

I was not over four or five inches long, not up to the lawful length of six inches, and after carefully extracting the hook he returned it to the water with, "Shucks, ye ain't big enough for good bass bait; hie off under yer log an' stay there till ye git big enough to make a smell in a fryin' pan."

He took a couple more of about the same size and then moved on up stream muttering something about "an old crank a-ketchin' minners with a bass rod." We fished the creek for half a mile or more, counting in the "kinks." Ben ahead and out of sight most of the time and found it literally swarming with trout, but of small size.

In one pool, however, where the water was near five feet deep and almost hidden by closely packed drift and logs, I saw four or five good sized ones—a half to three-quarters of a pound in weight perhaps—lazily fanning the gravelly bottom with their fins, all unconscious of my presence, for I had walked softly out on one of the tree trunks lying clear across the stream to where I could see the bottom through the only opening in the mass of drift that promised room to lower the hook into the water. Moving cautiously back a step or two and "skortening" the rod I dropped the baited hook through the opening till it struck the water, when it was instantly seized with a furious jerk that made my hair bristle, and in a twinkling I had a splendid dark backed fellow half out of water through the rift, but a flirt of his tail against the log tore the hook loose and he went out of sight in a flash. He must have left a streak of information after him as he darted under the bank, warning his mates of the narrow escape he had made, for a half hour's patient and persistent fishing failed to "restore confidence in the pool."

A cautious look through the opening revealed nothing in sight but the crystal water and I took my way up stream after Ben in the tangle and drizzle with a heart bowed down with disappointment and defeat.

We left the stream about the middle of the afternoon with fifty six trout, a few of them quarter-pounders, and we had besides put back in the water nearly as many more that we thought were under the lawful size of six inches.

I recall the score from the mental notebook: Hyperboler twenty-nine, Hickory twenty-seven, but the chief glory of the day's sport rested with Hickory, for he had "lost the big one."

A due north course soon brought us out into the road, where we were shortly overtaken by a couple of country lads going after the cows down by the lake side, and in the course of a trouty conversation with them, Ben gathered that the older one had taken a nineteen-inch trout with fat pork bait a few weeks before out of the stream near the point where we had just left it. There are no doubt many good-sized trout in Maybert's Creek, although we got none of them in fishing it three or four times while in camp. However, it is alive with small ones, and if the count fisher and the trout-hog will let it rest for two or three years, an honest angler could now and then get a day of "pure delight" with rod and worm or plau side meat out of its shaded pools, and think nothing of the loss of a section of cuticle from his ship or the labor of working his way through the "bresh" along its sinuous course.

But it is idle to hope that it will be let alone. The trout-hog and the "resorter" and the dude fisherman from the city, with kuce breeches and "mutton chops," will scent it from afar, and the native mossback will diligently "thrash its waters" with a total disregard of the beginning or ending of the close season. The hog, the dude and the resorter will fish it for numbers; the mossback for meat. To him a trout is a trout whether two inches or two feet long, and represents so many mou'fuls, more or less, of "succulent sustenance."

Verily the days of the wild *Salvelinus* (this will have to stand good for trout till some aspiring half-fledged naturalist digs up a name from the original Choctaw with more "priority" to it) are numbered, unless some better law is enforced to give the fingerlings a chance to grow up.

But how is one to tell the length of a trout in the water when he takes the bait under a log and out of sight, and how are you to prevent the little ones from taking the fly or bait? The Michigan law says (I write from memory): "It shall be unlawful for any person to take trout under six inches in length." If we take one only five and a half inches long, do we satisfy the law by returning it to the water? In many cases, in freeing the hook from a small fish it is unavoidably wounded so it will die even if returned to the water. If we keep it and take it to camp, we violate the statute; if we put it back in the water dead or hurt it so it will not recover, do we not break the law by complying with it?

Somebody show us the way out of the fog.

But after all I don't see why trout fishing is to be classed as the sport *par excellence* for the angler, although there is a fascination in it not to be accounted for, and I am not ready to admit that a six-inch trout is superior in game qualities to a six-inch small-mouthed bass. If there is more sport in handling a pound trout than there is in handling a bass of the same weight with the same tackle—and I deny it—it must be solely because he is a trout and not a bass, and because he has the "priority" over the bass in the matter of a fighting record. *Micropterus dol.* (the latest name out I believe, but it is getting a trifle old) is building up a reputation, however, as a fighter of many parts, and he has come to stay.

