

which "Guy Ropes" fished out of the sloop's well. "Now we'll make a haul sure," said the skipper as we fell away from the tug and got back on our course. "There's nothing a bluefish likes so well as a bit out of the back of a menhaden." Then he showed us how to cut two baits each an inch long out of the back of the small fish.

We sailed on for an hour, logging off six or seven knots easily. The parson and I were beginning to wonder how long a voyage was necessary to reach the trolling grounds, when the lawyer began to sit up and take notice. He picked up a menhaden and snipped out a bait. He recoiled the line he had pre-empted.

"See those gulls," he said, finally, pointing to a great flock of sea birds which were flying about excitedly not far ahead of us. "We'll get our first fishing there. The blues have run down a school of menhaden, and the gulls are feasting on the scraps."

Soon we were in the field of massacre; and it is a sight once seen never forgotten. There were thousands of the small menhaden flicking the water into foam in their maddened efforts to get away from their tireless, remorseless, insatiable enemies. The bluefish seemed to revel in the slaughter. They were not feeding, but wantonly mangling the menhaden school. Occasionally a bluish back would show on the surface, jaws working like steam-driven shears, cutting, nipping, slashing the pretty, harmless shiners into halves and quarters, which littered the surface all about.

The lawyer, the skipper and the "first hand" had their lines baited and over the stern at the first sign of a "whip." For the parson and myself it was a first experience, and we looked on in disgust at the merciless slaughter by these blue thugs of the sea. Perhaps, the gulls could have given a reason for it, but it made us feel like seeking vengeance for the weaker menhaden. We put out our lines with the rest.

The old skipper got the first strike, as we were advised when he howled for "Guy Ropes" to take the tiller, and forgetting his new Methodist allegiance "cussed" him roundly because he was so slow. We green hands watched him carefully that we might know what to do when our turn came. Bracing himself firmly he began to pull steadily on the line, giving not an inch in spite of the tugs which came at frequent

intervals. The line cut into his hands, toughened as they were with years of fishing, for the fish was a big one and pulled like a locomotive. The skipper set his teeth grimly, and hauled in foot by foot.

At last he had gained all but twenty yards, and the "tide-runner"—as the larger bluefish are known—began to "whip" frequently. The pressure on the line was growing less and a smile spread itself over the skipper's bronze face. In a minute more he would have landed his prize. Then came the tragedy.

"Guy Ropes," who had been managing the tiller with one hand and his line with the other, got a strike, and a mighty one. Naturally he forgot the tiller, and grabbed with both hands at the line, which was running out like a streak. The sloop, left to her own devices, gave a sudden lurch, which tumbled us all in a heap in a corner of the cockpit.

When the skipper got hold of his line again it was trailing over the stern and offered not the least resistance to his tugs. "Guy Ropes'" strike was still hooked, and he was pulling away on it as though nothing had happened. The skipper gave him one look, and followed it with a cuff on the ear. Then he seized upon the unfortunate's line, and for the rest of the day the "first hand" held the tiller.

The parson's first strike came a moment later, and when he pulled a fine eight-pounder over the rail after a twenty-minute fight the Canadian salmon had lost a champion. His hands were bleeding in several places; but he did not mind. "Such a fighter! Such a fighter!" he cried, looking down at the beauty. He bent over to lift the bluefish into the box by the cabin door. Not having been warned of danger, he tackled it as he would a salmon. There was a snap, and the jaws of the bluefish, game to the last, closed like a steel trap on his forefinger. "You thug, you! You pirate!" he cried, when the skipper had pried him free and was binding up the ugly wound. "You don't know when you're whipped!"

Four fine ones were threshing around the box by the time we had crossed the Banks. We put about then, and beat back to the other boundary. The lawyer was hauling them in with the skill of long experience; but it was not my lucky day. I got strikes enough, to be sure; but if there were any tricks the speedy blue boys did not play on me they are not known to the Atlantic tribe.

I was making great headway with the first one

hooked when resistance suddenly ceased and the line hung slack. The skipper said that probably the bait had slipped up the line and had been snapped off by a second fish. Another I lost lifting him into the boat. He got a purchase against the stern with his powerful tail, and I doubt if a steel wire would have held him. With still a third I was careless enough to slacken the line, and the fish ran up above the wire and snapped himself free, I firmly believe by design, not accident.

The Roulette was not alone on the Banks, for several other sloops had sailed down upon us—two from Saybrook through Plum-Gut, others from Gardiner's-Island, and the Montauk lighthouse keeper with a load of resorters. We threshed back and forth in company. Sometimes the smacks drew near together, too near on at least one occasion, when our lines fouled with those of the Donald. The skippers were friends in New-London; but one would never have known it from the way they clamored for "first cuts" and the language with which they tried to shift the blame on each other.

The afternoon slipped away as though our watches had doubled their speed and were reeling off two ticks for one. It fell to me to make the last catch and the largest fish of the day. It was a ten-pounder, a "tide-runner" truly, and my gloves were in shreds by the time I landed him. It was a mighty fight, and more than once I was tempted to hand over the line to one of the others, and rest aching muscles. It ended my allegiance to the trout of the Skykomish. They are fighters; but amateurs. The bluefish is a professional, a thoroughbred, and better sport no man can ask.

