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ON RIDEAU LAKES

FISHING IS A VERY POPULAR SPORT.

From the Standpoint of the Angler, These Lakes Are Ideal Some of The "Catches" Made.

By W. L. S.

Show me a man who doesn't get the fishing fever with the earliest advent of the robins and blue birds, and I will show you a man who was never a barefooted, barelegged boy, whose mother provided him with twine and bent pin and sent him full of enthusiasm and childish glee, to the brook that kept its peaceful way through the meadow, hard by, where, with his crude "tackle," and a little bait, he brought to the bank, and thence to his little basket, the "shiner," the dace, the chubb, and perchance an occasional trout, which were later cooked to a nice crisp brown, by that same dear mother. She is now old and grey, or perhaps, "lost awhile." All such boys, even with the poor sport furnished by twine, bent pin, "shiner," and dace, grew up with a fully developed passion for angling that lasts a life-time, and reaches the fever stage each year with the budding leaves and blossoming wild flowers.

As I write, those dreamlike days of early boyhood come again, and I hear the song of the blackbird, the cry of the bluejay, the tap, tap, tap of the woodpecker, the droning of the bee, and recall the battles I fought and the castles I builded in my little mind for the years that were to be mine in manhood's busy time. The battles have been fought and many of the ancient castles have been shattered or have crumbled away, but the passion for fishing has grown with the passing years, the twine and pin have been superseded by rod and reel, and the shiner and chubb are now the "bait" instead of the coveted prizes of long ago.

Many boys upon whom Providence did not thus smile; boys who were denied the pleasures of bare feet, meadow brook and blackbird's song; boys who were born in city mansions and surrounded by all the luxuries that riches bring, have grown to be expert and enthusiastic anglers, but their skill is the result of cultivation, while the country lad was almost born a fisherman.

Twenty-five or thirty years ago, good fishing could be found within easy distance of almost anywhere, but recently it has come to be understood that good sport can only be found in the wilds of Canada, Maine, or the great North-West. The old time waters still remain, and the guide books tell alluring tales of the sport they furnish, but these tales are largely a repetition of ancient history, and the angler looks in vain for the sport that satisfies.

Take heart, ye who love the music of the reel, as its line responds to the strike and rush of that gamiest of fish, the black bass, for there is yet much pleasure in store for you, even though you may have neither the time or "aille," for ventures far afield, for, within forty miles of Brockville, Ont., by rail, and about the same distance from Clayton, N.Y., by steamer, you can find bass fishing that will more than content you, for you must either return to the water many fish each day or both violate the Canadian laws and make yourself a candidate for the "Fish hog" column of "Recreation."

For some years I have been one of those who put faith in the booklets issued by railroads, steamer lines, and summer hotels, and have paid for my credulity by a season of vain effort and vanished hopes; last year I pinned my faith to private correspondence and after having written some forty letters to people in the various lake regions of Canada, a letter from a gentleman of Irish extraction in the Rideau lake region, who announced himself as the proprietor of a boat and bait livery, resulted in myself and two companions packing our "tackle" and betaking ourselves to these waters. I wish I might give this letter here, as it was a model of careful detail and glowing description, and betokened a man who ought to have been a great deal more than a purveyor of boats and bait. I believed much less than half of it, but to do justice at once to this genial Irishman, who writes such capital letters, I will say that his statements were all verified by an actual experience of many weeks. I would not have believed without an actual demonstration that such numbers of bass and pickerel could be found so near the centre of population as this chain of waters contain, and why it has not already been put "out of commission" by the throng of anxious sportsmen is beyond my ken. Disregarding all reason, logic and speculation, the actual truth is, that these lakes are literally alive with bass and pickerel and that they are to be had by the use of reasonably good bait, which is plentiful and cheap, the exercise of moderate skill in the handling of rod and reel, and a fair knowledge of the habits of these fish. The two photographs here reproduced show the catch of our three rods on the 6th and 10th of July last, each covering a period of about two and a half hours, and caught within three-quarters of a mile of my boat house. During our stay we were "on the water" about thirty times, and never failed to land a good string, some of them larger than those shown, and only two or three days did we fail to return to the water more than we brought in, as we saved only those of the larger size, and of those only such as we were quite sure would be used for food, none of us believing in sacrificing game fish for the sport (?) of catching them, as such sport becomes at once cruelty and waste.

