

### ALONG THE WAY

The spring season is incomplete unless I get at least a couple of days of trout fishing in. Every spring the fever hits me. I dig out my tackle, sharpen up my casting arm and dream and wait and dream.

They were two beauties, brown and speckled as they lay there on the green grass, dying. The setting was one of beautified serenity. The pond, surrounded by trees, alive with nature, was a sportsman's paradise. A place to forget the cares and troubles of the world, at least for a few hours.

The sun had set or rather it was twilight. The frogs were croaking from their various positions in the reeds and bullrushes around the pond. One could scarcely see the floaters on the lines. There was a slight evening breeze blowing. It felt fresh and invigorating. It made ripples on the surface of the pond, ripples evercoming ripples, glittering in their proudest moment, only to lose their existence on the beach.

A warbler was heard as he dove headlong from the heights in the act of catching insects. This was the note Dad had been listening for.

"We may as well go, John. No more fish tonight," said Dad with a great deal of certitude.

I did not argue. He knew the pond and its inhabitants well. We were about a half mile from the road where we left the car. We drove home contented. I had caught only two but they were large. Dad had seven to his credit but not as large as the ones I had caught.

Mother had supper ready when we got home, so we washed up and sat down to eat.

"John", said mother, "Stan called."

"Yes? What did he say?"

"He wants you to call him back as soon as you can".

"Thanks, I'll do that".

We were hungry. After supper I called Stan on the phone.

"Hello, Stan?"

"Just a moment please."

"Hello," beamed a voice from the other end of the line, "John?"



"Hello Stan, yes it is I."

"John I've changed my plans, I'm leaving in the morning for Montreal. You can be ready by then? You see I'm overdue now."

"Sure Stan, I'll be ready."

Boy, I'll have to hustle. Nothing packed yet and only a few hours to get ready.

"Mom! I'm leaving in the morning."

"John! but you're not ready!"

"Stan is leaving in the morning, I have no choice."

Father was seated in a rocking chair, bespectacled, and reading the evening paper. I noticed a strange expression on his face. I then turned and looked at mother. The same expression. A sixth sense told me that something was brewing.

Mother finally broke the silence.

"Must you go away this summer?" Then she paused. "Why don't you stay home this summer and help Dad on the farm? We need your help now. Bill is away and does not intend to come home this summer. So you see the problem. Another thing, John, well, I shall put it this way. Parents like to know their own children. You have been away from home since you were fifteen. First it was to high school and now college. And then away somewhere to work for the summer. The only time we spent together was the week-ends you got from school. It is a depressing thought; actually it is a very depressing thought for your father and me."

You see, these words struck me. I was trapped in the middle. I had to deliberate, yea, even further, weigh out my mother's address. But, it had to be done quickly.

"John, there is something else I want to say." Again she paused. "Your father and I have been talking things over and we reached the conclusion that you should not go to that army camp in Montreal this summer. We do not think that an army camp is a proper place for any young college boy, John. We are older than you and have more experience than you. Your Uncle was in the army during the First World War and he told us what the army was like. It is only a place for roughnecks. We have heard lots of people who talk about it too. And the things they said about it were not very nice. As Mrs. Brown said the other day, "I wouldn't allow a son of mine to join the army"!



The whole situation was changed. I was now on the defensive.

"I am sorry. Maybe I didn't explain it to you well enough last spring. I am not in the regular army. It is only the C.O.T.C. that I am a member of. You see all the members of the C.O.T.C. are college students like myself. Surely you would not apply the stories you hear about the army to the C.O.T.C.?"

This served to inhibit somewhat the flow of paternal sentiment.

"Please believe me, I am not leaving because of any selfish motive."

"Why are you going?" asked mother.

I was on the spot. It is not easy to express one's unformulated opinions on the spur of the moment. It was an attitude, and attitudes are not easily worded.

"I suppose I am leaving because it is the best thing I can do. I can't farm nor do I want to farm. I love nature and yet I do not like farming. Farming requires a special personality. Maybe it is the conservatism associated with farming that I don't like. Activity and change are the spice of life. That is, to put it frankly, I find rural life dull. Dullness; its autonym liveliness is what I want. Why? An inherent characteristic I guess. All in all your way of life and mine are incompatible. I would suffer in this environment and you would suffer with me and for me."

The case was closed, open opposition stopped and only suspicions remained.

Stan called for me in the morning. We were scheduled to leave at eight and he called at 7:45. I had often said goodbye to the family home and village before. Each succeeding time was as emotionally rich as the time before. I always left one little claim to what I held dear behind. It was part of my personality.

