TRUE ANGLING, THIS.

Joy of Battling With the Savage Muskallonge.

FIGHTS WORTH ANY MAN'S WHILE

Great Ferocity, Strength and Vitality of the Fish.

Two Methods of Catching It, One Sportsmanlike, the Other Not—The Sport to Be Enjoyed Not Very Far From New York—Outfit Required—Muskallonge Getting Smaller—Fascinations of Trout Fishing at Night—Ways of the Birds That Fish—Power of a Small Calibre Rifle Tested on a Bear.

Every barrier to the legal taking of fish is down now, and from June 1 until the ice sets in the angler may live and have his being without fear of the game warden.

Of all American inland fishes whose habitat is readily reached by the sportsman, greatest is the muskallonge. This great fish is found in Northwestern lakes, only a night's ride from the large towns of the West, and even the New Yorker who does not care to fish the St. Lawrence system for the huge swimmer can get out to the woods of Minnesota or Wisconsin in less than thirty hours and there put in days of excitement which he will remember as long as he lives.

The muskallonge is much like other members of the pike family in appearance. Indeed, there are many men unable to tell the muskallonge from the great Northern pike, but there is a wide difference in the disposition of these fishes and they are not all alike once they are fastened to the end of a line.

All true pike are born fighters. The biggest and fiercest of them rarely show on the surface when hooked and when their fins do see daylight it is only for an instant, a sullen roll and down they go again, depending almost wholly on strength and weight to obtain their freedom, displaying little activity and little gameness.

The biggest pike that ever swam, if it gets the butt hard and is reeled savagely, will surrender utterly in ten minutes; the wall-eyed variety will quit within a minute and come to the tugging of the reel as tamely as a croppie; but the muskallonge, bred in cold water and recklessly savage by nature, will fight generally so long as it has a dash or a surge in it.

Many a fish of this kind has been lost after being reeled to the boat's side and held with its head out of water while the slow guide prepared to shoot it through the head, for there is often an ounce of desperate fight left deep down in a beaten muskallonge, and just at the second when the revolver is presented and the angler is mentally estimating the weight a final tremendous flirt and surge are given, the line snaps, or the hook straightens, or the barb is loosened, and the supposed victim is away once more to freedom.

Fishing in waters which contain both the great pike and the muskallonge, a man may tell almost instantly what variety he has struck by the behavior of the fish. If the fighter stays under and puts on a steady sullen drag, that is pike; if it be muskallonge that is hooked the fisherman will know it soon, for the active, vicious thing at the far end of the line, after a jerk or two, will come straight to the surface and throw its length in air, shaking its huge head as violently and rapidly as the beating wings of a grouse, and when it strikes the water it will strike it head downward with body curved, throwing every ounce of its weight against the tackle.

Men call that a game bass which leaves the water twice in leaps of two feet high or more, but the muskallonge in prime condition will leap a half dozen times in a fight of ten minutes' duration and there is record of one which went into the air not less than twenty times in a half hour's fight. It seemed to the man who caught this fish that it was above water most of the time, and his most vivid recollection of the struggle is of a powerful, silvery body, outlined against the horizon seemingly ten feet high.

The muskallonge in reality will go from three to four feet out of the water, and one exceptionally powerful and having attained exceptional impetus may go five feet out. The fish which proved itself such a leaper was taken last October from the waters of Connor's Lake in Sawyer county, Wis. It was not of extraordinary size, weighing 18 pounds, but was a male in perfect condition.

Under ordinary circumstances it would have undoubtedly obtained its freedom, because the strain and shaking to which it subjected the hook would have loosened any common hold. This fish, however, had struck a No. 9 spoon, which had three large hooks behind it, had struck with force and jaws wide open, being hungry, and all three of the hooks had fastened, one in the lower jaw near the right corner of the mouth, one in the corner of the mouth and one in the upper jaw. Capturing the fish so badly struck was only a question of line, strength and time. It stood no chance to get away from the barbs.

There are two methods of fighting the muskallonge, one of them highly sportsmanlike, the other unsportsmanlike and brutal. The latter is much the more common method and ten years ago was universal. Of late years it is still general, but has exceptions.

This method consists in the angler sitting on the rear thwart of the boat while the guide rows slowly around a lake, keeping 15 feet out from the line of lily pads or wild rice growing in the shallower water. When feeding the muskallonge ensconces itself in this covert and dashes out upon any prey that swims by.

