

Edmund Ware Smith • Lee Wulff • Ted Jones • Capt. Dick Reed

Outdoors

December 1945

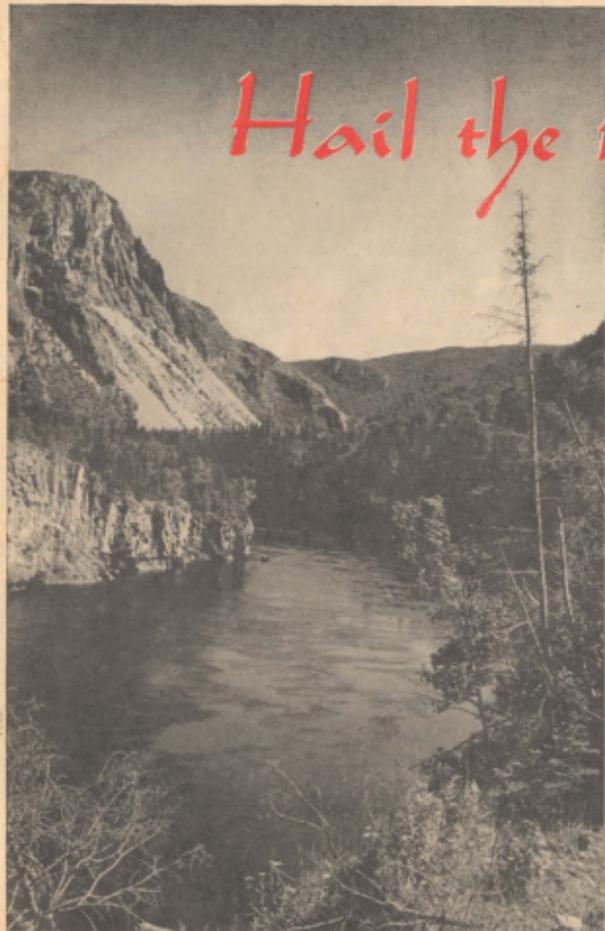
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Hail the Humber

By Lee Wulff



THE afternoon was beautiful in Corner Brook. The sky was cloudless and from the studio window I could see the evergreen-blanketed hills of western Newfoundland bathed in brilliant sunlight. The week had been hectic and now that the uncertainty of planning was over, I could breathe easier. There was still plenty to do but nothing that couldn't wait until tomorrow. I had finished my weekly broadcast and I had seven days in which to prepare the next script. My salmon tackle was down-stairs in my room, dusty from a month of idleness. There was nothing to hold me back.

Cliff, the station manager, and Ella,

one of the stars of its firmament, didn't seem to be working very hard and I tried to enlist them in a few hours' fishing on the Lower Humber. Cliff couldn't be budged from work which he claimed was important but Ella decided to join me. She didn't feel like tackling the Humber's heavy water for the big fish of its run until she'd had more practice where both the fish and fishing were less tricky, but thought she'd come along and watch. The Humber is a tough river and I could only hope that there'd be something besides casting to watch. It still was a little early for the salmon to be coming in to the Lower Humber shoals.

We passed the mouth of the river where the tide lapped high at the base of the limestone gorge through which the Humber pours its brown, pest-stained waters into the Bay of Islands. The road ran close beside the bank and we saw that the river was in good flow but the tide was too high to give good fishing conditions at the first pool above tidewater, Shellbird Island Shoal, where the tide still backs up the flow.

The old eagerness to wade into the river and sink into the rhythm of casting was strong inside me. I decided to fish the Quarry Pool a little farther upstream. We looked down upon the river from the high ground, saw the sunlight glinting on its lazy flow and the reflection of the gray crags bright on the dark, cool waters. Then we were walking down the narrow path through the alders to the river.

The day was too beautiful to have found the pool deserted. Sam Wells and Joe Kenney were fishing the lower section below the drop-off where the water swirls in, deep and black, against overhanging alders. It felt good to have the water brushing coolly around my knees as I waded the ledgy river bed above them. The delicate seven-foot fly rod made casting a pure pleasure and, in spite of occasional gusts of wind from the west, line and leader swept out cleanly to drop the fly into the chop and swirl of the deep water. Each time the fly swung inward I knew it should pass over the heads of some magnificent salmon, the first of the run to come in, bright and fresh from the sea.