There was an aftermath that rounded off the day—the bluefish that "Guy Ropes" broiled to just the right turn. The rusty stove in the little cabin smoked and was otherwise disorderly, but the "first hand" was an expert. He served it on a box in the cockpit, and there was only one fork for the six of us; but I doubt if kings ever enjoyed a meal more than we did that night.

"I forgive you those bad words, 'Guy Ropes,'" the parson was moved to say when he could eat no more.

"I'll forgive you, too," said the skipper following the righteous example; "but don't you ever let go another tiller when I'm haulin' in on a 'tide-runner.'"

"Guy Ropes" was entirely too full of bluefish to do more than broaden his grin.

MODERN BABES IN THE WOOD

Celestine and Cecil were beautiful twins,
The children of Timothy Jones,
Who lives on the square in the manse over there
And is mentioned in reverent tones,

I've Mrs. Jones' word for their wonderful traits,
And their virtues I fain would rehearse;
But whenever they budged they were sadly misjudged
By their sordidly practical nurse.

They were surely the life of the household of Jones,
(They were almost the death of it, too),
And the servants were vexed with the question:
What next
Will that Cecil and Celestine do?

At the first flush of morning they 'woke with a wail,
Which they kept up in relays till night.
They caught the Angora and twisted her tail,
And tumbled down-stairs with delight.

If the duo of cherubs were silent awhile,
It simply meant future unrest—
They were plotting things dire, or starting a fire,
Or robbing the medicine chest.

When Cecil hit sister, then sister would scream
With the voice of a banshee in pain,
Then she'd fall upon Cecil and ragefully wrestle
Till infantile Babel would reign.

If they went for a ramble with Pansy, the nurse,
They shouted for everything near:
They wanted an auto, a push-cart, a hearse,
A brewery dray loaded with beer.

And when nurse refused them the wish of their hearts,
Their keen disappointment was plain,
And again they gave vent to a tearful lament,
Like the voice of a banshee in pain.

Their mother would say: "They have sensitive souls—
You're harsh with them, Pansy, indeed."
But the nurse, when alone, would remark with a moan:
"It's a good Irish shpankin' they need!"

One morning two strangers arrived in the town—
Glum Charlie and Snickering Jo—
They were filled with the zeal of a business deal
For the Amsterdam Kidnapping Co.

By
Wallace Irwin

When they saw the magnificent mansion of Jones,
Jo whispered: "Hi, matey, here's luck!
Old Jones has de shiners and duplicate minors—
We'll pinch de twins lightly and duck."

As Pansy, the nurse, and her intimate, Mae,
Went forth with the twins down the row
There swung into view two policemen in blue
(Of course they were Charlie and Jo).

They lauded poor Pansy's complexion and eyes,
And the ladylike manner of Mae,
Till Mae said: "Tee-hee!" and Pansy: "Law me!"
In a very conventional way.

Thus trifling they came to an isolate wood,
Where Jo to his mate whistled thrice,
Then with impolite curses they handcuffed the nurses,
And seized on the twins in a trice.

As the ladies explained: "We was that took aback!"—
They had certainly screamed if they could—
For they saw the thieves slip the dear babes in a grip
And strike for the depths of the wood.

You'd better believe there was trouble in town
When the loss of the twins was divined.
Mrs. Jones, growing gray, fainted nicely away,
With remarkable presence of mind.

Imperious Timothy Jones beat his breast,
And rushed for the 'phone with a bound.
Called for Major McGeese, the chief of police
And ordered that worthy around.

The chief told the captain, the captain the sergeant,
The sergeant he called out the guard,
Who seized, on suspicion, a drunken physician—
Really they worked very hard.

For he was a genius, the chief of police,
An expert on crime's outs and ins:
So he did all the splendid occasion demanded—
Except to recover the twins.

He made out a schedule, he signed a report,
He ordered his janitor, Jim,
To sweep out the hall—which was certainly all
That could be expected of him.

A week had elapsed when a marvel occurred
Which no one could quite understand—
The bandits came back looking sickly and slack,
And leading the twins by the hand.

They limped to the mansion of Timothy Jones,
And met him with tears in their eyes:
"O, kind mister, please, we've brought you back these,
Though we know it's an awful surprise."

"Poor Charlie" said Jo, "isn't strong in his nerves
(I tell you, I pity's their nuss).
We've handled tough cases in different places,
But these was too peevish for us.

"They squalled and they bellered, they howled and
they yelled.
They kicked off our calves and our shins,
They bit and they scrapped while a-bein' kidnapped.
And they payed us up good for our sins.

"We had to sing lullabies to 'em by night,
We had to amuse 'em by day.
When we gits such a deal we imceejtly feel
That the kidnappin' bizness don't pay.

"We don't want no ransom for bringin' 'em back—
Don't care if they take us to jail.
What we think of as best is a decent night's rest
Far away from a squall or a wail."

The father had lived with the twins a long time,
So he felt for the kidnappers' woe,
And he let 'em go free, giving Charlie a dime
And a quarter to Snickering Jo.

Celestine and Cecil, returned to their home,
Made the hour of deliverance plain,
When the ancestral halls were alive with their bawls,
Like the voice of a banshee in pain.