brook still-water after a long day’s fishing. The day before, I had been after salmon, and I still had my box of dry salmon flies in my pocket. When we came to the big pool at the mouth of Long’s Lake Brook where we always leave the canoe, I said:

“Joe, just for fun, I’m going to try a dry fly here.”

I greased my cast, tied on a small Cinnamon Sedge, dropped it lightly, and let it float on the water. Then I had my greatest dry-fly fishing, for, though trout will nearly always rise to a wet fly of their fancy, there are many days on which they will ignore a dry fly. The pool went crazy over that Cinnamon Sedge, trout rushed from all directions, there was a welter of foam from rising fish. In ten minutes, I hooked and landed as many trout, all more than a pound in weight. How many more I could have taken I cannot guess, for my fly was so torn and frayed that it would float no more.

The walk home from Dean's Brook in the evening light is delightful; the life of the forest that has lain dormant throughout the day is awake and stirring; there are mysterious crackles in the bushes; birds call to one another from the tree-tops. We reach the car at Hectanooga.

“Good-night, Joe. See you soon again.”

“Good-night. Can't come too soon.”

CHAPTER XV

DONALD

The question is rather, whether you be capable of learning it? For angling is somewhat like poetry, men are born to be so.—*IZAACK WALTON.*

One morning last summer, my wife, Donald, aged seven, and I put our canoe and camping gear on an ox-cart and had them hauled to the foot of Lake Edward. Donald rode triumphantly on the top of the pile, shouting in shrill treble to the birds and trees, just as I had ridden years before on our treks from village to village. We loaded the canoe snugly, so that she would trim well, and set off up the lake, keeping close to the eastern shore. My wife paddled bow, I had the stern paddle, and Donald, tied fast to a cork life preserver salvaged from some wreck, sat amidships. His poor little ears were tired with, "Sit still," "Keep in the middle," "Don't trail your hand in the water," before we reached the head of the lake where the Lot's Lake Brook empties in. The temptation to trail a hand in water that rustles close along the gunwale is well-nigh irresistible.

On a grassy level near the brook mouth, we pitched our tent. Donald was, of course, excited over this, his first camping trip. He helped carry fir and ferns for the beds, and even volunteered to fetch water from the cold brook. This meant a little journey through a clump of dark spruces, a grand adventure! He almost reached the tent, only to stumble and spill his water, but went back bravely for another canful. All through the sunny afternoon, he dipped for minnows with the landing net, which was too large meshed to retain his catch. After supper, when night fell and trees became black and shadows mysterious, he kept close to the camp fire. He took several "dares" and once walked to a tree thirty feet distant. Later, we all slept soundly in our sleeping bags laid upon sweet fern and fir.

Donald and I turned out early, took the canoe, and paddled over to the mouth of the inlet. We pushed the canoe firmly into the reeds and fished the little pool where Cold Brook joins Lot's Lake Brook. I hooked eight for our breakfast, and he landed them all in his net. His first trout, a grand adventure! From the light in his eyes as he dipped up those fish, I believe that he, too, will be a fisherman. If I pass on to him the love of fishing as my father gave it to me, I shall have done well. One cannot go far wrong in the world if one loves fishing, horses, and beauty, for, after all, most of the

things we dub wicked are simply ugly. “And so,” says gentle old Izaak, “if I might be the judge, God never did make a more calm, quiet, innocent recreation than angling.” That things that are beautiful can be associated with wickedness is mere nonsense, an idea that puritans have invented to plague us. Enjoy all you can the beautiful, innocent diversions of life, for the future is vague and uncertain. Now, for me the circle is complete: I shall fish for a few years more, perhaps, and in that time I shall try to teach Donald everything I know of the art.

THE END

[The end of *The Autobiography of a Fisherman* by Frank Parker Day]