The Lower Humber is the name of the sleepy flow of water that drifts easily out of Deer Lake and courses between bluff limestone mountains for a distance of twelve miles to salt water. Thousands of salmon travel upstream through it on their way to the headwaters in late June and early July but few of these early fish pass even momentarily in the lower river. They're headed upstream far beyond Deer Lake and beyond that staggering barrier at the big falls where they depend upon the heavy run-off of the late spring to make good jumping conditions for them. Later, in August and September when the sun is warm and the river's flow has eased, the special salmon of the Lower Humber come

Patience, know-how and plenty of backing on your reel . . . that's the recipe for success with the big tide-water salmon of the Lower Humber River



back to their native waters on the spawning journey, big, deep-bellied fish that wait out the remaining weeks to spawning time on the shoals in the lower river's heavy flow and rarely rise to a fly.

I fished through fifty feet of water just above the ledgy drop-off, using a low-water Silver Gray on a No. 6 hook. There was no sign of a fish's movement behind my fly, no swirl or boil in the heavy water which would indicate that a salmon had moved up briefly from his resting place to have a look at the swinging fly.

A second time I worked down through the heavy water, this time using a No. 6 low-water type Dark Cahill. That pattern is common enough for trout but is rarely used for salmon. Still, it had been effective for

me before and especially in circumstances like these when the fish had seen a good many of the standard pattern salmon flies pass over their heads before mine were put to them. Halfway down the second time, my line tightened. I saw the swirl as the fish caught the fly and then felt the heavy drag as he moved upstream against the sweeping water. The movement was steady but swift. Then the fish stopped and hung motionless near the bottom for a moment. How big would he be? He leaped. I saw then that he would be big enough.

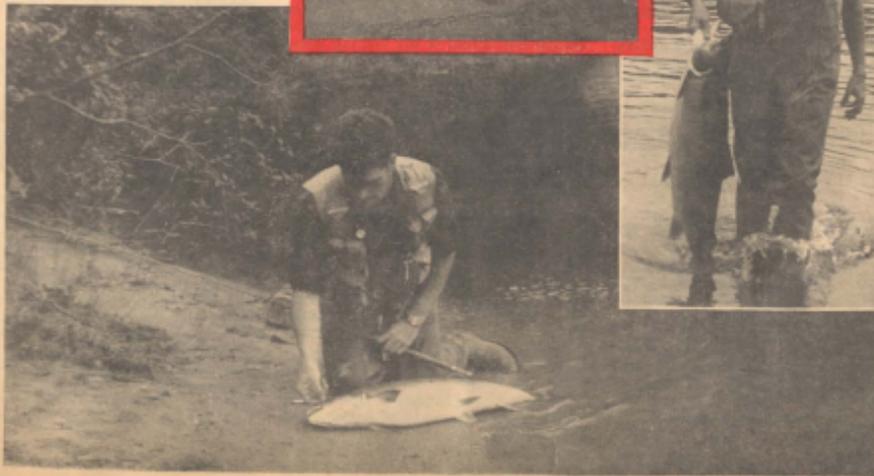
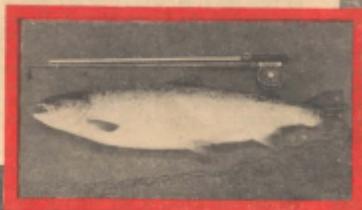
The Humber is about 150 yards wide at the Quarry Pool and the flow is a steady sweep that continues right on downstream except for a small eddy at the tail of the pool on the southern bank, the side from which I was fish-

ing. Those salmon that the fishermen are lucky enough to save come in on the quiet waters of that eddy. Knowing that if my fish was to be saved he'd be brought in at the eddy, I moved rapidly in that direction. This put me well below the fish where I could exert the greatest pressure on him. When I passed the spot where the black waters swirled in hard against the alders as the drop-off touches the shore, I swung the Leica camera from my neck and passed it to Ella who stood wide-eyed, watching the salmon leap.

The fish was bright and he threw a silvery light when he curved into the air. He worked upstream, then he fought his way out into the central flow and finally moved down with the current until he was below me. I relaxed the pressure from the light rod and the fish struggled back through the flow to a point opposite me. A little pressure and persuasion brought him into the eddy, but the sting of the fly

(Continued on page 46)

The salmon of the Lower Humber are big, deep-bellied fish. Right: The author brings in a 28-pounder, fresh from the sea. Below: It took 35 minutes to land this fish in high, swift water



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Baiting a Bass Plug

Q. This is my first season of fishing with artificial baits and I'm wondering if it's all right to add a worm or a grasshopper to a plug to make it more attractive?—K. T. M., N. Y.

