

Wet Fly Fishing for Brown Trout in New Zealand

By G. D. HAMILTON,

Author of Trout Fishing and Sport in Maoriland," etc., etc.

NO. V.

(See Illustration, page 12.)

HAVING dealt with the reel line and the gut lines, it will not be amiss to remind the comparative beginner that no more reel line should be out than is needed to keep out of sight of the trout, and to reach where they are lying. The more line there is out the more difficult it is to cast accurately and lightly. In striking, the more line there is out the more sag or slack line there is to bring up before the movement of the rod called "striking" is felt at the fly, and so the result of the strike is slower than with a shorter and straighter line. Also, in playing fish after they are hooked, no more line should be out, if possible, than is required to enable the angler to keep abreast of, or rather down stream, from the fish. The shorter the line out in reason the more the fish is under control for guidance; the less likely the line is to get entangled in snags; the less effect the wind or running water will have on it; and the less chance there will be of its being cut or broken. Of course it will not be lost sight of that a hooked fish must not be pulled against the current, unless unavoidable. It is also well to remember that the less a hooked fish sees of the angler, until aground, the better—the sight only increases its struggles with a corresponding chance of escape. I have for many years used a landing net of my own design. For New Zealand trout of medium size it is made of hard black or tanned cord, fourteen inches deep when shrunken, with a mesh one and a-half or two inches, on each side. The net is forty-six inches in circumference at the frame, and has a small lead, like a pistol bullet, fastened to the lower point of the net. This helps to sink the net in the water when being used to land a fish. The frame is best made of light flat spring steel, 3/4 inch wide, edge up, brazed together where it is driven into the handle, which is protected by a strong short ferrule, into which the frame is sunk to the depth of its width. It has a straight side twenty inches long, and is twelve inches across from this to the handle. The sides of the frame form the segment of a circle. The handle is of ash or hickory about two or three feet long, three quarter inch diameter, dressed with raw linseed oil. The net and handle weigh about three-quarters of a lb. The net can be carried on the fishing bag, when the band of the bag is worn (as it should be) over the left shoulder, as a loop about two or three inches broad, the full width of the band, can be placed on the band where hand and bag meet. This loop will take the handle. The net will then be behind the left shoulder—a ring of cord round the band will serve the same purpose. A cord fastened to the middle of the straight side, passed over the left shoulder, and secured by a loop over a front button of the coat, will prevent it being dropped. This cord can be kept from sliding down the shoulder by something in the nature of a high button sewn on the coat about four inches above the point of the shoulder. When carried in this way the handle should not be more than two feet long, unless telescopic, otherwise it will interfere with walking. Carried in this way the net is quite out of the way of walking, wading, or fishing until wanted. A little practice is required at first in adjusting the net for carrying.

Earlier in these sketches I alluded to the inconvenience occasionally caused by hooking two good trout at the same

time, and from among many others give the following instance. One summer just before dark I saw some good trout feeding, and hardly making a perceptible mark on the surface of the water of the smooth shallow edge of a rapid, the waters of the bank I was on gradually ending in flat shingle. After two or three casts with scarcely a perceptible rise, I hooked what promised to be a good fish that without any rush went steadily and heavily up and almost across the stream for perhaps sixty yards, and then as steadily and heavily it turned down stream. As I gently took in line, all at once the line slackened and came in. It was now nearly dark and I thought perhaps that the hold had broken. However, I found the gut had broken just where the upper dropper joined the casting line. It was strong, clean, well-soaked gut just put on for night fishing. It was too dark to put on a fresh cast of flies, so I went back some three hundred yards to the house. Next night, just before dark, I went back to the same place and almost immediately hooked a fair fish that made a good fight, and took exactly the same course as was taken by the last fish the night before. It was not hooked until dark. When I took the fly out of its mouth I was surprised to find only about eight inches of gut on it and thought what a singular escape from losing the fish, and then put the fly in my hat and the fish in the bag. The line, however, seemed to be fount of the bag somehow, and on investigating, found that it was not broken, and that the fish was still fast to the line by the fly it had been caught with. The fly with the broken gut on it was one of those taken by the two trout when they broke the line between them the previous night. As there were no other hooks of my pattern there was no doubt about the identity of the fly. The trout thus captured was a little over two and a-half pounds. There is no doubt that the trout not recaptured was much heavier, and had taken the dropper fly where the line was broken. Most of the trout at the place were from three to five pounds.

THE END.

The New Chinese Railway.

While the great mass of the Chinese people is still unaffected to any appreciable degree by the influences at work for change in the Far East set in motion by Japan, it is an undoubted fact that the merchant classes of China have awakened to a knowledge of the immense benefits derivable from a proper development of the natural resources of their country. A striking illustration of this fact is to be seen in the work now being undertaken for the extension of the railway system throughout the land. Hitherto railway construction in China has been initiated and carried out by European concessionaries in the face of every obstacle that a corrupt mandarin and an ignorant, superstitious populace have thought fit to create for the purpose of preventing and hampering such enterprise. But now the era has dawned for the work to be done under Chinese auspices, and the principle is being enunciated that the numerous concessions already granted to foreigners must revert in course of time to the Chinese Government. When it is remembered that there are only about three thousand miles of railway open in the territories known as the Chinese Empire, which has an area of nearly two million miles, and which embraces a population of over four hundred million people, it

will be recognised what an illimitable field is there for railway constructive enterprise.

