

Makes Fishing a Fine Art



Fred G. Shaw

Fred G. Shaw, Coach of Famous Anglers, Tells Fine Points of Fly-Casting

pionship title, the recognition which he now enjoys and which led to the organization of the "School for Salmon and Trout Fly-casting" both in England and in America. "It suddenly seemed, upon the publication of that work," said Mr. Shaw, "that everyone went in for fishing. Angling became the fad. Dear old Isaac Walton must have been quite delighted in his heavenly dwelling-place—for that's where all good fishermen go—at the sudden interest folks began to exhibit in things piscatorial. Demands poured in on all sides, from Auckland, from Johannesburg, from New York, from Brazil for fishing lessons. The only practical solution of that problem lay in the establishment of the school. "Has it been profitable? Yes, in more ways than one. In addition to dollars and cents profit it afforded the means to wander over this planet, to dip my line into its beautiful streams and rivers, live with strange people, observe their habits and manner of life, and lots of adventures besides. Such return cannot be measured in financial terms. "I suppose you would like to have me tell you something of what is involved in the art of fly-casting," he proceeded. "I should very much like to, but to seriously attempt it in so brief a time would be absurd. Nevertheless, there are a lot of things I would like to say about fishing and related subjects to a person in a position to disseminate them.

By Helen Herbert Foster

OF THE many ways in which men achieve fame and fortune perhaps there is none more unique than that chosen by Fred G. Shaw, professional fly-caster.

Unless you are something of an angler you may not be certain as to the function of such a person. Briefly, it is a man who, with a fly, the kind that hovers over streams—usually an imitation one—attached to his fly-rod, can cast it in such a manner that it lands light as gossamer on the water and floats to the precise spot to which it had been directed.

For more than twenty years Mr. Shaw has made the teaching of this art a profitable business enterprise. His school, known as the "School for Salmon and Trout Fly-casting," is the only school of its kind in existence. His list of pupils—whose expressions of tribute form an imposing exhibit—looks like a super Who's Who. In our own country he has taught members of the Roosevelt, Harding, Pinchot, Colgate, Widener and many other families. In England, his birthplace, a long line of nobility, army leaders, writers, including the beloved author of "Peter Pan," attest the benefits of his tutelage.

To say that Mr. Shaw is an Englishman, by birth and not an American citizen would be merely stating facts. For, in a larger sense, he is a citizen of the world. In the course of his life he has wandered over five continents, exhibiting his skill, taking part in fly-casting tournaments and studying all manner of piscatorial subjects.

How Mr. Shaw drifted into this profession is in itself a curious tale. He was educated to be a mining engineer, a graduate of Clifton College, and was sent to South Africa on a British Government mission.

"It was a delightful job," said Mr. Shaw; "nothing to do but make a few geological observations, which I reported to a stupid commission, and the rest of the time to fish in. Words cannot describe the grandeur of African rivers, their virginity, their clarity."

That Mr. Shaw did not spend his entire time fishing can be attested by the fact that he wrote in those days an ingenious solution to a puzzling geological problem entitled "The Pseudomorphic Theory of the Witwatersand Conglomerates."

"In 1904 I found myself back in London," he went on, "where a fly-casting tournament was in progress. I had no thought at the time of giving up my engineering work. But in one of those unexpected moments I landed into something which, so to speak, changed my mind for me. I entered the tournament as an amateur and carried off the honors. The question which now presented itself to me was this: why should fly-casting, fishing, etc., be such a hit-and-miss proposition. If properly worked out it could be made a science."

Straightway after this episode Mr. Shaw set to work on the problem. In less than a year he published the result of his analysis in book form. It was entitled "The Science of Fly Fishing for Trout" and, as its title indicated, it succeeded in reducing the subject to mathematical equations. To one whose knowledge of fishing is limited to angling with a worm tied to a piece of string it was something of a surprise to learn that there could be so much to the subject. It was this work which won for Mr. Shaw, exclusive of his cham-

"Casting a fly requires greater technique than striking a golf ball. For however rottenly a golf ball may be fozzled and however bad may be the language or ridiculous the antics of a golfer, bad work or misfortunes at golf are not likely to scare the 'hole' on the desired green, as is the case when one is fishing. Therefore I contend that a person who can cast a fly-rod in an absolutely accurate manner to its scientifically chosen goal performs an infinitely greater feat than the golfer."

Then Mr. Shaw arose from his chair—we were sitting in his Brooklyn home—left the room and returned with a fly-rod. Holding it aloft he described the position the body should assume when attempting to fly-cast. "It's all in the duty of the thumb," he said, as he placed the fly-rod on a table.