In speaking of the number caught, reference is had only to those of legal size, and many bass were taken daily that fell below this limit.

The Canadian laws are superior to our own in some respects, the legal catch ob bass per rod being only eight and of pickerel twelve, while the sizes must be ten and fifteen inches respectively. What is even a greater protection to bass is, however, that no one, native or foreign, may sell such fish for a period of five years from 1901, and foreigners may not send or take out of the country more than the lawful catch of two days, and then only upon payment of a small fee for a permit. This year the department of fisheries of Ontario have adopted a rule requiring all non-residents of the province, whether Canadian or foreigners, to pay a license of $2 for three months' fishing, and the local inspectors are rather more than diligent in exacting this fee. As this small sum is certain to keep many people out of Ontario, who would otherwise go there and spend considerable sums for board, bait, boats and guides, it is hard to reconcile such a rule with ordinary good sense or business sagacity, and it is a fair presumption that this will soon make itself apparent to the Canadian authorities.

The bass caught here are of both the "small mouth" and "Oswego" varieties, in some lakes the "small mouth" predominating, while in others it is the reverse. The "Oswego" is almost as "gamey" as the "small mouth," and nowhere else have I ever seen them such excellent sport, while it is not too much to say that the pickerel of these waters is the strongest and most resolute fighter that I have ever found him anywhere.

The "small mouth" bass runs to five pounds or more, the "Oswego" to six and a half, and pickerel and pike to ten or twelve. Some of the lakes are very deep, and afford splendid sport to those who are fond of salmon fishing, though about this I cannot speak from experience, as none are found in the lakes in which I fish.

At all the principal points on the chain, excellent boats, bait and guides are to be found, as one who knows the habits of these fish can easily find them himself. The writer never uses a guide for the reason that he "goes-a-fishing" largely for the exercise that the hard work of rowing requires; and what a rest for worn-out nerves; what a specific for sweet health-giving sleep it is, and for the further reason that he finds half his pleasure in "nosing out" the spots where the finny denizens most do congregate, but the novice, or he who makes but a limited stay, will do well to employ a guide, and he will find them skilful, well mannered men, who are also excellent cooks and who will, at the noon rest, land at some beauty spot where stoves and rude tables are located, and cook a dinner fit even for the king of this vast Canadian domain, and the man who "minces" and turns away from the delicacies of a Delmonico or Waldorf-Astoria table will here find himself eating the generous portions consumed by an average wood-chopper, and he will relish them, too.

From the standpoint of the angler, then, these lakes are ideal. What shall I write of the beautiful lakes themselves? Not much I fear, for it requires a poet's pen and a painter's brush to do even partial justice to this wondrous region, so that the briefest outline only can be given of what, in competent hands, would fill a book with delightful reading.

Any good map of Canada will tell you that the Rideau Lakes lie in a chain extending north-easterly from near Kingston, and that, with the Rideau and Ottawa Rivers they form an inland water way from the great lakes to Montreal. What the map will not tell you is that these lakes, with the locks, channels and dams required to make them navigable, form a wondrous and ever-changing scene of picturesque loveliness that gives them high rank among all earth's charming spots.

