

FOREST AND STREAM.

A WEEKLY JOURNAL OF THE ROD AND GUN.

TERMS, \$4 A YEAR. 10 CTS. A COPY. {
SIX MONTHS, \$2.

NEW YORK, MARCH 24, 1892.

VOL. XXXVIII.—No. 12.
No. 318 BROADWAY, NEW YORK.

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MARCH DAYS.—II.

THE sunshine, the bracing air, the swaying boughs of the pines and hemlocks beckoning at the woodside, the firm smooth footing irresistibly invite you forth. Your feet devour the way with crisp bites, and you think that nothing could be more pleasant to them till you are offered a few yards of turf, laid bare by winds and sun, and then you realize that nothing is quite so good as the old standby, a naked ground, and crave more of it, even as this is, and hunger for it with its later garnishing of grass and flowers. The crows, too, are drawn to these bare patches and are busy upon them, and you wonder what they can find; spiders, perhaps, for these you may see in thawy days crawling sluggishly over the snow, where they must have come from the earth.

The woods are astir with more life than a month ago. The squirrels are busy and noisy, the chickadees throng about you, sometimes singing their sweet brief song of three notes; the nuthatches pipe their tiny trumpets in full orchestra, and the jays are clamoring their ordinary familiar cries with occasional notes that you do not often hear. One of these is a soft, rapidly uttered cluck, the bird all the time dancing with his body, but not with his feet, to his own music, which is pleasant to the ear, especially when you remember it is a jay's music, which in the main cannot be recommended. To-day, doubtless, he is practicing allurements for the coming mating season.

You hear the loud cackle of a logcock making the daily round of his grub preserves, but you are not likely to get more than a glimpse of his black plumage or a gleam of his blood-red crest.

By rare luck you may hear the little Acadian owl filing his invisible saw, but you are likelier to see him and mistake him for a clot of last year's leaves lodged midway in their fall to earth.

The forest floor barred and netted with blue shadows of trunks and branches, is strewn with dry twigs, evergreen leaves, shards of bark and shreds of tree-moss and lichen, with here and there a heap of cone scales, the squirrel's kitchen middens, and there the sign of a partridge's nightly roosting, and similar traces of the hare's moonlight wanderings, and perhaps a fluff of his white fur shows where they've ended forever in a fox's jaw.

Here and there the top of a cradle knoll crops out of the snow with its patches of green moss, sturdy upright stems and leaves and red berries of wintergreen, as fresh as when the first snow covered them, a rusty trail of May-flower leaves, and the flat-pressed purple lobes of squirrel cup with a downy heart of buds full of the promise of spring.

The woods are filled with a certain subtle scent quite distinct from the very apparent resinous and balsamic aroma of the evergreens and eludes description but as a kind of freshness that tickles the nose with longing for a more generous waft of it.

You can trace it to no source, as you can the odors of

the pine and the hemlocks or the sweet fragrance of the boiling sap, coming to you from the sugar-maker's camp with a pungent mixture of wood-smoke.

You are also made aware that the skunk has been abroad, that reynard is somewhere to windward, and by an undescribed, and so far as you know, unattributed pungency in the air, that a gray squirrel lives in your neighborhood. Yet among all these more potent odors you still discover this subtle exhalation, perhaps of the earth filtered upward through the snow, perhaps the first awakening breath of all the deciduous trees.

Warmer shines the sun and warmer blows the wind from southern seas and southern lands.

More and more the tawny earth comes in sight among puddles of melted snow, that bring the mirrored sky and its fleecy flocks of clouds, with treetops turned topsy turvey, down into the bounds of fields. The brooks are alive again and babbling noisily over their pebbled beds, and the lake, hearing them, groans and cries for deliverance from its prison of ice.

On the marshes you may find the ice shrunken from the shores and an intervening strip of water where the muskrat may see the sun and the stars again.

You hear the trumpets of the wild geese and see the gray battalion riding northward on the swift wind.

The sun and the south wind, that perhaps bears some faint breath of stolen fragrance from far-off violet banks, tempt forth the bees, but they find no flowers yet, not even a squirrel cup or willow catkin, and can only make the most of the fresh sawdust by the woodpile and the sappy ends of maple logs.

Down from the sky, whose livery he wears and whose song he sings, comes the heavenly carol of the bluebird, the song sparrow trills his cheery melody, the first robin is announced to-day, and we cry, "Lo, spring has come." But to-morrow may come winter and longer waiting.

THE CANADIAN SALMON PETITION.