"The finest place in the whole world to fish is in the many beautiful rivers of New Zealand," he added, parenthetically, "but that's a long way from Tipperary." For there one can make the most unheard-of catches. Trout is more than abundant. There are many reasons to advance for this. First and most obvious is, of course, fewer fishermen. But above this the healthy condition of the fish is due to clear streams, the way in which the fish are fed.

"I should like to say a word about the depopulation of our trout streams from road pollution. One of the most common sources of river or stream pollution arises from the chemicals, the sediment, the oils and other poisonous matter brought down by road drainage."

"But I seem, to be preaching," he suddenly said. "You see, this is a subject which means a great deal to me. I go about the country lecturing and never lose an opportunity to make my little speech. Now that I've said it, is there anything else you'd like to know? I can, like my namesake, G. B. Shaw, answer almost anything this afternoon."

"Yes," we thought of something. "What was the biggest fish you ever caught?"

"Shhh," he replied, "I once touched a whale. It happened off the coast of South America. I was on a small boat when I saw something like a flash of lightning start across the dark waters, for it was night. Upon closer observation I found that it was a whale turning on its belly. The big feller then moved toward the boat and began rubbing itself against it, doubtless trying to free itself of some barnacles. It was then that I dropped down a rope and touched him. It would have been dangerous to attempt anything more in so small a boat."

"But that was not your question. You asked what was the weight of the biggest fish I ever caught. What kind? Salmon? Well, the biggest salmon I ever landed weighed exactly fifty-two and a half pounds."

"It isn't the size of the fish one catches that really counts. Fish stories that emphasize the size of the fish caught, for that reason never mean much to me. Oftentimes a greater technique is required in catching a small fish."

"The best fisherman, after all, in my judgment, is he who nets fish and who kills and injures the least. As old Isaac Walton puts it, 'There can be no harm in filling one's creel if its contents are employed in pleasuring some poor body,' but to effect the depletion of a trout stream for no other purpose than that of proving one's skill is sinful."

Mr. Shaw is a man of amazing versatility. Aside from his interest in fishing he has at various times engaged in other things. He is the author of "Comets and Their Tails and the Gegenschein Light," a work of astronomical significance. He is also the author of "The Ancient Miners of Rhodesia."



The Proper Position for Fly-casting

It Isn't the Size of the Fish One Catches That Really Counts



Lawyer Becomes Jazz Dictator

By Harriette Ashbrook

JAZZ has arrived! Of course we realize that people have been saying just that thing for the past three or four years, but they've been kidding you. Its real arrival dates from the appointment a few weeks ago of a czar—Julian T. Abeles. Mr. Abeles will be to jazz what Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis is to baseball and what Will Hays is to the movies. He will, even as they, attempt to keep pure that section of the arts which falls within his province.

His appointment at a salary of \$25,000 a year is the result of the joint efforts of the eight leading jazz exponents in the country—Paul Whiteman, Vincent Lopez, George Olsen, Roger Wolf Kahn, Ben Bernie, B. A. Rolfe, Fred Rich and Ernie Golden.

It will be his duty to make jazz safe for the American household, to convince the mothers and fathers of the rising and obstreperous generation that it isn't the pernicious influence that it is painted, but is in reality the only really original contribution which America has ever made to music.

"Here is such a sample of the sort of mail I have been getting since my appointment was announced," said Mr. Abeles, and tossed across the table to us a post card which had just come in the morning mail. It was signed "A Kansas City Music Lover" and read as follows:

"The world will owe you a debt of gratitude indeed if you succeed in suppressing the lewd and lustful jazz music now being broadcast over radios. If it is not stopped it means the downfall of the coming generation. Only the morons of society indulge in it, and only morons enjoy such carion. I am a lover of music, and to clean, wholesome, humorous music I do not object, but from the present brand, Good Lord deliver us."

"I have received hundreds of those in the last few weeks," Mr. Abeles continued, "from every corner of the country. Some people are under the impression that I am here to stamp out jazz. On the contrary I am here to help it prosper and grow and develop—to show them that it is not the insidious viper they think it, but a legitimate musical form."

The organization of which Mr. Abeles acts as czar is known officially as the National Association of Orchestra Directors, and includes all of the principal jazz bands in the country from Bangor, Me., to Los Angeles, Cal. Hotel orchestras, dance hall orchestras, night club orchestras and theater orchestras have joined hands in an effort to combat the tide of protest against jazz.