The chain of lakes consists of ten separate bodies of water of varying sizes and shapes, ranging from two or three miles in length, to twenty-one, each forming a picture of its own, set in a framework of forest verdure and granite hills, all of them studded with many islands of surprising beauty; gems of emerald set in basins of liquid silver. The several illustrations given are fair examples of what one sees in all of them and it is not exaggeration to say that probably no more enchanting trip can be found in the world than that from Kingston to Smith's Falls, where the lake region ends and the river begins. Certainly there is none other like it. The St. Lawrence with its thousand islands, is much the same, but lacks the picturesque features of channels, locks and dams, massive engineering works that lend additional charms to the Rideau chain.

Historically, the British government after the war of 1812, conceived the plan of this inland route as a military necessity in case of future trouble, and with its soldiers for workmen at a cost of five millions of dollars, and the achievement of engineering feats that rank among the greatest in the world, made this a navigable waterway, which was completed in 1832. The differing levels of the lakes made many locks necessary, all of which are of solid masonry of the most massive character, while dams that are simply marvels of size and strength were required to change the natural levels of some of the lakes. These are also of granite and some of them stupendous, that at Kingston Mills being 6,000 feet long and 14 feet high, while the one at Jones' Falls, is 400 feet long 300 feet thick at the base and 90 feet high; this wonderful dam, four locks by which boats are raised and lowered eighty feet; the falls and the general landscape features surrounding it, led Princess Louise to pronounce Jones' Falls, "The most beautiful spot in Canada."

Newboro, about midway from Kingston to Smith's Falls, is the "high point" between Kingston and Ottawa, and steamers en route from Kingston are lifted by the various locks 192 feet, while from Newboro to Ottawa they are lowered 113 feet.

In a word, then, here, within a few miles of the mighty St. Lawrence, which is known and loved by some millions of people, is a region, comparatively unknown, where you may find fishing that is unsurpassed, scenery that will delight you every moment of your stay, courteous, obliging and intelligent inhabitants, who have not yet learned to count the pockets of visitors as their own particular property, and a summer climate that is ideal.

If you are looking for fashion and society, you must look elsewhere; if you are looking for water where your reel will sing its whizzing song many times each day, and your rod bend and swish from the strain put upon it by bass, pickerel or salmon, where your tired nerves will find rest and cure, and where the "sand man" will gently "kiss your eyelids down," bringing many hours of sweet, refreshing sleep each night, you need look no farther than the Rideau Lakes of Ontario.

Japanese Patriotism.

That veteran of Methodist missions, Rev. Alexander Sutherland, D.D., who, with Dr. Carman, is now on his way to Japan to further the union of the three branches of the Methodist church in the land of chrysanthemums, spoke for a few moments on Sunday morning last in Winnipeg, on Japanese patriotism and how it influenced their views on religion. I am sorry I cannot give his exact words, but they ran somewhat as follows: With our colder northern nations, patriotism is a sentiment, with the Japanese it is a passion, and though, with their more western form of government, and their free press, they run riot at election times and are as virulent and vituperative as politicians in Manitoba, let anything for one moment menace the honor or the integrity of the empire and the whole population stands together as one man. It is this solidarity of their love for country that makes it so difficult for them to understand how there can be so many branches of the Christian church, and why fifty of them should at the present time be trying to gain a foothold in Japan. Native Japanese Christians are therefore deeply interested in the present movement towards union, and many of them are praying that they may live to see the day when there will be but one Protestant church in Japan, "and," continued Dr. Sutherland, "I think it would do no harm if Christians in Canada were offering the same prayer for the union of churches in their own land."

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Herodotus tells of an ingenious ruse employed to carry an important message through the lines of the enemy. Histiaeus, being anxious to give Aristagoras orders to revolt, could think of no means to send the message to his ally, as all the roads were carefully guarded. Finally he hit upon a scheme. Calling his trustiest servant to him, he ordered that the man's hair be shaven off. He then pricked the desired message on the scalp of the slave, and, waiting until his hair had grown out, dispatched him upon the errand. The messenger passed safely through the lines, and when he reached Aristagoras his head was again shaved and the message read.

Stewart Baird, Lanark, died on March 31st, aged sixty-nine years.

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