

ADDENDUM.

A CENTURY OF SAWDUST.

Editor Forest and Stream:

I was delighted with the intelligent way in which your correspondent "Piscator" handled the Sawdust question in your issue of Dec. 27th. It is a comfort to listen when a well-informed person speaks, but in those days of callow pretension experience is usually elbowed back from the front.

In my opinion, the famous Mill Brook, of Plainfield, Mass., which has a record of a century as the finest trout-water in the Hampshire Hills, supplies those very conditions and corroborative data which "Piscator" declares are essential to determine what pernicious effects the presence of sawdust has upon the denizens of mill streams. Here is a waterpower which carried no less than thirteen manufactories fifty years ago. These included a tannery, a sawmill, and factories for making brush and broom handles, whipstocks and cheese and butter boxes, all of which discharged more or less sawdust and shavings into the stream; to say nothing of three satinnet factories and a felt hat factory whose waste must have been deleterious to fish life. Most of the buildings have since been destroyed by fire or tumbled into pieces by decay, but the old foundation walls and dams remain, and untold tons of tanbark and sawdust still cover the beds of the abandoned mill ponds knee deep, all of it in a perfect state of preservation, as I happen to know from wading the stream last summer. Nevertheless the brook continues fairly stocked with small trout, despite the supplementary fact that it has been unmercifully fished ever since the memorial days of the "Mountain Miller," fifty fingerlings per rod being not unusual now for a day's catch. Besides, at no time within my recollection have there been less than three sawdust-producing mills on this stream at once, so that it may be asserted that its waters have not been normally clear for a century.

When the current is rapid and the water broken by ledges or boulders, the presence of the sawdust is scarcely perceptible, but at mill-tails, and in the basins above the dams, it accumulates in quantity and remains, becoming water-soaked and sinking to the bottom. Obviously, in localities where the entire bottom is embedded by sawdust, fish can neither spawn nor feed; but it happens that such deposits do not form on their breeding places, nor is the area of their foraging ground appreciably diminished by their presence. Even in the half-emptied and now useless ponds, the current constantly scours out a central channel through the sawdust, leaving the bottom clean and pebbly: so that in fact these local beds are of no more detriment to the fish than so many submerged logs. The trout can range far and wide without encountering them at all. Yet strange to say—that is, it must seem strange to those persons who take it for granted that sawdust kills fish—the most likely places for the larger trout are these selfsame pebbly channels in the old ponds, along whose edges, despite a hundred freshets and iceshoves, the persistent sawdust and tanbark lie in winnowings so deep that the wader feels as if he were going to sink out of sight whenever he puts his foot into the yielding mass, every movement of which stirs up a broadening efflorescence which spreads for rods away, distributing itself throughout the stream. From these sawdust beds I can always fish out three or four good trout with a cautious fly, and at certain times the surface is fairly dimpled with breaking fish which presumably are after larva and insects which the sawdust has harbored, though careful investigation might discover other inducements for their congregating there.

In passing, I would remark, that this Mill Brook is fed by seven lateral brooklets which tumble into it from the adjacent hillsides at intervalles between dams, and are so effectively protected by overgrowth that they must always serve as prolific breeding