Turn the pages of the current issue of any magazine and you are likely to find an article or editorial lamenting the fact that we Americans have become a "bunch of softies," and to our further discredit these lamentations are supported by reports from military men who have, during the past year, had occasion to observe and test the physical condition of thousands of young men. True, there are statisticians who attempt to minimize these derogatory conclusions by quoting figures to prove that today we have record-breaking track men, better football and baseball players, also that we have men with higher ratings in every field of athletics than at any time throughout our history. But even so, such statistics do not prove that all of our young men are superior in physical development to all of the young men of any other generation; it merely shows that while we have struggled to build up winning college and professional teams, composed of men naturally endowed with superior strength and agility, we have been neglecting the boys who sorely need physical development.

This somewhat appealing, yet deluding, situation is not confined to the field of athletics, but it is discernible in all outdoor sports. For many years, all over the nation, conservation of wildlife meant the propagating and protection of fish and game in order that the fishermen would have more fish to catch and the hunter would have more game to kill. Only the skilled hunter and fisher got full benefit of the expenditure of vast sums that were appropriated for the conservation of wildlife, which implication may be assailed by the retort that every person has equal privileges in field and forest, on stream and lake, and that no one is denied the right to avail himself of the benefits of conservation. Likewise, every youngster may have the privilege of playing football, but if he happens to be a weakling, greatly in need of physical development, he doesn't find himself carefully watched and trained by a high-salaried coach.

At the moment I'd be unable to articulate this piece because of an impaired vocal apparatus that received severe strain at a football game last Saturday night, increased in malignancy by unnecessary exposure while fishing a couple of days later, which statements are made for the purpose of clearing myself in advance of any charge of prejudice and intolerance toward sports.

OUTDOOR SPORTS NECESSARY FOR HEALTH BUILDING

My plea is for the underprivileged nature lover, for the vacationer, for the artist, for the photographer, and for those thousands of individuals—men and women—who are too lazy and indolent to leave the highroads and their auto-
mobiles long enough to learn that conservation of wildlife, conservation of forests and streams can, and must, mean a great deal to them and their physically inferior offspring.

Students and workers in social welfare consider recreation a necessity. Never before in the history of our country has there been such determined effort to get people interested in playing outdoors. Health experts declare that if people of this and future generations don’t engage in more strenuous outdoor exercises, that we will become a race of degenerates—and such declarations are made in spite of our enviable records in college and professional athletics.

Only a very small percentage of our population has any desire to fish and hunt and even a lesser portion of them care to play football or any of the other athletic games, and yet the adepts at these sports are the ones for whom great sums are expended in order that their pleasure be assured. And lest anyone get the idea that I am condemning such conditions, let me hasten to say that I wouldn’t have a single fishing hole polluted or a single goal post destroyed. On the other hand, I am now thinking of the thousands of men and women, boys and girls, of this state and of the Nation who ought to be using, every month of the year, the thousands of miles of waterways that we have in Louisiana. The great throng of people who are looking for interesting modes of travel could do no better than to consider the rivers, bayous, lakes, bays, canals and lagoons of Louisiana. The artist can find no landscapes more beautiful than those found along our streams; the innate nature lover and the trained ornithologist can find in no other region of the United States a greater variety of feathered friends than live in the forest haunts along our bayous.

BEAUTIFUL VIEWS CAN BE SEEN FROM WATERWAY TRAVEL

With but little effort and comparatively small expenditures of money thousands of miles of water highways can be made available for people who are tired of assuming the hazards of automobile travel and who want to revert to the adventurous and romantic mode of transportation used by the rugged pioneer of a century ago. The bateau and the pirogue skimming over the lazy water of Bayou Teche have a charm that is not found in the most elegant automobile. From a swiftly moving motor boat a vacationer could see from the streams of Louisiana, during a period of two weeks, more beautiful settings, and experience more interesting situations than would be possible for him to perceive during five thousand miles of railway or automobile travel in any region of the United States.

A family touring the bayous, lakes, canals and lagoons of Louisiana in one of the half dozen types of light water craft, would get more genuine recreation, more hardy enjoyment, and greater physical conditioning than they could through any other mode of travel.

During the past few years our youngsters have been encouraged to pity themselves. They need an infusion of pioneer spirit. They need to emulate Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn.