The angler has a stout short rod, a line tested to a breaking strain of thirty pounds, and a spoon with either a three-hook gang or single hook behind it, generally the gang. He lets out from forty to sixty feet of line and so trolls, the spoon spinning violently.

When the muskallonge strikes the guide immediately heads for deep water, pulling a strong, steady stroke and dragging the fish away from the pads or rice. The guide keeps on rowing and the angler keeps on holding to the rod, which is bent far back in a semicircle by the fish towing. If the hooks and line and rod hold the muskallonge is a dead fish; if not, it gets away.

There is no science in this method of fishing; there is no fairness to the fish. Against its twenty pounds are pitted a 180-pound guide, a 160-pound angler and a 125-pound boat. It is a case of drag and drag and the fish, finally exhausted by its fruitless efforts to hold back, is reeled in and shot. All of the man's excitement is found in holding on and wondering whether or not the fish will get off.

The genuine muskallonge angler scorns the assistance of the guide after the boat is taken beyond the reach of the pads or rice. He backs his skill and wrist-strength against the skill and muscle of the fish and when he loses he knows that he has been defeated fairly and has no complaints to make.

He may troll or may cast and casting is by far the better thing. This sort of angler occupies the front thwart, the boat being rowed forty or fifty feet from the lilies. He casts ahead with his big spoon, striking the water a yard from the lilies and reeling in rapidly.

The progress of the boat is slow and the man with the rod is able to whip every twenty feet of water thoroughly. That is enough, as the muskallonge will see and hit at a spoon from ten feet away. The spoon is permitted to sink to a yard below the surface. The man in casting is able to put his spoon where he wants it to go, making two or three casts over the likeliest looking spots and passing by those which plainly contain no fish.

The moment the strike occurs and the hook is sent violently in, the guide, as with the troller, spins the boat half around and snatches it into deep water. He goes out a hundred yards, but there he stops and rests upon his oars, watching the fight and giving a barrel of advice, not a word of which is heeded or even heard.

From a stationary boat—or one that would be stationary if the muskallonge did not jerk it about so—the fight is waged, and a harder, more glorious fight is not to be witnessed anywhere. It is the muskallonge fought so which leaves the water in successive leaps; one which is dragged to death has no chance to leap; and the ferocity, strength and vitality of the fish are wonderful.

The boat spins around and around; the angler faces every point of the compass a dozen times; the still surface of the lake is broken into tiny waves which spread for a hundred yards or more from the centre of the commotion. Ten times the man thinks he has the foeman conquered; ten times he is forced to give line and see every foot of it, won at much cost, taken back again.

Twice or thrice he will fight the fish to within five yards of the boat and each time it will break away and carry out from fifty to a hundred feet of line seemingly as fresh as when first struck. It is characteristic of the pure grit of the muskallonge that it battles until the last moment and then goes all to pieces at once like the one-horse shay.

At a moment it is soaring from the water, going away up in the clear and its massive head fluttering from side to side, sending strong vibrations to the fisher's elbow; the next it is apparently dead and comes in like a senseless body as the reel crank is plied, almost utterly gone. It is with the little vitality it gathered while being reeled in that it makes its final dash for freedom when the guide is getting ready for his shot.

This is a fight worth any man's while to make and any man's while to watch. It is pure angling, without a hint of the butcher in it, and it will test the resources of the most experienced. It is not popular with people who go into the wilderness determined to get fish and to get all they can, because many more muskallonge are lost by it than by the dragging method.

The muskallonge captured from a standstill boat must be securely hooked and then must be handled perfectly. A battle of this kind will last from ten to twenty minutes, depending upon the strength and temper of the fish and the angler's skill.

The longest and strongest muskallonge in any water can be taken by the standstill-and-fight-it-out method, because no game fish can withstand for ever the strain of the rod tip. Muskallonge will run frequently to thirty-five and forty pounds—the largest ever taken weighed 103 pounds; but the leaping tuna of the south Californian coast will run to five or six hundred pounds, and that fish is killed with the rod, just as the tarpon of 150 pounds is killed.

What is called the drag of the rod-tip is one of the most tiring things to which animal muscle can be subjected. It never lets up for an instant and the harder it is fought the greater the drag.

At this season the muskallonge is striking most freely. The best sport of the year is to be had in early June because the fish are still hungry from their long winter fast and are feeding at every opportunity.

"They are not so vigorous as they will be in October or late in September: fewer fish are taken then, but they are apt to be larger and to fight harder. In June, however, a man will get two strikes to one at another time.

