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Cosmopolitans

*Going Fishing. By Negley Farson.
(Country Life. 10s. 6d.)*

By H. E. BATES

The jacket of Mr. Farson's book is a map. It depicts Mr. Farson among the sturgeon fishers of Central Europe, the gillies of Scotland, in the trout-valleys of the new-occupied France. It shows him poaching in, as near as you can tell, Austria; being shot at by frontier guards in Bulgaria; under threat of some sort of killing in Finland. It shows him as far south as Chile and as far east as the Caucasus, where he discovered that only capitalists fish with fly; as far north as Norway and as far west as British Columbia, where readers of "The Way of a Transgressor" will remember how Mr. Farson kept himself alive for two years on salmon, rejection slips, and the hope of fame.

You do not, however, need to be a fisherman to enjoy this book, any more than you need to be an expert to enjoy fishing. The title is a piece of skillful bait. It is designed to lure you into the reminiscences of an excellent foreign correspondent who spends his off-days, quite properly, in a more intelligent occupation than politics. For fishing, as one of Mr. Farson's American cronies remarked, makes you think; and "what you get out of fishing," as he himself says, "is more than fish." So whether Mr. Farson is fishing for sea-bass off the American coast, or for apple-green, scarlet-spotted trout in the snow-streams of the Caucasus, it is really Mr. Farson and the people he meets rather than the fish that matter.

The book is, in fact, something of a study in international character, and I confess my heart warms to the French peasant in Haute Savoie, showing Mr. Farson how to catch trout with a grub, a two-yard line and a bamboo rod, and equally to the Norwegians who very sensibly used a hundred yards of net in a trout-lake when Mr. Farson was practically drowning himself for one two-pounder, and who called it, in a now much-worn phrase, exercising their independence. These fishermen, together with Mr. Farson's Russians, Scots, Chileans, Central Europeans, Scandinavians, and Americans, are, as I say, a richer part of the book than the fish themselves.

The author has been admirably assisted by Mr. C. F. Tunnicliffe, to whose black-and-white illustrations war-time paper and production have not, however, been notably kind.