Around the bend, and then home to me was beyond the horizon. We caught the 9.00 o'clock crossing of the ferry at Borden. I always loved that little trip across the Strait on the ferry. I was always thrilled as I stood on the deck with the sea breeze blowing in my face, watching the boat making its way across the Strait, seeing the red-soiled Island fade and the brown of the mainland come closer. At the same

time wishing with all my heart that the opposite was happening.

We were in no special hurry because we were going to make it a two day trip. We travelled up the coast of New Brunswick. It was a beautiful day. New Brunswick, on the whole, is to me a rather drab province. There are exceptions to the rule. If one is artistic, he can find ample material for a delightful study in the fishing villages which dot the East coast of New Brunswick. They have not lost any of their original flavor. They picture a rugged life but a pleasant one.

Stan was a self-educated individual. His formal education was limited, but that was due to circumstances, not intelligence. He was an extensive reader and had an artistic mind. But what surprised me was that Stan picked a technical job to earn a livelihood. He was a T.V. technician. Again circumstances were probably the cause for him doing so.

"Think we will ever have T.V. in our neighbourhood back home, Stan?"

"Maybe. If the people can afford T.V. sets and a station is close enough for them to pick it up."

"I suppose you'll go back home then and set up shop?"

"No, John, the idea does not seem feasible somehow. The people are not electro-technical minded enough in our neighborhood back home. Only a small percentage of the people have their homes wired. Most of them are too conventional or too poor to convert over to electricity. They do not have a weekly income assured to them so they cannot buy on budget terms and they never seem to accumulate enough money ahead to buy luxuries. So no T.V. sets."

"Oh! well, perhaps it is for the better, T.V. also has its defects in excess."

Stan did not answer. We were now entering Bathurst.

"It is too bad," I said somewhat dejectedly to Stan, "that we should not have more small industries operating on the Island."

"What, for example?" queried Stan.

"Well, I was thinking that if we could have more canneries or more modern fish processing plants or even starch factories. Another industry that has been neglected on the Island is that of Irish Moss. Why do we not process it our-

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selves instead of sending it thousands of miles to be processed?"

My imagination was really beginning to function. Stan knew, as I did, that these were merely hypothetical examples, but what hurt both of us was that there was a grain of truth in them. At least, on the Island we had fresh air to breathe. It was the only compensation we could think of.

At five o'clock in the evening we arrived at Campbellton. We had supper, and at 5:30 we started on our way again. The most pleasant or disagreeable part of the trip was immediately ahead, the Matapedia Valley. I have both pleasant and disagreeable memories of the valley. Seen in the sunlight it is the most picturesque of all Eastern Canadian scenery. But pray do not travel through it when fog hangs gloomily from mountain top to mountain top. The only guide the driver has to follow is the white centre line of the pavement. On one side of the road is a mountain side, on the other a steep drop of hundreds of feet to the river below.

I remember one trip, on which I was driving home from Montreal. When we reached the valley it was already midnight. We suddenly hit the fog; the valley was like a tomb and the lights of the car were practically useless. The road is very winding and it was impossible to see more than five feet in front of the car. We followed the white line on the pavement for what seemed an eternity, never knowing what was going to happen. Suddenly the fog was no more. We stopped and took our bearings. We had missed our turnoff for Campbellton and had kept on driving on route six which goes up along the coast of Gaspé. We had driven fifty miles out of the way. But this evening it was full of glory. It was an awful sight. Entrancing to behold. The blue river winding its way below us and the tree clad mountains around and above us. We were now in the Province of Quebec.

"Stan", I asked, "what is a French-Canadian?"

"Do not say French Canadian, John, say a Canadien français. The word Canadien is most important, so naturally it comes first. And since they are Canadians and not Frenchmen, they capitalize the word Canadien while the word français has only a small f. So you see they consider themselves as Canadians, first and foremost, just as we do. They carry the word français to remind them that they are heirs of a special Canadian heritage."

The French-Canadian village has several characteristics



of its own. We passed through many of them on our trip. They looked so cozy. They are full of vigor, literally, beaming with life, hewed out with great care from the grey granite rocks of their Province.

The next day at sunrise we were again on our way. We passed through small French-Canadian towns which succeeded each other in kaleidoscopic fashion. The front doors of the shops and homes open practically on the street. The endless line of tourist cabins, travel lodges, motels and summer cottages which dominated the shorelines of the St. Lawrence from Quebec City to Montreal on both sides of the river clearly indicated that other people besides ourselves enjoyed the scenery and out-of-doors life offered by this particular part of the Province of Quebec. We crossed the bridge and on up to Sherbrooke St. East. We were in Montreal. Stan drove me to the camp.