A. I wouldn't advise it as it would probably spoil the action of the lure. These baits are made to be used just as they come and you'll find them adequate without the addition of any further attraction.

Pork Chunk Lures

Q. Can a pork-chunk bait be used for fishing weedy areas of bass water? I know it's good for pickerel but how about the bass?—M. S. A., Conn.

A. Bass will take a pork-chunk readily. Used on a regulation weedless hook rig, it can be cast right up to the bank and dropped through those paddled areas where the big fish grow fat and stazy.

Finding Lakers

Q. How do you locate lake trout in summer fishing?—R. L. T., N. J.

A. The important thing is to know the lake bottom, thereby finding the deeps where the water is usually cold. This can be done by sounding with a heavy lead on a line marked off with colored thread at various depths. But there are also spring holes in shallower water and in locating these a thermometer is necessary. Where the temperature runs from 40 to 50 degrees, you'll find the lakers.

Hail the Humber

(Continued from page 17)

in his jaw naggged him and he came into the air again and moved well out into the current.

We played a little game then, the fish seesawing back and forth in and out of the eddy, punctuating the play with leaps. The hook was of the fine wire type and its hold couldn't be tried too much; the leader would stand up to about three pounds on the fine end of the taper, no more. More than once the fish fell away with the current to a point below me. This was bad since the way downstream for me was blocked by a small island that would be inshore of the fish if he went on downstream, yet which was in water too deep for me to reach by wading. The game went on until he'd made his ninth clean leap and returned to the eddy in a wide loop that brought him close to me. Snubbed hard, he bored toward the sandy bottom and found strength enough to move out with the circling water of the eddy. I detached the tailer from its snap on my left shoulder and set it up. The fish came in again and, in one of his spasmodic twists, the tailer went over his tail and I drew it tight to set the noose and bring him ashore.

"He" turned out to be a female fish and I stretched her out on the wet sands thirty-five minutes after the

OUTDOORS

rise. Scales taken from her side showed her to have spent probably three years in freshwater as a parr before migrating to the sea. Here she grew fat for a little more than two years after which she'd returned to the Humber and spawned, probably weighing about twenty-three pounds at the time. She'd lost weight in her period of fresh water starvation at spawning and had gone back to the sea the next spring to regain that poundage and more. She had come back again on a second spawning journey a few days ago at her final weight of twenty-eight pounds.

Sam Wells came over and said, "I've hooked four here in the last three days but I didn't bring any of them in. One of them was bigger than this fish, too."

I knew how he felt. I'd been lucky and my salmon hadn't been too hard to handle. It was a tough place to land a fish without a canoe and a poor spot to use one.

ALL day Saturday I worked and watched the rain stream down my windows. Long after midnight I could still hear the big drops beating against the panes as I lay in bed waiting for sleep and picturing the rising river. I gave it an eight- or nine-inch rise if the rain stopped by morning. How lucky I'd been to have gone out the day before. Still, a rise of water would bring in new fish and help the fishing conditions, especially in a day or two when the flow steadied off at its new level.

Sunday morning's skies were bright and blue again, with a soft, warm wind from the west. I spread my fly-tying things on the table and proceeded to make up a few flies that I felt might turn the trick with the river at its new high level. They were unorthodox for the Humber, being on No. 1 hooks, much larger than those in common use. The body was of golden-yellow wool with oval tinsel spiralling down its length. The hackle was of guinea hen neck feather and the wings of black squirreltail with a golden pheasant crest feather topping it off. It had no tail and was tied slim and small of bulk. With higher water a larger fly might be in order to compete for the salmon's attention with all the debris a rising river picks up and carries upon it. With the current swifter than usual, I wanted a heavy hook that would tend to hold the fly under water instead of letting it lift up to the top and skin along, cutting the surface as a light fly often does when the water is fast and the line lies near the top.

Monday's midday sun was bright as I walked along West Street. My mind, of course, was strictly on business and the Humber River was completely out of my thoughts. With a rattling of fenders and squeaking of springs Ray Doucette pulled in beside me at the curb and his head poked out of the window. "How about it?" he asked grinning. "Let's go up the river this afternoon."