On the north woods lakes the lilies have not yet come to the surface, the rice is still near to the bottom and the weeds are short. These growths, however, are high enough to afford the fish the cover it needs.

In the fore part of June only the naked spoon is used for muskallonge. Frogs are not as yet fairly in season, and it would do little good to hang a minnow or chub on the spoon as the fish takes the spoon to be a perch or croppie anyhow. Some guides object to the use of bait at any season, saying that it lends nothing to the attractiveness of the spoon, but the weight of argument seems to be on the side of those who say that the bait is a good thing as the muskallonge later on will often swim close to a spoon and fail to attack it unless it knows that there is meat on it.

When frogs are used those of large size and green color are chosen. They are hooked through the lips and suffered to float behind the spoon as it is trolled or reeled through the water.

The average size of muskallonge taken from Northwestern waters has been decreasing for years. Ten thousand anglers are after them every summer and the fish are unable to hold their own. Damming the rivers and the lower ends of lakes has had a bad effect upon them also.

Ten years ago muskallonge captured in Wisconsin or Minnesota would average fully twelve pounds. Then the average fell to ten and now it is not anything above eight, if so high. This does not mean that large ones are not taken now, because each season furnishes records of great muskies, but there are not so many large ones and a much greater number of small ones.

Among the better class of anglers it has come to be accepted that any muskallonge under seven pounds' weight should be returned to the water at once, and many of them refuse to keep anything under ten pounds.

The giant of 103 pounds, to which reference was had, was taken last year in the nets of the fish hatchery at Minocqua, Wis., and returned to the lake. It is still in Tomahawk waters, awaiting the lure of some ambitious angler, and many will try for it now that its existence is known, but it is not thought that it will ever be taken with hook and line. A fish that has reached the age necessary to give it such girth and inches is pretty experienced, and the fact that it never has been hooked is a good indication that it never will be.

Anglers who do not mind purchasing expensive outfits use silk lines of great strength on muskallonge, yet it is difficult to see that they are in any way better than the cheaper linen. They rot faster and snarl as badly and are not so strong.

A linen line tested to thirty pounds will be found to be good enough for anybody. The remainder of the outfit will consist of a short steel rod, No. 9 spoons, hooks of proper size and a double multiplying reel. Some men use the quadruple multiplying reels on muskallonge merely because they have bought them for bass, but there is little power in the crank of the fast reel of this character and handling a big fish with them is difficult.

The muskallonge, "musky" or "longe" for short, is not only one of the gamest and most powerful of the big inland fishes, but also one of the most toothsome. The man who has never tasted a ten-pound muskallonge prepared à *court-bouillon* by one who knows how is like the man who has never read "David Copperfield": he has an experience coming to him that he should take a week off to enjoy.

The musky is also an exceedingly handsome swimmer and, properly mounted upon an old oaken board, makes an ornament fit for the dining-room wall of a copper king. Many men who have fought their victorious fights on woods, lakes or rivers have their trophies so mounted. The average cost of muskallonge served in this style is some $20 a pound.

STIRRED THE MUSKY TO WRATH.

A Spoon Bent Nearly Double by the Force of a Big Fish's Blow.

Poling up the North Fork of the Flambeau River, in northern Wisconsin recently Ed Andrews turned into an affluent known as the Slough or Dead Man's Slough. It is wide, shallow water, running away into the woods for a couple of miles and draining an area of swampland. Andrews was looking for maple trees, but had a fishing rod with him.

Getting up the slough for a quarter of a mile and rounding a bend he ran into the shadow of a birch tree which fell clear across the water and his eye was attracted by a slight movement close to bank, some fifty feet from him.

He stopped the punt and looked hard and saw the outline of a giant muskallonge, which was loafing a foot under water with its belly rubbing the sand and enjoying itself. The fish was nearly four feet long, a broad, savage fellow, with cavernous jaws and lidless eyes staring unwinkingly through the water.

Andrews drove in his pole, braced the punt against it to hold it, picked up his rod and made a cast. He would have given anything to hook and fight that fish to a finish, and there was a wide, clear expanse of slough all around giving him ample acreage for a row.

The big spoon landed within a yard of the musky's snout and spun through the water as it was reeled in. The fish did not notice it by so much as an extra movement of fin or tail.

Andrews tried again and again with the same result. The muskallonge looked from the spoon to the man and evidently connected them. Then the fisherman, who has been catching muskallonge for some years, made a wide cast, striking the water twenty feet from the fish and bringing the spoon to him rapidly.

