

# Field Sports at Home and Abroad

## THE OPENING OF THE TROUT FISHING

Here's a health to every sort of stream that harbors speckled trout.  
And a health to those that put them in and those that pull them out!  
Here's a health to every sporting fish that rises to the fly,  
To the fish that likes it sunken and the fish that takes it dry!

Here's a health to every angler in whatever land or clime,  
With a sop to Lady Fortune and a wink for Father Time!

Here's a health to those that never know the limits of their luck,  
And a bumper to the duffers like myself, who chance and chuck!

The fishing season is open. The weather seems likely to be propitious, the trees are budding, so the trout should be rising. Brothers of the cut are casting care behind them and have hied them to lake, stream, and estuary, to put their skill once more to the test and match their wits against the sagacity of the lusty trout, and salmon. Here's "tight lines" to all good brothers of the rod.

## READINGS FROM THE OLD MASTER

### The Trout and His Seasons

The trout is a fish highly valued, both in this and foreign nations. He may be justly said, as the old poet said of wine, and we English say of venison: "To be a generous fish." A fish that is so like the buck, that he also has his seasons; for it is observed that he comes in and goes out of season with the stag and buck. Gesner says his name is of a German offspring; and says he is a fish that feeds clean and purely in the swiftest streams, and on the hardest gravel; and that he may justly contend with all the fresh water fish, as the mullet may with all the sea fish—for precedence and daintiness of taste; and that being in right season, the most dainty palates have allowed precedence to him.

And next you are to notice that he is not like the crocodile, which, if he lives ever so long, yet always thrives till his death; but 'tis not so with the trout, for after he is come to his full growth, he declines in his body and keeps his bigness, or thrives only in his head till his death. And you are to know that he will about, especially before the time of his spawning, get, almost miraculously, through weirs and floodgates, against the stream even though such high and swift places as is almost incredible. Next that the trout usually spawns about October or November, but in some rivers a little sooner or later; which is the more observable, because most other fish spawn in the spring or summer, when the sun hath warmed both the earth and water and made it fit for generation. And you are to note that he continues many months out of season; for it may be observed of the trout, that he is like the buck or the ox, that he will not be fat in many months, though he go in the very same pastures that horses do, which will be fat in one month, and so you may observe that most other fishes recover strength, and grow sooner fat in season than the trout doth.

And next you are to note, that till the sun gets to such a height as to warm the earth and the water, the trout is sick, and lean and lousy, and unwholesome; for you shall, in winter, find him to have a big head, and then, to be lank and thin and lean, at which time many of them have sticking on them bugs or trout-lice; which is a kind of a worm in shape like a clove, or pin with a big head, and sticks close to him, and sucks his moisture those, I think, the trout breeds himself, and never thrives till he frees himself from them, which is when warm weather comes, and then, as he grows stronger he gets from the dead still water into the sharp streams, and the gravel-and, there, rubs off these worms or lice; and then, as he grows stronger, so he gets into swifter and swifter streams, and there lies at the watch for any fly or minnow that comes near to him; and he especially loves the May-fly, which is bred of the cod-worm or caddis, and these make the trout bold and lusty, and he is usually fatter and better meat at the end of that month than at any time of the year.

Now you are to note that it is observed that usually the best trouts are either red or yellow, though some, as the Fordidge trout, be white and yet good, but that is not usual; and it is a note observable that the female trout hath usually a less head, and a deeper body than the male trout, and is usually the better meat. And not that a hog back and a little head, to either trout salmon or any other fish is a sign that the fish is in season.

## THEN AND NOW

The afterglow lingered long in the sky that evening, for it was Midsummer Day and settled weather. The west was a sea of pale primrose, where a few long purple cloud-islands floated. It was as if one stood on a height above some fairy Benbecula, flat, dove-colored, and marked its coastline of innumerable inlets (where celestial sea trout ran) reach out forever to a horizon that was not. Behind me a peerless spire soared from amidst the dark green of elms, as if it would lose itself in the rose of the upper air. I stood on ancient turf,

which had laid its seemly carpet of green velvet between odorous flower beds and tall, trim hedges, straight to the old house, where shone a single red window. Ten inches below my feet flowed the river, primrose out of that primrose sea, broad, where night already dwelt. Large, oily rings appeared here and there upon the surface of the water, spread, died away, were succeeded by others, larger, oilier. The stillness was broken only by the purring flight of bats and the sound of great fish, feeding rapidly, greedily on sedge flies. I cast and cast. The frenzy was upon me that is born of the last moments of daylight, a rise of the bigones, and—an empty creel.