At two o'clock I was waiting for



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him in the lobby of the Inn, my waders
and other gear piled beside me. Cap-
tain Bill Davies of the Canadian Army
Public Relations came over to ask me
what I thought of his chances for get-
ting some fishing pictures, still pictures
in color.

Having spent months waiting for
perfect Kodachrome conditions of
bright sunlight in combination with
hooked and leaping salmon, I couldn't
be too hopeful, but since the sun was
shining and the river was handy I
suggested that he come up to the
Quarry Pool in about half an hour on
the bare possibility that one of us
would hook a fish. At least he'd be
able to snap his shutter on some
fishermen casting on the broad river.

Fish came along then and we headed
up-river to the Quarry Pool. The
water was high and the waves curled
over the rocks near the head of the
shoal with a swishing sound. Ray
fished below the drop-off while I
worked through the stretch just above
with the water rougher and the wad-
ing more difficult under the new con-
ditions. I tied on one of the black and
gold flies I'd made up and sent it out
into the crisp white waves.

ONE cast was like another as I
moved down with the flow. Each
time the fly settled on the water it was
swept quickly toward the shore in a
downstream arc. Sometimes I could
catch the glint of the sun on the fly
as it swam an inch or so beneath the
water and more times it was lost from
sight in the general darkness of the
twisting current. Then there was a
heavy swirl where the fly had been a
moment before but no pressure on the
line followed the fish's rise. He'd been
interested but not quite enough. He'd
risen short. I stood stock still, mark-
ing the length of line I had out and re-
membering exactly the direction of my
cast.

For ten minutes I cast repeatedly,
the same distance from the same spot
and in the same direction. There was
no sign of life from the brown water.
Sometimes these Lower Humber salmon
will make a dozen false rises . . .
and end up still refusing to take the
fly. This one seemed to have exhausted
his interest with one good look at the
fishers and steel.

I'd just started through that short
stretch of water a second time, using
the same fly, when Bill Davies showed
up on the bank behind me. He had
scouted the possibilities and taken a
couple of Kodachromes of the pool and
its fisherman when I reached the spot
from which I'd risen the fish before.
This time I felt the line tighten before
I saw the swirl of the rise. Bill was
in exactly the right spot with a cloud-
less sky above and a bright sun burn-
ing behind him, the conditions color
photographers pray for.

The salmon went through his bag of
tricks with more than the usual
abandon, piling one jump upon an-
other. He wore himself out quickly
and I slid the taylor over his waving

caudal fin in the eddy after a con-
centrated period of non-stop excite-
ment. When I slid his sleek, silvery
twenty-pound body up on the sandy
beach I heard Bill's shutter make a
final click and turned to see him smil-
ing broadly. I couldn't help thinking
of the empty hours I'd spent waiting
for just such a chance in comparison
with the ease with which this oppor-
tunity had come along for him.

Ray and I fished for half an hour
without another rise. Two other
anglers who reached the pool just after
we had went without action, too. Then,
with Bill joining us, we drove a mile
further up-river to Steady Brook Pool.
There the river pushes its flow over
a series of shallow bars that end in
deep drop-offs and build up slowly to
a shallows again. The salmon lie on
the shoals in an easy flow and we
waded out to cast our flies as far off-
shore as we could, letting them make
a long swing through the easy, rippled
water. The same fly was still tied to
the end of my fifteen-foot leader, even
though the water here was shallower
and the need for a large fly should not
be as great. The nylon line rode high
in the water and, once or twice, in
spite of the heavy hook, the fly
skipped along the surface instead of
traveling beneath it.

Then, when the line was thoroughly
wet once more the fly rode beautifully
and up from below came a sleek, swift
salmon to take it in his jaws. Ray left
off fishing to get the boat and bring
Bill out close to the spot where I was
playing the fish. It was insurance,
too, should I need the boat to take me
downstream if the fish headed that
way into water too deep for me to
wade. The salmon took me down
across two of the deep shoal-ends
where the bottom dropped off
abruptly. In crossing them the water
came up to my armpits, lapping at the
very tops of my waders and the force
of the deep water swept me across
those deep spots with a speed equal
to its own.