"In a general way," Mr. Abeles went on, "the object of the association is to raise the standards of jazz music. You see, the chief difficulty is that there are a lot of people in the country today who don't realize that jazz has changed any in the last five years. In the beginning the jazz movement was to a great extent just a lot of noise. It was every man for himself, and the result was frequently chaos. The big orchestra leaders such as Whiteman and Lopez took this chaotic, noisy, brassy form and from it evolved our present jazz, something vastly superior and in many respects vastly different from the first crashing, noisy attempts. They took a great deal of the brass out of it and what they left in they muffled. Today a jazz orchestra is composed of a harmony of strings and brass. In the beginning it was almost all brass. And it is much more melodious now. It is distinctly an American music as typically American as anything could be and entitled to a very definite and legitimate niche in the musical world."

The difficulty is, Mr. Abeles points out, that there are a lot of people who aren't aware of this fact. Their misapprehension is due in a great measure to the inferior quality of jazz which they sometimes hear on the radio or on their phonograph. They don't know that

Julian T. Abeles

Heads Association of Famous Orchestras



Julian T. Abeles

there is such a thing as good jazz and bad jazz. To them it is all one—just jazz, a very convenient peg on which to hang the blame for all the shortcomings of the age.

The new organization, since it includes all of the principal jazz orchestras in the country, can practically dictate what sort of jazz the country is to hear, for they are the bands which do most of the jazz broadcasting and most of the record making. It is the object of the organization, therefore, to set a certain musical standard to which all of its members shall conform. Specifically this means refraining from playing such tunes as the board of governors have decided do not advance the cause of jazz.

In practice this will work out somewhat as follows: The board in reviewing the season's music may come upon a piece which they believe is not conducive to the development of good taste in jazz. The objection may be, Mr. Abeles points out, to the lyric, which is perhaps suggestive in language, or it may be merely to the general inferiority of the composition. The word will then go around to the orchestra members of the organization that that composition is not to be played. The result is that the great majority of the people of the country do not hear it, since their radio and the phonograph are their chief means of learning the latest compositions.

"To be very frank about it," says Mr. Abeles, "the jazz bands of the country have organized because they realized that jazz was in a bad way—that unless something was done about the situation jazz would go on the rocks. It has developed to a certain point from its first crude beginnings back in the days when Irving Berlin started things going with 'Alexander's Ragtime Band.' The question is whether it is going to die out, or whether it is going on developing, until it is recognized everywhere as a legitimate musical form."

"Incidentally we feel that jazz is a misnomer. Where the term came from we don't quite know. The term which we prefer and which we believe comes more nearly describing the type of music to which we refer is 'American music.'"

There are no rules and regulations in the new organization, except the ones which Mr. Abeles sees fit to make from time to time to fit the various contingencies which may arise. That is why he is called the czar of the jazz world.

Like the two other famous czars, Landis and Hays, Mr. Abeles is by profession a lawyer. For many years he has been before the courts with the troubles of Tin Pan

Alley and has been identified with some of the most sensational cases of the past ten years involving musical copyrights.

Several years ago when "Dardanella" was at the height of its popularity he helped make musical history. This song, which incidentally was exceeded in volume of sales only by the earlier "Hiawatha," had a very distinctive rhythm in the bass. It was a bass such as Broadway had never heard before.

So when "Kalua" subsequently made its appearance in the musical show "Good Morning Dearie" with a similar bass, Fred Fisher, composer of "Dardanella," brought suit against Jerome Kern and C. B. Dillingham, author and producer respectively of the show. Mr. Abeles, acting as counsel for Fisher, found himself up against a tough battery of witnesses called by the defense—there was Arthur Bodanzky, Metropolitan Opera Conductor; Walter Damrosch, conductor of the New York Symphony Orchestra; and Victor Herbert, composer of light opera and musical comedies.

The general gist of the testimony was that a bass was only an accompaniment of the melody and could not therefore be considered of such importance as to be the subject of plagiarism. But in the end Mr. Abeles obtained an injunction preventing the composer of "Kalua" from using the bass in question, the court holding that there really was infringement shown.

But despite Mr. Abeles' long association with things musical, despite the fact that he has been set up as the czar of "American music," he can't play a note on the piano, the saxophone, the violin, the trombone, the zither, mouth organ or jew's-harp. He can't even carry a tune very well. But he can spot a tune that he has heard before quicker than the memory course advertising gentleman can spot Mr. Addison Sims of Seattle, and he can tell you the artistic and legal history of nearly every prominent tune from the "Flower Song" from "Faust" to "Yes, We Have No Bananas."