The most important line of railway now rapidly nearing its completion in China, excluding that built by Russia in Manchuria, is the as yet unfinished one from Peking to Canton, and the history of its evolution is of both great political and commercial interest. The concession for the construction of the first stage of the line, from Peking to Wuchang, was given to a syndicate composed of French and Belgian capitalists. Once they had secured the concession, the members of the syndicate commenced to organise their plans for the work of construction with a promptitude and thoroughness of attention to detail sadly lacking in not a few instances on the part of British companies in China engaged in similar undertakings. Progress was slow owing to the extraordinary difficulties met with in the country selected for the route, and to the long time it took for the arrival of the fresh assistance so often needed from Europe to meet unexpected requirements. By the end of last year the line was ready for a limited amount of traffic to be borne upon it, and its future success assured as the chief artery of communication between the provinces of North China. It is seven hundred miles in length, and constitutes a notable addition to the engineering achievements accomplished by the combination of foreign skill and capital in the Middle Kingdom. Its terminus, Wuchang, is a busy town situated on the west bank of the Yangtze river. On the other side of the Yangtze is the large and flourishing city of Hankow, destined one day to rival, if not to surpass, Shanghai as a commercial centre.

The steady and successful progress made by the European continental syndicate in linking together Peking and Wuchang had no counterpart in the task undertaken by the America-China Development Company to establish railway communication between Canton and Hankow. The distance between these two cities is eight hundred and fifty miles, and the track marked out for the railway stretched across land admirably adapted for construction purposes. During the first few months of its working the enterprise was boomed in a characteristically American manner. A double-tracked branch-line was opened from Shekwatong, a town on the southern side of the Shun-king river, opposite Canton, to Fatsan, fourteen miles away. This line was soon afterwards extended by a single track to Samshui, or Three Rivers, the total length of it from Shekwatong being thirty-two miles. When ready it was immediately opened to traffic, and paid exceedingly well. The Chinese by their patronage of it showing that they know how to appreciate quick methods of travel, even though the spirits of the dead in their graves may be disturbed by the "fire devils" of the Western barbarians. The rolling-stock in use on this branch-line consisted of two large Baldwin eighty-ton locomotives, six small tank-engines originally used on the New York overhead railway before its electrification, several cars imported direct from the United States, and a number of carriages crudely constructed in the neighbourhood. Such was the humble beginning of a railway which will in the not distant future bring Hong-kong within comparatively easy reach of London by an overland journey of surpassing interest.

Matters came to a standstill upon the completion of the branch-line. Disputes arose between the members of the managerial and engineering staffs of the company, and some of the engineers left the service. To fill the places left vacant untrained and incompetent men were hastily engaged, the natural result being bad and faulty workmanship, which will have to be all done over again. About this time, in the mid part of the year 1904, the company sold a lot of shares in Europe. This action evoked strenuous protest from the Chinese Government, which declared the sale of the shares to be a deliberate breach of the agreement made between the native Authorities and the company. Fear of a possible increase of French influence in Southern China no doubt inspired the governmental protest, as most of the shares sold went to French and Belgian subjects. But in spite of the action taken in the matter a Belgian engineer was sent to Canton, and he practically took charge there of affairs connected with the railway, considerable friction arising in consequence between him and the American employees of the company. It appeared likely from the trend of events that, as upon so many former occasions,

the Chinese Government would not follow up their protest with energetic action, and that Europeans would eventually have full control of the concession rights and privileges.

It was now that the strength of the Chinese business class showed itself. In every city and town in South China an agitation, supported by the viceregal authorities, was started against the company. The Chinese demanded that if the railway were proceeded with the shares secretly purchased by European capital should revert either to the company or to Chinese purchasers. The newly appointed European shareholders flatly refused to part with their interests, and matters were for a time at a deadlock. Determined that their wishes should be enforced, the Chinese continued their agitation so vigorously that the authorities finally threatened the company with a cancellation of the concession. The prolonged negotiations which ensued between them and the company ended in a demand being made by the shareholders through their representatives for the sum of seven hundred thousand pounds for a retrocession of their rights to the Chinese. An agreement embodying these terms was eventually drawn up and signed by both parties. Two hundred thousand pounds of this sum represented the value of the rails and rolling-stock on the branch-line from Shekwatong to Samshui, and the remainder compensation money.

Unable to find the necessary funds themselves either to pay off the company or to create an adequate working capital for going on with the construction of the railway, the Chinese were compelled to raise a foreign loan.

From the Hong-kong Government, the Viceroy of Nanking, Chang Chih Tung, who was appointed by the central power at Peking to deal with the whole matter of the railway, secured four million five hundred thousand pounds for ten years at an interest of 4 1/2 per cent a year, the security being the opium revenue of the three provinces through which the railway will pass. Various opinions have been expressed as to the competence of the Chinese to carry on the work of constructing the railway, official dilatoriness and dishonesty being feared in connection with the administration of the work. But Chang Chih Tung is an able, progressive viceroy, animated by a sincere desire for the good of his countrymen, and he may be trusted to see that the railway is built as speedily and efficiently as possible within the next four years.

The whole railway from Canton to Peking should be in full working order in five years' time, playing a part in the development of the richest and most densely populated provinces in the Chinese Empire, which cannot fail to be of incalculable importance to the world.

In connection with the main line of the railway, a branch is in course of preparation to Canton from Kowloon, the thriving and prosperous British possession separated from Hong-kong by the harbour.

In Chicago is a street sweeper who was once a clergyman; and in a little country town in New England is a Doctor of Philosophy who has given up a college professorship to keep a candy store. He was single, and the total profits from the shop were about ten dollars a week. But he said frankly that he was perfectly happy, and that the candy store had been the dream of his life.

An acquaintance once said that he knew a lawyer who had given up a large practice to become a bootblack; and there was a miniature painter of consummate skill who renounced her profession in order that she might sit in a store window as an advertisement for a brand of cigars.

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