And while in a fighting vein it might be mentioned that a six-inch "blue gill" will kick up a fight with great celerity, and to my notion is about as tough a customer to handle as a trout of the same length, though not so long-winded, and when you have taken one you can hold up your head and exult over the victory, and not feel that you are a culprit in the eye of the law, as you do after subduing a fingerling trout.

Old Ben says, "There's jest as much fun a flippin' out good big chubs an' shiners as there is in ketchin' them little sucklin' trout;" and I am inclined to fall in with Ben's way of thinking, even at the risk of having a figurative rock shied at me for an old foggy who believes there are some other good fish besides trout, and that plain bass fishing with fly, and even minnow and frog, is "good enough for the Joneses."

As we stepped back in the boat to start for camp Ben tied the trout over the side to "freshen 'em up like," as he said, and after bailing out a few gallons of water with an old peach can, said with his usual gravity of speech, "Hickory, 'pears to me we've struck out to a new kind o' trout in that creek. What's the matter with callin' 'em *Sal-mo infantalis*, an' gittin' Jim to publish it in his paper fur a new species discovered by his nibs, Professor Hyperboler Jones?" And then the old bronze-back scraped a match and hovered over it to keep the wind from blowing it, chuckling to himself, I fancied, at the neat manner in which he had relieved him-

self of this "fool notion" that had been weighing him down for the last half mile.

We found the happy family somewhat out of sorts at the state of the weather, for it still rained, and the wind was cold and raw, and worse than all, the lake was most of the time too rough to fish, but a yell of "trout" from Ben worked a magic change in the camp. Rain, cold and wind were forgotten, as the girls came trooping out of the big tent to see our "speckled beauties" (a brand new name for trout that it is hoped will cause old "priority" to take a back seat) where Ben had spread them out on the table in a manner to make the best showing, as any other conscientious angler would have done. The Editor lost interest in a game of cribbage that old Dan and Muller were hotly contesting despite the chill in the air, relieved his long suffering camp stool of its burden, shook himself together, and came in under the fly to cast a mouth-watering glance at the spread out and give vent to his feelings in a regretful, "wish I had gone with you two old lunatics this morning;" and then the Philosopher came crawling out of the "Knots" tent, where he had been cat-napping, and expressed his satisfaction at the catch; and finally from the big tent, in measured rumble from Muller, "fifteen two, fifteen four, and a pair," and from the old Pelican in a sort of "umpirish" tone that implied a strong leaning to the "national game" even in matters of crib, "game called on account of rain, let's go and see the trout;" and at last the entire Jones family were under the big fly, all talking at once and all talking trout, utterly unmindful of the weather and all happy, with Ben and the Skipper a couple of lengths ahead in the matter of "complacent serenity," notwithstanding we were "a trifle stiff in the joints," as Ben said, "an' hungry as a sucklin' wolf."

Bob and Kit were at once seized with a desire to catch a trout, but when told of the difficulties a woman would labor under in getting through the "bresh" with skirts and the other flummery they are usually oppressed with, their ardor cooled somewhat, but I have no doubt had not the scheme been discovered and the enterprise nipped in the bud, these two mischievous madcaps would have "snacked out papa's two old pair of extra breeches," rigged themselves out for the occasion and made a trip to Maybert's Creek or some nearer stream the very first time I was out of camp for a day with the bass. But "the best laid scheme o' mice and girls are oft knocked higher'n a kite" (slightly altered from Burns) and the twins are yet pining over that lost opportunity to distinguish themselves as trout fishers.

The trout were dressed and many of them, notably the smaller ones, were found to be full of spawn, and this raised the question, how long will the wild trout last in Michigan or any other place, if they are allowed to be taken during at least a month while the females are full of eggs? Is it any more destructive to leave the season open up to the very day of spawning? We fish for trout all through the month of August, till darkness drives us from the stream on the 31st day, when the season closes, because the law allows it, but we don't seem to realize that we kill the goose that lays the golden egg every time we take a fish that is in spawn, and lessen our chance for sport for each succeeding year till the streams will be utterly barren. But we all do it, and will keep on doing it to the end, simply, perhaps, because it is not unlawful, and yet I don't believe there is a solitary, conscientious angler in the land but will say it is wrong to kill a fish that is full of eggs. And this may apply as well to early spring bass fishing.

