

Skues and the World's Best Rod— A Sequel

(I am indebted to Colonel R. B. Ullman for seeking out the following additional facts about this rod and to Mr. Adam Kerr for providing them. Ed.)

IT looks as though I do have the Skues rod although regrettably it has suffered with age and probably, mishandling on my part. I seem to recall that Grandfather (S. J. Lamorna Birch, R.A.) said that he had got it for Granny as it was particularly light. I remember that he sometimes let me use it for fishing in the St. Ives reservoir which as you probably know had some good fish — Loch Leven Trout, although I understand that it is now stocked with Rainbow.

The rod has an aluminium case with a brass cap and inside the cap is a paper label saying 'G. E. M. Skues, Flyfishers' Club' — so as they say in the U.S.A., 'we must be close to the home plate!' The rod* is in three sections and the length is now 9ft. 7in. since the tip of the only remaining top section is broken off. The other sections are also much the worst for wear as the whippings have perished and in places I have ham-handedly tried to re-whip them. It's very much a one-handed rod as the reel fits very close to the butt. I had really given it up for a lost cause and now use a rather stiff two sectioned Hardy (I should have bought a three section). I really think it is beyond repair but if you thought there was any hope or alternatively if it would fit in anyone's museum, I could bring it over at Christmas.

The week after next I am off to Manitowlin Island on the North end of Lake Huron to fish for Sea (Lake) run rainbows, coho and chinook salmon. The lamprey control programmes on the Great Lakes have been so successful that it has been possible to maintain good stocks of all these fish and they now spawn in many rivers around the lakes. It is quite fantastic to see these big (25 lb.) salmon

in the small rivers and the rainbows grow to well over 10 lb. Unfortunately it is almost impossible to make them interested in the fly and so it's spoons or stooping very low (as very many Canadian fishermen do) use roe sacks!

I seem to keep on remembering things which I think would interest you. Grandfather let me also have a very fine box of fly tying gear — in fact there was a cupboard but in the folly of my youth I consolidated it. Anyway among the gear were two sheets of paper with 5 flies on one and 8 flies on the other and alongside in rather faded ink are the instructions on how they should be fished and how they should be tied. They don't say who prepared them but wonder if they weren't Skues' creation. A friend of mine a very keen fly fisherman borrowed the box one day and took out the papers and had them framed and presented them to me as a going-away present when I left Ottawa to come to Burlington. The flies are:

Iron Blue Dun
'The Super Bug'
Special Coch-y-Bonndde
Evening Alder
Gold ribbed Hare Lug . . .

February Red
The Diddler
Pink M.B. (March Brown?)
Rusty M.B.
Green M.B.
Yellow M.B.
Dirty Orange
Hackled Apple Green

* The inscription on the butt cap reads:—

The
Leonard Rod
H. L. Leonard Rod Co.
Makers