At the second cast of this kind the musky darted forward toward the lure for a yard or so, but saw what it was and retired disgustedly to its original position.

This variety of pike has an infirmity of temper, and may be induced to strike sometimes in anger when it will not strike from hunger. Andrews knew this, so he threw his spoon over the musky's back and brought it through the water with a rush.

No result, and he cast again, striking the water in practically the same place. No result, and he began casting so that the spoon would fall just in front of the big idler's nose. At the fifth cast something happened.

The muskallonge waited until the spoon fell and had been withdrawn for a couple of yards and was travelling rapidly toward the punt, then it struck it. It struck it for every pound that was in it and with its jaws tightly shut.

The spoon, which had been a foot under the surface, flew into the air as if shot from a gun. It described a half circle over the fisherman's head and splashed into the water on the far side, twenty feet away. Like a black flash under the yellow water, the muskallonge, with a single powerful flirt of its flukes, was gone, yards down the slough and invisible.

Andrews reeled in his spoon and looked at it. It was bent nearly double, much as if it had been laid on a rock with a hollow under it and hit hard with a hammer. It was out of action for good. Then he picked up his pole and punted on after the maples.

NIGHT TROUT FISHING.

There Are Queer Things About It That Give It Fascination.

Night trout fishing is a form of sport that the regular fly-caster has not tried and would disdain to try, but it has its merits. Not the least of them is that the trout, through some crankiness of its nature, will often bite after dark when all through the day it lies motionless at the bottom of a pool and refuses to rise to the most tempting lures. At such periods the entire nature of the fish seems to have changed and it has become a night-hawk, roving its native stream from dusk to daylight and sleeping through the sun hours.

There is no such thing as taking half a basket of trout after dark with the fly. Changed as the fish is, it still has sense enough to know that insects it likes are not broad at that hour.

Occasionally one will rise to an artificial fly cast in the dark, but this is so exceptional as not to be worth counting. It will take the worm avidly, however, when it is night feeding, and it is with worms that the night fisherman takes it.

There is no explanation of how the trout manage to see the worms in the dark. They find them, however, on the blackest sort of night and possibly they are guided by a sense of smell.

Where there is one trout there are apt to be more, and the angler who has taken one with his bunch of worms may confidently drop them into the same place. Indeed, the chances are that he will land a half dozen beauties before he is forced to move on by failure of supply.

The sensation afforded is an odd one, because the fisherman cannot see his line, nor tell when the trout strikes except by the jerk. All he can see is the trees waving darkly against the sky on the bank of a river that is only dimly visible and now and then he catches a glimpse of his rod, which looks like a line no bigger than a lead pencil running out over the water.

He fights his trout blindly, he has no knowledge of the movements it is making nor has he any idea of its size, except from the trouble it gives him, until it has been scooped within a dipnet struck downward blindly and lies gasping on the bank. With a light rod and silk the angler, if he strikes a heavy trout under these circumstances, is seriously at a disadvantage. It is this very uncertainty which lends night fishing its charm to some men.

In some parts of the Province of Quebec, and in other parts of the Dominion, it is the custom of the country people to fish for brook trout almost wholly after dark, and they take them in enormous numbers. These folk are not refined enough to use supple fly-rod and silk line.

They have, instead, poles which they cut on the banks of the creek or river, and stout linen cords. To their hooks they fasten half a dozen worms and drop them in wriggling, and when they get a strike they yank the fish fifteen feet in the air, landing it on the bank behind them with a thump. They always build a large fire on the bank and the trout are attracted by the light, coming in schools to the feeding.

At such a place in proper season half a dozen men and women will be yanking out speckled trout as fast as they can take them from the hooks and will keep this sort of thing up for an hour, going back to their homes before midnight with two or three hundred speckled beauties.

The trout taken in these streams are all small, seldom running above half a pound, but exceedingly fine table fish, with the bright salmon flesh and true trout delicacy of flavor.

NAVAL BATTLE WITH A BEAR.

Harral Tests the Penetrating Power of a .22 Calibre Rifle.

William Harral of Vilas county, Wis., a woodsman and guide, had a singular experience not long ago. It demonstrated the hurtful character of bullets driven by smokeless powder even when of the smallest calibre.

Harral was camped on Squaw Lake, just off the Chippewa reservation, in the wildest part of the State. His business out there was to estimate the value of some timberlands and he put in a good deal of time fishing.