This little digression may be something for the honest angler to think over, but it is not intended to reach the trout hog and the count fisher, nor yet the native and the dude; they will fish in season and out of season; they never put a fish back in the water, alive or dead; some of them would shoot a timid mother doe with a week-old fawn pulling at the teat.

At breakfast next morning the trout were so toothsome that Ben was moved to say: "Ef there's any fish that has more of a flavor to it than another, strikes me it must be a trout; beats side meat clean out o' sight," and as he deftly extracted the backbone from his second one and dropped a section of the savory flesh into the rift in his countenance, he added, with a glance up and down the table, "guess James Mackerel an' me'll hev to slip over an' ketch another mess o' them minners in a day or two," and then, as Kit turned to help Mother Jim to another "minner," the old sinner hastily gathered all the fish bones within his reach and furtively deposited them alongside of her plate. When she faced around to replace the trout dish (a tin pan), she discovered the sudden accumulation of bones, but aside from a flash of color in her face and a quick glance at the old culprit, she showed no sign of anything amiss. Ben stirred his coffee in an absent-minded sort of way, meantime delighting little Top with a yarn about "a famous place jest around the pint, where he would take her some fine day when it quit rainin', where she could hev dead loads o' fun with the sunfish."

As the yarn was finished, he solemnly passed the trout pan to Kit with: "It's 'stonishin' what Michigan air an' a few days' campin' out'll do in the way o' creatin' an' appyтите fur fish in some gals. Ef Miss Kit keeps on the way she's started in an' don't git a backset, it'll keep her daddy an' me a hustlin' aroun' to ketch trout enough fur her from the look o' that pile o' bones."

Top clapped her hands and laughed in great glee (Top had suddenly become Ben's fast crony on account of the promised frolic with the sunfish), and her happy laugh seeming to be infectious, the whole camp "joined in," even the usual gravity of old Dan's face relaxed into a broad grin, and Kit was forced to follow the example of the others to hide her confusion.

A morning or two after, however, Ben inadvertently sweetened his coffee with salt in place of sugar, and as he emptied the cup behind him after the first taste, he looked at Miss Kitty, who sat opposite, and remarked, without the twitch of a muzzle in his mirth-provoking old face, "Must a some o' them trout bones got into that coffee from the taste of it," and we knew that retribution had overtaken him at the hands of Miss Innocence across the table, who was demurely stirring her coffee with a complacency that betokened a keen satisfaction in getting even with "Hyperboler."

Miss Top felt it her bounden duty to laugh at about everything "Uncle Ben" said, and when she bubbled over it started the others, older heads and all, and merriment and hilarity reigned in the Kingsfishers' camp despite the rain, that kept up a steady, monotonous patter on the canvas overhead. But it takes little to make one laugh in the woods, when all the cares and worries of life have been left behind. A whole camp will roar at an asinine remark that ought to be the death warrant of the perpetrator. Old, stale jokes that have been worked over and done service for years, that

have lost all their edge and brightness from oft recurring use, are brought forth and burnished up in the light of the camp fire till they are almost as good as new and we laugh at them and enjoy them with the same keen zest that we did a score of years gone by. Some one has said all this before, and I quote it, in effect, only because it is so true. The camp in the woods, too, is a great equalizer. The clerk stands as high as his employer, the owner of a block of bricks; the shover of the plau sleeps and snores under the same blanket with the dignified judge; the undertaker cracks business jokes with the dispenser of physic; the sun-browned follower of the plow ranks equal to the M. C. "from the flat-rock deestrick," and all partake with equal relish of the same stew concocted in the same old blackened and battered camp kettle that has weathered half a score of rough campaigns. In the woods social distinctions are lost sight of; no lines of caste are there to mar good fellowship, albeit lines are often cast, and all the certificate required for admission to the circle around the camp fire is a love of rod, gun and the woods, and to be possessed of the instincts of a sportsman, which are always gentlemanly; and I am going to record it that I don't take any stock in the terms true sportsman and gentleman sportsman, for I take it a sportsman can be nothing but a gentleman, however, a gentleman may not be a sportsman, but "sportsman" covers the whole ground, whether he be a respected Governor of a State or the humblest woodchopper in the pineries.

But the trout bones have led into a digression.
KINGFISHER.

CINCINNATI, Ohio.
THE TROUT OF SUNAPEE LAKE.