THIS fish, like the first, spent
himself quickly with a spurge of
activity that piled leap upon leap and
run upon run. Strangely enough, he
made no very long runs and never
took out more than a hundred yards
of line. With three fish out of four
that size I'd have needed the boat to
take me downstream to slower water
to land him. But, to my advantage,
he stayed close most of the time and
did his leaping right around me. Again
Bill was presented with a fighting,
fresh-run fish in bright sunlight. His
shutter clicked repeatedly on a gleam-
ing twenty-pounder that came ashore
in twelve minutes, exactly the same
time his cousin of identical weight had
required less than an hour before. The
rod was the same seven-foot, 2 1/2-
ounce fly rod balanced with a specially
tapered D nylon fly line.

I was grateful then, and I'm grateful
now as I write, for the pleasure that
went with the capture of those three

salmon on my first two attempts of the season on the Lower Humber. Each time I fish those heavy waters, I go with the thought that I'll enjoy the fishing and absorb the beauty of the moving water and steep, bare mountains that hem it in . . . and if I'm lucky have a fish rise to my fly. "I write now I wonder if I've at last solved the riddle of where to fish the Lower Humber's pools and which flies to present under varying conditions and just how to present them. It seems more likely to me that I was just attuned to the river and that in another year, granted the grace to fish it, I'll have fewer salmon for my casting hours. But I can be certain that the pleasure of fishing those brown waters will be the same and the look of the river from the high road will always make my heart beat faster."

PAT PENDING: SPORTSMAN

(Continued from page 21)

as it can be immediately brought into action by disengaging the team, and in times of danger may be used in the field ready charged with its deadly missiles of grape or ball. The share serves to anchor it firmly in the ground and enables it to resist the recoil while the hand-levers A furnish convenient means of giving it proper direction."

This innocuous appearing plow would seem to fill a long-felt need among farmers who could destroy crows with it as they plowed, to say nothing of its expediency in times of national crisis. The modern Cincinnatus would not leave his plow in the furrow as he went off to war. He would take it right along with him.

And, finally, we have a new type of projectile, patented Oct. 4, 1870, by James G. Hope of Topeka, Kansas.

"My invention," states Mr. Hope, "has for its object to furnish an improvement in balls and other projectiles, by means of which the ball or other projectile may be fired in curved lines with the same accuracy as in straight lines; and

"It consists in constructing the ball with a curved flat piece upon its base, whether used with or without a curved flat point, as hereinafter more fully described.

"A represents the body of the projectile, which may be made in any of the well-known forms used in the construction of projectiles.

"Upon the base of the body A is formed a rearwardly-projecting piece or plate, B, which is made flat, as shown in fig. 1, to take a good hold upon the air, and is curved, as shown in fig. 2, to cause it to move upon a curved line.

"The piece or guide B should be curved to exactly correspond with a portion of the line upon which it is desired to have the projection move.

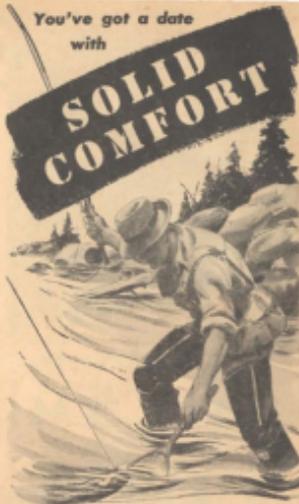
"The forward end or part of the projectile may have a flattened point, C, formed upon it, as shown in fig. 1, which flattened point should be curved to correspond with the curve of the guide B, as shown in fig. 2, as an additional guide in causing the projectile to move in the desired line.

"The projectile thus formed must be used in arms made with straight grooves or rifles, or in arms having smooth bores, as the guide B or guides BC will prevent the projectile from twisting or revolving during its flight which greatly increases the range and accuracy of the fire.

"It should be observed that the projectile must be placed in the arm with the guide or guides in the exact position in which it is desired to have the said projectile travel, whether it be to the right or left, or in any other direction."

There are many others, but these examples will suffice to point up our original premise that when sportsmen require a special tool to do a special job, they're going to have it, if they have to invent it themselves.

Some of the fruits of these creative sportsmen have come to be the commonplace items of equipment in the world of modern sports. Others languish in dusty files forgotten. But each one of them, nationally known or neglected, reflects the pioneering spirit of American sportsmen, a tradition which is still carrying on today.



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