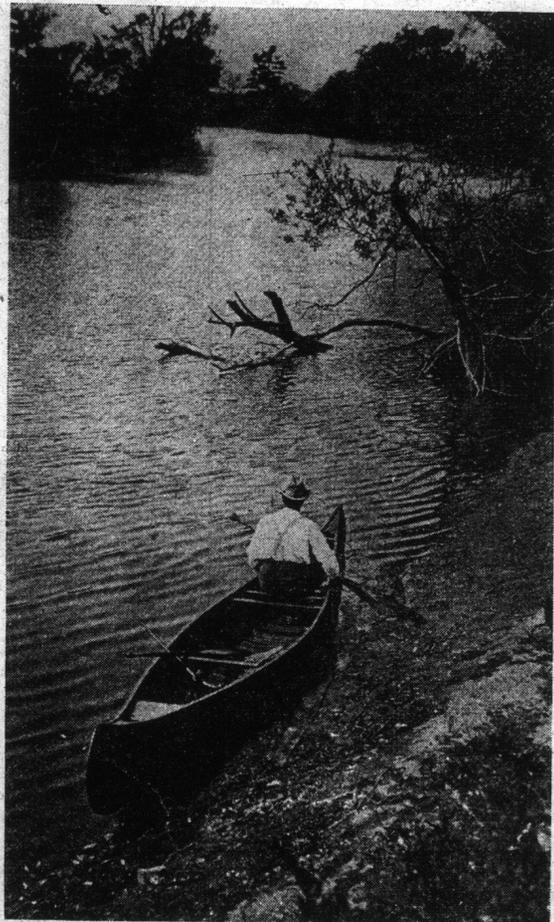
Over the turf silently there came towards me a dim figure, which as it approached resolved itself into the likeness of a lively old man, clothed in black, with an apron and gaiters upon his shapely legs and a low-crowned, broad hat upon his head. His rojnd cheeks were apples; his nose was colored by nothing

not be satisfied with verbal evidence. "Tush, tush!" he observed, "what make of angler is this?" I considered whether I might without all loss of self-respect, take this venomous ancient by his admirable middle and heave him into the river. I decided that at all cost I must keep my hands off him. I owed my fishing to a churchman, and the clergy hang together.

I busied myself with casting above some particularly oily rings. "And yet," he remarked critically to the sunset, "he throweth deftly and far. But why kneeleth he?"

I rose abruptly and went fifty yards up stream. I have never done a ruder thing, but what I could have done had I not been resolved to show him forbearance. I stared miserably at water which nothing broke. The first spectral wreaths of the river mist were lightening the darkness under the further bank.

"Good master"—unheard he had rejoined



The Philosophic Angler

Photo from Recreation.

but the soundest port; yet his eyes were bright and youthful—a round, comfortable elder. Lace ruffles were at his wrists and a pair of bands depended below his two ample chins. I assumed him to be some dignitary of the cathedral with an old-fashioned taste in dress. A huge creel was slung over his plump shoulders, and in his hand he bore a tremendous fishing rod. These things placed him among the fraternity.

He said, "Master, well met!" and I understood him to be a facetious old gentleman. Humor was out of harmony with my mood, but I strove to be civil. "Gramercy!" said I, "vastly well met!" He did not smile, and I put him down as one of those humorists whom their own wit alone entertains, and went on fishing. Minutes were precious. I was aware that he remained beside me. Presently: "So ends another merry Midsummer Day," he observed, and I heard a faint sigh follow the words. "It has brought me right good sport, whose memory shall sweeten all my long year." Evidently he got a day on the water each season. I tried to be glad that he had done well—I said I was; but my voice was not convincing. He detected its false ring instantly. "And you, good master," he said, "have caught, I doubt not, an honest store of fishes?" I said, not too amiably (or too truthfully—but who can blame me?) that I had risen several big trout, but had grassed nothing all day. This latter statement the condition of my creel made necessary. He was just the sort of complacent old creature who would

me—"prithce suffer a brother angler to make closer acquaintance with that so far-throwing wand." I held out my split cane to him dumbly. He did not take it, but he bent over it, peering at it through the small square spectacles he wore. "Aye," he said, "a pretty tool and a valiant. But what device is this?" "That," said I, in scorn of him, "is the reel. You perceive, simple sir, that the line, passing through these excellently contrived rings upon the so-valiant wand is retained upon a central drum, and may be drawn off!" (I drew some off) "or rolled up at will by the miraculous turning of this deft little pin." I wound up, as ironically as I might.