Editor Forest and Stream:
Food makes trout grow. After the interesting letter of Mr. Livingston Stone, in last week's issue, it seems needless to cite instances from the experience of pisciculturists, anglers and naturalists in this country and England to prove the above. Abundance of digestible food is a condition which Sunapee Lake meets in its countless millions of smelts, which supply the black bass and the *salmonidae*. These fish, two or three inches in length, are tender-fleshed and easily disintegrate in the stomach of the trout, and there is practically no limit to a trout's voracity. Mr. Henry R. Francis, in the recent pages of the Badminton Library, mentions a trout caught by him, weighing a little more than 4 pounds, that had "forty-six small minnows in its maw, the uppermost freshly swallowed, while those furthest down were more than half digested." The same author further instances a brook trout, whose stuffed skin is in the possession of the Driffeld Club, that attained a weight of 17 pounds from feeding upon minnows that swarmed in the neighboring Beck and its tributaries.

It is every way probable that the *ogouasse* taken in Sunapee last fall attained their remarkable proportions in six years. Mr. Livingston Stone seeks to account for four pounds more than the steelyard proves. The largest trout taken, according to the testimony before us, weighed but 6 pounds; that there were 10-pounders on the spawning bed was a guess. Now, according to Dr. Merriam, six pounds is not an unusual weight for *ogouassa* rapidly to attain in the salt waters of the Lower St. Lawrence. The same little despised four-ounce "blue back" give it an abundance of appropriate food and the tonic effects of a favorable change of waters, develops in the Godbout, the Miagan and the Trinity River, as well as in Sunapee, into a giant worthy of the angler's skill, in accordance with nature's simplest laws. I fully agree with Col. Samuel Webber that our noble fish are sprung from his 1879 plant.
JOHN D. QUACKENBOS.

COLUMBIA COLLEGE, New York, April 14.

P. S.—Permit me to add the following postscript; in reply to your correspondent who has seen fit to enter this scientific discussion under the shadow of a pseudonym. It is rather late in the day to speak of four ounces, as the maximum weight of the *Salmo ogouassa*, it having been repeatedly shown in the columns of this paper that *ogouassa* have attained a weight of six and eight pounds; nor is it absolutely certain that the "blue-backs," of Rangeley, "do not average a quarter of a pound." Let me engage our opponents for a moment with their own weapons. They gravely inform us that monster *ogouasse* probably make their home in a number of New Hampshire lakes. It would not surprise me, therefore, at any time to learn that there are in Rangeley Lake *ogouassa* trout weighing from six to eight pounds. The "blue-backs" swarming in the inlets during October may be the callow offspring of astute giants that rise annually from fathomless waters to spawn upon some mid-lake shoal unknown to the genus *homo*, and after a few days recede into depths where no lure can reach them. Assuredly, it is as probable that such Solomons among *Salmonidae* have eluded the vigilance of Caucasian man for a few decades in Rangeley, as that they have reproduced their species for a century in Sunapee unmolested by the net or spear? What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. Your correspondent does not know that these large *ogouasse* have always been in Sunapee any more than he knows they are not to-day actually in the lakes of the Rangeley chain. If the latter be a fact, then the presence in Sunapee of six pound fish from the 1879 plant would by no one be regarded even as remarkable.

The dime museum analogy is so absolutely inapplicable as to be undeserving of serious notice.

Once more, the largest *Salmo ogouassa* taken from Sunapee weighed six, not ten, pounds. To quote Charles F. Imbrie, when the weight of a trout is in question, "I would rather believe a poor pair of scales than George Washington."
J. D. Q.

Editor Forest and Stream:
I have lately noticed in the FOREST AND STREAM remarks on the different species of trout in Sunapee Lake, N. H. I will say to the readers of FOREST AND STREAM, and others, that I began fishing for trout in that lake in 1857, and have fished every year since, more or less, therefore am able to state to you the different varieties of trout in the lake. When I first began to fish for trout in the lake there was but one species of trout in it and that was the native speckled trout. We have at this time four different varieties of trout in this lake, viz., the speckled trout, the white trout, blue-back trout, and landlocked salmon. The speckled trout sometimes weigh 5 or 6 pounds; the white fish average a little more than the speckled trout; the landlocked salmon average 8 or 10 pounds, and the blue-back not so much. As to the white fish being a species of the speckled trout I should say they were not, but are a species of the real St. John River trout. These four varieties of trout are caught in great abundance.
JACOB R. HUTCHINSON
NEWPORT, N. H., April 6.