One morning he got into his boat to try the muskallonge and he took with him a rifle of .22-calibre, a repeater, with which to shoot any fish he reeled in. He went out of a small narrow bay and just as he got to the mouth of it heard a commotion in the water ahead of him. Looking around, he saw a black bear swimming hard toward him. At least, the bear had been swimming toward him, but had turned suddenly when it saw the boat and was so badly frightened that it made a good deal of noise.

Harral is not afraid of bears on land or in the water. The animal then had its side turned toward him and was some twenty yards away. The man raised his rifle, not hoping to injure the brute seriously, but intending to sting it, aimed carefully and fired.

The tiny pellet struck the bear's head and flattened against the skull. It hurt sufficiently to make the bear turn tail.

The bear started out into the lake. Then Harral shot it three times in the rump. Not liking this treatment and believing that if it shifted again it would do better, the bear once more turned broadside on and dug for shore three hundred yards away.

Harral jerked the boat in a couple of strokes to within ten feet of the swimming beast and began to pump in the lead. His temerity come near costing him something, particularly as he cannot swim; for the bear, furiously angered at last by this persecution, swerved toward the boat and got one paw over the gunwale.

The boat tilted dangerously and Harral knew that if the bear got its other paw over he would be spilled. The oars were lying on the thwarts, and he had no time to grasp them, even if they would have done him any good.

Instead, he worked his little gun. He had some eight shots left in it, and he peppered the bear at a distance of three feet.

The whole business, from the time the bear grasped the boat until it released its hold and rolled over dead, did not take more than five seconds, but it seemed half an hour to the man. He hitched a rope to the carcass and towed it ashore. There he examined it.

When he came to skin it he found that the bullets which had struck on the skull had all flattened and those which had struck the body had merely penetrated the skin. The shot which killed had entered at the ear, striking fairly in the cavity and thence had penetrated the brain. It was, of course, entirely accidental and a very good accident for Harral.

This bear was a small male, evidently one born late last year, and had been out of its hibernating place long enough to have become reasonably fat. Bears are fat when they wake up, but rapidly lose flesh for ten days afterward and then get fat again, and this fellow was fairly along with the replenishing process.

The bullet of .22 calibre, though not larger than a cowpea, will, when driven by smokeless powder, penetrate a couple of inches of hard pine or dried hemlock, and this one after entering the ear had gone nearly through the bear's brain.

FISHING OF THE BIRDS.

Some of Them Exceedingly Expert—The Fish Eagle Only a Bungler.

It is easy for a man abroad with rod and line on some still tree-fringed lake to understand how the loon, the hell-diver, the kingfisher and such birds make a living. They are all expert anglers with their own peculiar outfits and understand how to use them to perfection.

The hell-diver does not pretend to tackle anything but very small fishes, minnows mostly, and it eats a good many things that it finds in the mud.

The loon is a powerful and fast swimmer and one of the greatest of all great divers. It thinks nothing of going to the bottom of a lake fifty feet deep, and when it gets after a small bass or a perch or croppie that particular fish is in for a very unpleasant three minutes. The loon catches and eats fish all day, being almost an unfailing pursuer and one of the most destructive of all birds which prey upon fish life.

The kingfisher, small, active and blue, cannot swim a stroke, but it is a diver to a depth of a foot and it makes up in expertness what it lacks in amphibiousness. Perched upon a branch which overhangs the water, with its head turned to one side and its eye cocked like a parrot's, it sees everything which passes below and darts downward at frequent intervals.

It is after surface fish, minnows, chubs, dace and such things, seldom capturing anything more than three inches long. The kingfisher is successful about once in three times, which is a very good average for a non-water bird, and as it is very industrious it gets plenty for itself and its sitting mate and later for the young in the nest among the sedges by the lake's edge. A man who watches small gulls flying and diving over a lake will find that they do not average more than one kill to six dives and the kingfisher has them clearly outclassed.

No angler, though, ever has understood how the great fish-eagle gets along. This huge bird, with a wingspread of six feet and a big body, needs much food. Moreover, except in late fall and winter, it has always a brood of squalling young that are insatiable.

Both the male and the female fish for the nest, but it is a mystery how they manage to obtain enough for themselves, let alone the youngsters. The fish-eagle cannot swim; it cannot dive; it is slow of flight; it cannot pick up anything with its beak.

