

A MEMORY OF MOUNTAIN TROUT.

BY R. L. WARNER.

WHAT treasures to the sportsman or angler are the memories of days spent with gun or rod in the forest or upon the bank of the stream, breathing health from the pure mountain air; every sense alert, every step leading to some new surprise, every glance revealing unsuspected beauties of color and life!

How often, after the day of business care or professional study, does the tired brain seek refreshment in the paths of memory, in dreams of hours spent far from the grind and roar of city life. Through the wreaths of smoke from my restful brier, one favorite picture always presents itself with especial clearness, carrying me back in fancy to the scene of my most memorable outing. In the foreground a lake scarcely over three miles in length, surrounded on three sides by forest-clad hills and on the fourth by beds of lava and stunted growths of pine. In the distance, beyond the lava-beds, the glistening glaciers and snowy head of a mighty peak, so far, and yet, in the rare mountain atmosphere, seemingly so near. The scene is in the heart of the Cascades, the lake is called Echo, and the mountain is grand St. Helens.

There were three of us in the party that summer—yes, four, for "Spillie," our cayuse, or Indian pack-pony, was an important member of the company, since he combined commissary, arsenal, bedroom, and kitchen in the pack beneath which he patiently climbed logs and waded streams during the weeks spent in those Northwestern woods.

There is a road (so called by courtesy) to within twenty miles of the lake, and from there is a faint trail, now much the worse for lack of wear and crossed in many places by trees felled by the winters' storms and weight of snow. The last two miles of this trail lead up over the backbone of a mountain, the top of which is always just ahead through the trees and constantly receding; then down zig-zag, back and forth, until it reaches the great cedars lining the pebbled beach of the lake.

We took turns leading the cayuse, and the lead over the mountain into the camp that day had fallen to my lot.

The trail was so loose and steep that the only method of procedure on the part of his cayuseship consisted in a series of mad plunges ahead, followed by a blowing spell, and so on and up, tiring the leader more than any reasonable number of miles of steady climbing could possibly do.

But the hard-won vantage point was so fair when reached that I could neither feel ill repaid for the labor nor even remember it at sight of such an ideal spot for camp. The cayuse was soon relieved of his burden and picketed, and two of us with rods jointed were soon casting the flies out over the smooth water, broken here and there by the rising afternoon breeze.

Our camp was situated near the south end of the lake, and we decided to fish on opposite sides, A—— taking the east shore. Ten minutes' tramp along the beach brought me to a little point of rocks which jutted out into the water for some ten yards, and here I made my first cast. Once, twice, I let the brown and red hackles, always favorites in Western lakes and streams, fall upon the water, and then a flash of light, a short struggle, and I had taken my first trout from Echo Lake. Again and again was the performance repeated as I waded carefully along near the shore, trying every likely bit of water, taking a fine one from where a little point of rock just rose above the surface almost beyond the reach of my cast. The fish made my reel whirr, and bent the light rod almost double as he struggled and threw himself from the water in vain.

Once I roused a pair of wood-duck and their brood from the roots of a hemlock which had fallen into the lake from the bank above, and such a splashing and confusion of cries as there was while they tried to hurry away the little ones, still too young to rise. After the water had quieted I took two fine trout from that very tangle of roots and branches.

So I followed the shore, on and on, until the air grew chilly and the shadows of the great hills on the west lengthened until they stretched across upon the eastern shore and only the blazing tops of the highest firs told that the sun was still shining in the world outside.

Then I retraced my steps to the head of the lake whither A—— had preceded me, and here was in store for me a new surprise.

It was at this point that the principal stream flowed in. Years of noisy toil had enabled it here to fill the lake, which was in most places quite deep, until one might wade out for perhaps a hundred yards without getting over the hips, save where a dark, winding line showed the channel of the stream through the silt and stones. A—— was standing out there, keeping unusually quiet for him, and making long casts out over the channel, and cautiously fluttering his flies upon the ruffled surface. Suddenly there was a heavy swirl, a strike, and his reel fairly sung as the old grandfather of all the trout started for deep water and finally succeeded in carrying away leader and flies.

To say that I lost no time in getting into that would be putting it mildly. All my fish, with an occasional exception, had been comparatively small, and here, it seemed, was the solution of what had before been a mystery.

If the sport had been good down the lake, it was here beyond all expectation. For an hour we moved up and down on opposite sides of the channel, forgetting the chilliness of the water in our enjoyment of such rare sport, and landing the most beautiful fish I ever saw. They taxed our light rods to the utmost. Now and then a fly or leader vanished forever in deep water, but we fished on

until our shoulders were sore with the weight of the filled creels and our lower limbs numb from the cold. Then, as the last ray of sunlight lit up the white cap of Mt. St. Helens and fled, leaving us amid the deepening shadows of forest and mountain, we reluctantly turned our faces toward the light of the camp-fire flickering through the tree-trunks, whence the coo-eing of our companion informed us that supper was ready.

Who can forget such hours as these? Whose pulses would not quicken at the delight of such moments? Whose senses could fail to feel the presence of some higher influence as the stillness of the mountain night surrounds him and his heart swells up with gratitude and kindly feeling toward all mankind?

We had excellent sport upon succeeding days, and the other pleasures and beauties of the trip were many, but none of them could suffice to dull the memory of that first try at the lake.

We ate of the plain camp fare as only those can eat who live in the open air. The firelight made ghostly shadows among the trees and an owl complained of our intrusion from the mountain-side above; then upon our bed of fragrant cedar boughs we lay and looked up through the tops of dark cedars at the blinking orbs whose rays could scarce penetrate the tangled foliage, and, lulled by the faint music of the stream, we fell asleep, grateful that it was our privilege for a little time to live close to the great throbbing heart of Nature.

SUNRISE IN THE CATSKILLS.

BY JEAN LA RUE BURNETT.

THE air is amber; twinkling mist-clouds lie
 Outspread like tapestries in gray and gold,
 Above the mountain summits, fold on fold;
 Soft spirit-winds on dusky wings go by
 Laden with myrrh and frankincense; the sky
 Seems like a sea of foam where free and bold
 The pink star-ships sail on in calm delight,
 And drifting in the offing, fade from sight;
 Deep in the wood—sweet herald of morn—
 A feathered Orpheus winds his liquid horn;
 A hush—then, where the black up-reaching ledge
 Holds high its moss-hung turrets gaunt and grim,
 Like burnished brass the sun's red, smoking rim
 Looms of a sudden o'er the orient's edge.