



## Canadian Natural History.

### The Brook Trout.

(*Salmo fontinalis*, of America; *Salmo fario*, of Europe)

THE speckled Trout belongs to the same family as the salmon, and is so well known as to require no description at our hands. His beautiful figure, his gay colours, and the gracefulness of his motions have been celebrated by statesmen, Divines, and poets, from the days of Isaac Walton down to the present time. No mere description, however, can do him justice. He must be seen in his native element to be fully appreciated.

Nowhere is this fine fish found in greater abundance, or in finer condition, than in the northern regions of this continent. He is equally the delight of the sportsman and the epicure. Next to the salmon, he stands unrivalled not only as a game fish, but as a dainty for the table.

By some writers, the brook Trout of America is considered distinct from the common Trout, *salmo fario*, of Europe. A careful study of the arguments advanced in support of this theory, as well as a minute examination of the American Trout and his European congener have failed to convince us of its soundness. Their manners, their haunts, their prey, and the mode of taking it are quite identical; while the same remark holds good in respect to colour, shape, and the artificial lures used by sportsmen to capture this fine fish wherever it is found. Considerable emphasis has been laid on the fact that great diversity of colour is observable in the trout of different localities. From this circumstance endless attempts have been made in England and elsewhere to distinguish and define fresh species. In our opinion, these attempts have signally failed. The observant sportsman cannot have failed to notice that even in the same river the fish of two pools, separated even

by a few rods, are frequently of an entirely different hue. Indeed, it has been proved by most indisputable experiments, within late years, that the Trout, as well as some other fishes, possesses a wonderful control over his colour. He can, in fact, adapt the shade of his skin to the colour of the element in which he is placed. When we weigh the great influence of light in the production of colours, and then consider how the transmission of light through waters of different degrees of purity, colour and density, affects the light itself, we probably may have got some clue to the right interpretation of this phenomenon. This subject of colour in the trout, however, would demand for its ventilation more space than we can spare for the entire article.

The Trout inhabits none but the purest waters, such as mountain streams, spring brooks, and lakelets, in which the water is pure and cold. Their growth depends much upon the size of the stream they occupy; if in a small brook, they would rarely exceed from four to six ounces in weight; but if placed in a large river, or lakelet, they may attain to as many pounds, or even more.

Their food consists of aquatic insects, and small fishes. They are remarkably shy and wary, but when domesticated, will become so tame and gentle, as to take food from the hand. Of all fish, this is the most desirable for fish culture, and should be selected in preference to any other, provided the quality of the water will be congenial to its wants.

The spawning season commences about the first of October, and continues nearly two months, but a majority are through by the 15th or 20th of the month. They invariably seek very shoal, gravelly rapids for depositing their eggs, and prepare their beds by digging a cavity of from one to two feet in diameter, and two or three inches in depth; by agitating the water in these beds, the fine sand and earthy matter is got clear of, leaving the bottom of the bed covered with clear coarse gravel.

There can be no more delightful recreation than angling for this game fish; and no disciple of the

gentle art can read the following lines from Thompson without feeling a thrill of delight:

"Just in the dubious point, where with the pool,  
Is mix'd the trembling stream, or where it boils  
Around the stone, or from the hollow'd bank  
Revered, plays in undulating flow;  
There throw nice-judging, the elusive fly;  
And as you lead it round in artful curve,  
With eye attentive mark the springing game.  
Straight as above the surface of the food  
They waken rise, or urged by hunger leap,  
Then fix with gentle twirl, the barbed hook,  
Some, lightly tossing to the grassy bank,  
And to the sheltering shore, slow dragging some,  
With various hand, proportioned to their force,  
If yet too young, and easily deceived,  
A worthless prey scarce bends; our pliant rod,  
Him, plumes of his youth and the short space  
He has enjoyed the vital light of Heaven,  
Soft disengage and back into the stream  
The speckled captive throw. It should you lure  
From his dark haunt beneath the tangled roots  
Of pendant trees, the monarch of the brook  
Behooves you then to ply your finest art.  
Long time he, following cautious, scans the fly,  
And oft attempts to seize it, but as oft  
The duple water speaks his jealous fear.  
At last, who haply o'er the shaded sun  
Passes a cloud, he desperate takes the death  
With sudden plunge. At once he darts along,  
Deep struck, and runs out all the lengthened line,  
Then seeks the farthest ooze, the sheltering weed,  
The cavern'd bank, his old recurrence,  
And flies aloft and flourishes round the pool  
Indignant of the gull. With yifling hand,  
That feels him still, yet t. his furious course  
Gives way, now, now retiring, following now,  
Across the stream, exhaust his kilo rage,  
Till floating broad upon his breathless side,  
And to his fate abandoned, to the shore  
You gaily drag your unresisting prize."

Whether the Trout and other fish really mistake our artificial flies for different species of natural ones, as Englishmen hold; or for something good to eat, the colour whereof strikes their fancy, as Scotchmen think, is a matter about which much good sense has been written on both sides. Mr. Stewart of Edinburgh, in his admirable "Practical Angler," discusses the subject with great ability, and seems to prove the correctness of his countrymen's theory. The same writer handles another mistake, incident to the laziness of fallen man—that of fishing down stream and not up—with great skill. Every tyro should read what Mr. Stewart says on this point. "By fishing up stream, even against the wind, he will, on an average, kill twice as many trout as when fishing