Again my humor failed to touch him. His eyes were round with amazement and delight. "Is it even so?" he breathed reverently. I perceived that I had to do with a lunatic or with a supreme artist, in either of which cases everything must be forgiven him. Humoring him or playing up to him—I cared not which, for the rise was over—I indicated the gut trace. "This," I said, "is the gut, made by extending the entrails of transparent." So how strong it is, and how transparent." I tugged on it. "And see, here is the fly—a sedge. There are five hundred other patterns (sold at half a crown a dozen), all of which I have in these boxes." I opened my creel, and permitted him to peep within. "This," I went on, "is my bottle of paraffin oil, with which I anoint the fly to make it float more yarely, and so deceive and master these subtle fishes. There are the pincers with which I pick my flies out of their

boxes. Here is a tube of dubbin—I smear it on my line, reverend sir, and this causes it to float most excellently. Thus with but one little twitch I do hook the brutes. Here is a piece of blotting paper to dry my flies withal if haply they be wetter. Here—"

"Good gentleman," he said, interrupting, "no more, I pray you! I am dazed. Tell me but one thing. How cometh it that with so many cunning aids thy skill, which sufficeth surely, as I have seen, hath brought nothing to land in a long day's angling?" I was silent. A question at once more pertinent and more important had never been put to me, or one less easy to answer. "Behold," he said, "these my own unworthy weapons. My wand a single timber shoot of ash, my line tied to its tip; three twisted strands from the tail of my good grey mare, and my two great bouncing bumbles fashioned by these fingers from the hackles of my old game-cock that died gloriously in Will Andrew's pit a semit come Tuesday." As I looked at the dreadful tackle my heart swelled with pity for the man. But he had said something about good sport. Well, there were chub in the river; he might conceivably have caught a brace of chub.

"And yet," he went on, "see what I have taken." As he spoke he unslung his creel, inverted it, and upon the grass there poured a cascade of trout—fat, golden, ponderous. Instantly I removed my hat. Lunatic or fantastic, here was my master. "There be a dozen and three," he said in a satisfied voice. "The others are above, concealed beneath a bush. These since seven of the clock." "The others," I gasped, "how many, in Heaven's name?" "Threescore and two," he announced simply. "Look you!"—he moved the heap of fish with his hand, and disclosed a stupendous fish of about 6lb. weight—"here is a shapely gentleman. A gladsome time he gave me, forcing me to cast all twice to the river. But the floating wand betrayed him. I rode, my pony in to him, and now he is mine!"

"You rode your pony?" "Ay, marry! I'm not so young as I was, and old Tom has carried me since noon. He has gone round to stable for my turf is not for hooves to tread." "Your turf?" "Ay, marry!" said the old gentleman carelessly, as he placed the fish back in the creel. "Fah!" he exclaimed, weighing the thing in his hand, "I have seen a worse evening's fishing. Trust me! There is two stone in there, my master!" As he spoke the strap gave beneath the inordinate weight of chalk-stream trout, and slipped through his fingers. The creel fell to earth. I stooped—for this man was worthy of all reverence—and picked the thing up, bracing myself unconsciously to lift it. My body flew upwards with a jerk which caused me severe pain, and when I had recovered from the shock of surprise the creel was in his hands. In the gathering darkness I must have failed to take hold of it.

"Sir," he said, "I thank you. And now I will even wish you a good night's rest, and, an you angle on the morrow, a fair south wind and a dark water." So saying, he began to move silently away. "But don't you fish tomorrow!" I cried. It would be an education to see this angler at work.

The river mist was now thickening fast, and partly by the faint pallor in the west, which was all that remained of Midsummer Day, partly by the golden glow of the elms in the close, I could see his vague but comfortable shape ambling softly from me. "Let me see you fish tomorrow," I called. "Nay, nay!" he replied, his voice lessened by distance, "not tomorrow, gentle sir; I must wait my year—my long, long year." Again I heard the gentle sigh, and with it the dark shadow that was my acquaintance became one with the blackness that filled a space between two ageless yews.—W. Quilliam, in The Field.