"I'll see you this week-end Stan".

I walked to the Orderly Room.

"TF 75596 2/Lt. John - - - reporting, Sir".

"TF 75596", he flipped over several sheets, "Oh! here it is."

"Field Ops Coy, hut 16, room 23,—report to R & D at 0830 hrs. tomorrow."

"Right, Sir. Good-evening", I saluted and left.

Orderly Officers are always impersonal, I thought to myself. They have to be. Otherwise—. I went to bed. 5.30 I was up again. The army routine begins then for personnel under training. The bathroom was in a hubub.

"Hi, John," echoed from all its occupants.

"Hi, fellows, what's the stir?"

"Haven't you heard?"

"No."

"We leave for a two week scheme this morning."

"What? Oh Hell! Not a scheme."

"Yes, and an infantry one too."

"But we had our infantry training last year."

"Oh! this is a refresher course."



I washed and shaved reluctantly. I did not want to go on scheme so soon. I was fresh from college and not toughened up enough for the grind. But, what was I talking about? Mine's not to reason why; mine's to do or die.

The next morning I found myself disembarking from an army bus in the middle of nowhere. The site picked for the scheme by headquarters was on a mountainside. The scenery was beautiful, but would we have time to appreciate it?

I land in time to go on parade. I did not have time to get ready so I went on parade the way I was. My rifle had not been cleaned that morning. Sure enough, rifle inspection, and I stood there in line, sweating and waiting, and very ill at ease, holding my rifle at the port. The inspection officer took one look at it and yelled:

"Is this your rifle?"

Yes, Sir."

"There's a bird's nest in it."

"Yes, sir."

"Disgraceful, the dirtiest rifle I have seen in twenty years."

"Yes, Sir."

"Sergeant, get this horrible little man's name."

"Yes, Sir," retorted the sergeant with a beaming smile.

That night I had to go sentry duty from 0200 to 0400 hrs. I had to learn the hard way. Soldier keep thinking, soldier be more solicitous in the future. Soldier, I thought to myself, keep your head up and your nose clean.

That night I walked alone on the mountain side. The company were all tucked in their sleeping bags. It was lonely. I sat on the edge of a thicket about thirty yards in front of the trenches and my sleeping buddies. What was I doing there? Why shouldn't I be sleeping? I had erred but was I culpable? If I was on civy street I could have told the boss to go to hell and got another job, but this was a different situation, I had no right to do such a thing. From my position on the mountain side I could see the flickering lights glittering from the windows of the homes below on the plain. A road wound its way along the foot of the mountain and an interrupted stream of headlights flowed by, tourists mainly I supposed, heading back to Montreal after



a holiday in the country. How I longed to be in one of those cars instead of standing guard on a make-believe battle field, in the middle of night, cold, lonely, and unhappy. I tried to think but my emotions intervened. Why am I here standing like a jackass I was becoming ironical even at my own expense. Make believe! Why this stuff is only for children. Children like to play cowboys and Indians. Sure, that's it, Cowboys and Indians. Why should I go for that? I am a grown man. What shall I do - - - go tell the CO that I want a discharge or shall I string along. Maybe I can take this sort of stuff for a couple of weeks. But why should I? There was the hitch. It was an unseemingly small word at first, but the more I pondered on it the more important it became. Why? Maybe I am looking at the aim of the scheme through the wrong lens. Maybe this chicken stuff does make sense, but how? I recalled the words of the 2'/c who gave us a lecture that afternoon.

"The aim of this scheme is to give you some idea of battle-field conditions. - - - Gentlemen, although things may go wrong, although you may think you are getting a rough deal, don't forget that the morale of your troops is of primary importance. Never do anything to that morale of your unit, and do everything you can to foster it."

I was ashamed of myself. I was chicken, I considered myself mature but now I knew that this was not quite true. I still had much to learn.

I began to reflect over the past few days. Did I gain anything from them in the way of personal development? Why, certainly I had. I had many things to be thankful for, little incidents mainly, that happened during the week. They all contributed some little thing. An impression, an attitude, a concrete fact, or some other actuality was abstracted from each singular incident. The impressions one has influence actions, and the same can be said for facts. The way a person acts depends upon the type of personality he has. So you can see that the little incidents, the fishing trip, secondly my parents' charge, then one could enumerate the trip to Montreal and finally the dirty rifle episode are of small importance as isolated events, but in the over-all picture of life they are very important.

—RALPH GAUDET '55