I can scarcely imagine a trip more thrilling and adventurous for a group of young men than one by way of a fleet of rowboats down a bayou or river that leads to the Gulf. It would be unique experience for them. They would, after a few days, become proud of their calloused hands and rejoice over the discovery that power is concealed in their youthful arms. Their latent pride would be aroused, and they would find joy in the realization that the seat of their pants is not the only part of their raiment that should suffer from wear and tear. This country needs some Tom Sawyers and Huckleberry Finns, and another Mark Twain for these troublous times would be a genuine blessing. We may never again follow the winding pathways of the Father of Waters aboard the old river packets made famous by Mark Twain and Lafcadio Hearn, but we can lure pleasure seekers and vacationers into using our streams with which we are so lavishly blessed.

Several government agencies are combining the country for park and parkways sites. Ancient railroads and Indian traces are being retraced from musty old maps, and every spot of historical value is being marked for future reference. Millions of dollars have been spent and still more will be spent to expand recreational facilities. Thousands of pages have been written to inform the vacationer about
how he can get from here to there as quickly as possible, but little has been done to make him understand that what he most needs is a slowing down of tempo, complete relaxation, a change of mental diet, along with intervals of solitude.

THOUSANDS OF MILES OF NAVIGABLE STREAMS IN STATE

Our waterways have already been built. They were not built by the hands of man. Perhaps that is the reason why streams are so romantic, so poetic. The most tranquil streams in America, and yet, the most charming are those that move slowly, but majestically, through our State, where, "trailing mosses in midair waved like banners that hung on the walls of ancient cathedrals," and where, "the whole air and the woods and the waves seemed silent to listen," and where, "one is lost in a maze of sluggish and devious waters." Perhaps no other romance will live longer on the pages of literature and in the hearts of future generations than "Evangeline".

The fact that it was drawn from history that was partially enacted in our State, provides a stimulus for us to inaugurate waterway tours through this region where live today descendants of the Acadians who provided the motivation in this great epic poem of Henry W. Longfellow's.

There are more than four thousand miles of navigable streams in Louisiana

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* Drawings by Roy Odom.
and in all of them boats operate during some seasons of the year; we have a total area of 3,094 square miles of water, nearly all of which can be made attractive to sportsmen and vacationers.

But while admitting that Providence has been kind to us, we must not deny our own derelictions. We have not given much assistance toward keeping our bayous and rivers clear of obstructions. We are guilty of poisoning them through our feverish desire to expand industries. Many of our streams are polluted during a part of each year, generally in the summer and autumn while there is not sufficient rainfall to dilute poisonous fluids that flow from pulp mills, oil fields, and sugar mills. And for this reason we are not ready to advertise that waterway conditions are ideal in Louisiana—until industrialists and agents of the Conservation Department have perfected a plan to protect the streams from contamination. But progress is being made and satisfactory results may be anticipated, although the problem is a difficult one.

**HISTORY AND TRADITION HAVE MADE US UNIQUE**

There is another obstacle to navigation in Louisiana that will seem strange to people who have never visited our state, and all prospective vacationers from beyond our borders will be amazed to learn that hyacinths grow so profusely that navigation in many streams is seriously impeded. But think of the effect of such advertising as: "We have at last succeeded in cutting boatways through the water hyacinths that obstruct our bayous. These flowers are beautiful, but they grow so luxuriantly in Louisiana that we are forced to cut through them in order that your bateau may glide along safely." Major R. G. Lovett, district engineer at New Orleans, says: "We have the hyacinths under control now. We have given up hope of ever exterminating them, for they grow in the deep swamps and every high water float them out into the navigable bayous and waterways. But with our present facilities for destroying them, we can keep them under control from now on." And so, with assurance, we can say to vacationers, "Don't be afraid that our lovely lillies will spoil your boat trip. Their pastel shades against a solid carpet of green will delight you."

**SOME DAY WATER HYACINTHS WILL BE ONLY DETERMENT**

We should begin the planning of boat tours in anticipation of that day when water hyacinths will be the only enemy to the navigation of small craft through our thousands of miles of waterways. There must be parks and camps along the way. There must be entertainment provided, a la Louisian. Rice festivals, sugar cane festivals and tarpon rodeos are typical of Louisiana, but the bulldogging of bovines is borrowed from the west. History and tradition have made us unique, which should prove quite valuable when we begin inviting vacationers to use our boatways.

Perhaps no cash value can be definitely assigned to waterways for pleasure purposes, yet who will deny the value of stream improvements for such purposes?

Adult salmon on their way to the spawning grounds always swim against the current. No power on earth will force them to swim with the current. They will dash themselves to death against dams and other obstructions in their efforts to get upstream.

Protect Game and Fish. It pays dividends!

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To make navigation possible, lances must be cut through hyacinths that cover some of our bayous.

(Photograph by W. S. Robinson.)