## FLY FISHING FOR BLACK BASS

I agree fully with Dr. Henshall that, ounce for ounce, inch for inch, there is no fish of the sweet waters that can excel the small-mouthed black bass in game qualities and cleverness. At times these fighters are erratic and almost hysterical in their actions and treatment of different baits and lures. The experience to which attention is called deals only with fly casting on a beautiful lake nesting among the hills of New Hampshire. This lake always had a bad name among fishermen who tried their skill there, for only small fish were taken, and those few in number. The reason, I believe, after investigation, was the large supply of land-locked smelts in the deeper waters, and the bass were so well fed and so shy that the ordinary worm, grasshoppers, crickets, minnows, frogs, etc., were no temptation at all. Plenty of large fish had frequently been seen and one or two hooked, but not landed.

This particular lake was almost like a crystal in its absolute clearness. Its waters were cold all the time, as its source of supply came from living springs alone. It was about two o'clock in the afternoon that I first saw this charming bit of water. The sun was shining brightly and a stiff breeze was blowing. In addition squalls of fierce wind added their power every few minutes, whipping the surface into froth and spray against the rocks. It was difficult to manage a boat, and still harder to control a cast at all; but it was ideal weather for hard work, as neither the boat nor sportsman, line nor leader could be made out clearly by the bass in their watery, rock-girdled home. A reef of rocks was selected as the best place, for here many large fish had been observed when the waters were smooth.

The first essential factor was to row the boat far up to the weather shore, then turn her



## Sportsman's Calendar

### MARCH

Sports for the Month—For the angler: Trout-fishing after March 25, grilse and spring salmon fishing. For the shooter: Geese and brant, which may be shot but not sold.

March 25—Opening day of trout-fishing season.

N.B.—March is one of the best months of the year for spring salmon trolling, and for brant shooting.

Broadside and drift down towards the reef, thus giving two men an equal chance to cast, and this we did. I used a yellow-belly (worsted) Montreal and an oriole, the gentleman with me a green drake and a split ibis. At the first cast I struck a bass that weighed 4½lb. He fought hard, long, and well, jumping clear of the water some five or six times. He was brought to net. Then my companion struck a 3½lb. bass, an excellent fighter, and I gave him the net. When we had drifted too near we began all over again, and the sport kept up until the twilight fell. None of the small fish were kept, but all unhooked and returned to their home. The catch was just 26½lb., and not a fish that did not weigh over 2lb.

It seemed to be rather remarkable that so many large fish were taken while the wind was so violent and unsteady. Not only were these fish of all sizes good fighters, but they were extremely clever. One big chap, who rose well and whom I struck sharply and surely, jumped high out of the water several times and then made for the bottom. I could not hold him with the light rod with which I was fishing, and were were too near the reef to pull the boat into deeper water; so he selected a large rock that had a V-like split in it, drew my line into it, and then wound himself up about another rock. I could not dislodge him, for it was difficult to keep the boat in hand, so after a bit he rubbed my leader against the rocks, until it parted quite near the line. I lost him, naturally; but I enjoyed the battle, and I only hope that he freed himself from that Montreal fly, and that he will live long and be able to give good battle again.

The next day there was still good sport, fish about the same size taken, but not so many—a total in weight of 18½lb.; but the wind blew from a different quarter and died down long before sunset. This, in my opinion, made the difference. After my luck was noised abroad other sportsmen tried fly casting there, but without good results. The lessons learned might be enumerated. Do not give up because a lake has a bad name if fishes have been seen in its waters often. Cast your flies during a good strong breeze, always drift towards the place selected. Use two flies at first, and if a companion be with you let him use a different set. Then if there be selective tendency shown the popular taking fly can be used only. Always soak well both flies and leaders that are to be used. Strike a black bass fairly hard. Do not try and net a big fish until he has been well played.—F. M. Johnson, Boston, Mass.

It will be a welcome announcement to all anglers when we hear that the dispute with the Dominion Government over the control of our fisheries is at last settled. Then we may get something done in the matter of the protection of our best rivers; those of them within easy reach of town are in sore need of it.

Quite a lot has been written lately in different papers about the possibility of catching our salmon with the fly, so much so indeed that the old fallacy pushed by now be almost dispelled and the doubting should at last believe that Pacific salmon will take a fly at the right time and place. In a river where there are no places where the fish can lie and feed on their way up from the salt water they can be caught with the fly. Not all our rivers are suitable for fly-fishing for salmon. But it is possible to make such places in a river, as has been demonstrated not only in the Old Country, but also here on Vancouver Island, and were the Provincial Government in control of the fisheries, we might perhaps prevail on them to spend a little money making salmon pools on some of our best known rivers.

Vladivostok is getting electric cars. Longer straps will have to be put in to accommodate the Japs.