BEFORE this number of the FOREST AND STREAM shall reach all of its readers, it is altogether likely that the celebrated petition of the salmon anglers in the Canadian rivers will be in the hands of the ministers at Ottawa. The petition has already been published in these columns in full. It asks that the time when the nets shall be raised, in the bays and rivers below, shall be increased, in order that the parent salmon may have more of a chance to reach the breeding grounds in the rivers above. Mr. D. Blanchard, of Boston, the originator of the petition, first published in the FOREST AND STREAM, has now 110 signers to the document, all owners and lessees of salmon rivers in the Dominion. Messrs. Geo. B. Appleton & Co., of Boston, have kindly assisted Mr. Blanchard in the work, making their tackle store the headquarters for the receipt of names. The petition is a most reasonable one: for the benefit of all concerned—the netter as well as the salmon angler. It is scarcely possible that the wisdom of the Canadian ministry will refuse the granting of a prayer so reasonable.

As further reason why the salmon anglers think that their petition should be granted, it may be added that these anglers spend many thousands of dollars annually in Canada. One club alone spends over \$40,000 a year there, and the members of this club are all signers of the petition. The anglers provide employment for the people of Canada, as guides, guardians and attendants, and the people in the vicinity of the salmon rivers are very largely dependent upon such employment for their support. Through the efforts of the petitioners, the salmon rivers are better guarded and protected than they could possibly be by any other system, because the inhabitants living along the shores, through the employment furnished them by the anglers, are made interested to preserve the fish, the destruction and extermination of which would be of incalculable damage to them, by reason of the loss of this employment.

Of late these people have become much alarmed at the scarcity of salmon, which they have observed to be rapidly growing worse. They very well know that this scarcity is due to the excessive netting carried on each season. When the salmon become so scarce as to leave it no object for the angler longer to visit the rivers, which time is very rapidly approaching, as witness the ill-success of last season especially, it is easy to see what will take place. The Canadian people along the shores, having lost their interest in the fish—their interest in preserving them—and feeling, as they will in that case, that

their loss of employment is entirely due to the selfish course of the net fishermen—will then not hesitate in the least to take the parent salmon for their own use, and thus work the final completion of the utter destruction of all the salmon in the rivers. They would feel that this utter destruction had been begun by the greed of the netters below, and it would be impossible to prevent their action, begun in a spirit of retaliation. These men, employed as guides and guardians by the anglers, know every spawning bed in the streams they watch. Indeed they know almost every salmon, so familiar are they with the streams, and they could take even the last parent fish left, if moved, as there is danger of their being, by a desire to get even with the netters. Take away the motive of self-interest that the inhabitants now have, the interest they now feel in keeping the streams well stocked with fish, in order that the number of anglers may be greater and through these anglers greater rewards to the people, and put in its place a feeling of retaliation against the netters for having destroyed the source of their "bread and butter," as it were; and a regiment of soldiers along the borders of every salmon river could scarcely save the parent fish from destruction to the last spawning salmon.

The excuse offered by the net fishermen, and doubtless it will be offered against the granting of the petition, is that their nets, or trap nets now in use, are so constructed as to make it difficult to lift them during the weekly close time now in vogue. From this reasoning the anglers very naturally conclude that the short close time, already the law, is not observed, and that the nets are not taken up as they should be. If such is the case, then the law has to comply with the interest of the netters rather than that the netters obey the law.

The anglers would say to the net fishermen, "Please bear in mind that whatever we may say or do for the furtherance of our own interests in this matter, we cannot benefit ourselves without benefiting you also. We sincerely believe that if our petition is granted, by the wisdom of the Canadian government, it will require but a short time to prove that it is working for the interest of the government itself, the netters, the anglers and all concerned."

PROTECT THE BLACK BASS.

THE treatment of the black bass in different localities shows a wonderful amount of variation. In most of the States they are protected during the spawning season or what is supposed to be their spawning time, while in others no effort is made to protect them at any time. It is well known that the nesting season in New York extends certainly to the end of June, and in the northern portions into July, yet the open season in this State begins on May 30. Even in Indiana, which has a warmer climate than New York, the hatching of the black bass has been observed to continue after the middle of June. In New Hampshire it is very well known that the spawning lasts through June, but the anglers favor its capturing during that month because it will not readily take the fly in any other summer month, and this applies equally well in most of the waters of the Middle States.

The black bass is subjected to many dangers through certain of its habits. As it is frequently found in schools, the skillful anglers can often capture almost an entire school. Its innate voracity, also, is another cause of its own destruction, since the young bass devour one another with great relish during the first two or three weeks of their existence. Still another unfortunate habit of this fish is that of making its nest in shallow water near the shore where, owing to its large size and light color, it can be readily observed. The parents guard the nest and the young, and during this exercise of paternal care are often pounced upon and destroyed by poachers. Then too the male bass at the time of breeding fight among themselves and many are thus killed.

The black bass is not very prolific, the number of eggs to the female having been estimated at about 4,000, and when the parent fish are destroyed the young fall a prey to crawfish and minnows. According to observations of Mr. C. F. Holt, in Michigan, the young fish do not become perfectly developed until they are from one to two months old. During this time they are under the care of the parents, learning how to obtain food and to shelter themselves among the water plants from the attacks of their enemies. Kill the guardians of these tender broods and the pike and pickerel will do the rest.