The kingfisher hits the water spear-bill downward like a flash of blue and white light, but the fish-eagle, ponderous, cumbrous and deliberative, has no depend entirely upon its talons. It flies slowly over the lake at a height of ten to twenty yards. Seeing a fish near the surface it lowers itself above it, drops its legs down for six inches and brings its long talons together in the effort to grasp.

While it is doing this its great wings are pounding the air to keep it aloft. Nobody knows what would happen if it fell in. A more awkward take-a-chance-anyhow fisherman does not exist.

It would seem that any fish with an atom of sense would get out of the way, since unquestionably plenty of time is afforded. A bass idling on the surface and seeing the great shadow descending would easily shoot twenty yards before the terrible talons were let down.

In fact, the man who has seen a fish-eagle catch a fish is rare, though every angler has seen it try lots of times. The eagle after one of these attempts gets aloft awkwardly for a hundred feet or so, then takes a perch on some dead tree overlooking the water and apparently thinks about it for a while, resolving to do better. Then it takes wing and goes through its opera bouffe chase once more.

Eagles do catch fish, for now and then about sunset one is seen winging its way toward the nest with a handsome bass or pike in its claws, but the prey must have been asleep when taken. The fish-eagle is a good deal of a scavenger, and probably much of its sustenance is gained in cleaning up dead fish.

Lots of them are killed and not eaten by other fish. Often a muskallonge or big bass will hit a smaller swimmer and kill it when its own maw is gorged, and the dead thing floats away. The fish-eagle takes it in almost any stage of decomposition.

The most frequent victims to ravenous game fishes belong to the class of suckers. They are slow and get out into deep water often, and there they meet fate. If a man sees a big fat sucker floating belly upward, with a gash in it, he may know that a muskallonge, pike, pickerel or bass has been at work. If he looks for the body of the sucker the next day he will not find it. The fish-eagle will have been along.

BAITING WITH TROUT.

The Epicurian Muskallonge of Some Small Michigan Lakes.

"There are several small lakes on the headwaters of the Mänistique River in Michigan, where there are very large muskallonge," said a New York angler. "Brook trout are abundant in the streams that run into those lakes.

"It had been the lament of fishermen, time out of mind, that the muskallonge would take no live bait or lures that were tried on them, but a party of anglers who were trout fishing in that region made the discovery, some seasons ago, that the muskallonge would not accept any of the ordinary baits for the reason that they were highly epicurean in their tastes.

"One of the party went out one day to try his skill on the muskallonge in one of the lakes. After exhausting it all without having had a single strike, he abandoned muskallonge fishing and began casting for trout at a stream that emptied into the lake.

"He hooked a fair-sized trout, and was reeling it in, when there came a sudden swoop and splash in the water, and down went the trout and the fisherman's leader in the whirlpool that marked the spot where the trout had been.

"The fisherman knew that it was nothing else than a muskallonge that had swept trout and leader away in a dash such as that, and he instantly made up his mind that it was trout those great fish regaled themselves on in those waters. He kept alive the next six-inch trout he caught, put it on his muskallonge hook, and tossed it into the lake where he thought muskallonge were more than likely lying in wait.

"The trout had barely sunk below the surface when it was pounced upon, and the angler, after a stiff fight for a quarter of an hour, had the gratification of landing a seventeen-pound muskallonge. With similar bait the party killed twelve big muskallonge in that lake in less than two hours.

"At the same time, every other kind of bait was used, without a single strike resulting on any of them. At any time during the party's stay thereabouts, muskallonge could be caught when trout were used as bait, but at no time with anything else.

"The big fish were connoisseurs. The streams provided them with delicate trout, and they refused anything less choice. Trading off trout for muskallonge seemed like a decidedly barbarous and unsportsmanlike thing to do, but the knowledge obtained as to the ways of muskallonge was regarded by the anglers as worth the sacrifice.

"Another lake in that region has nowhere more than four feet of water in it, and its bottom is so soft that a pole twenty feet long may be shoved down into it without reaching solid ground. The lake is alive with big pickerel, for they have devoured all of the small ones.

"They bite at almost anything presented to them, but the moment one is hooked it dives into the soft bottom and goes so deep that sometimes they have to be pried out with poles. It is not an uncommon thing to mine a pickerel from a depth of four feet. The bottom is not mud or mire, but a pulpy mass described as resembling tapioca pudding."

ART OF THE FLY-FISHER.

Growing Popularity of the Sport—Hints for the Angler.

Fly-fishing in northern Maine waters will soon be prime. From the 1st to the 15th of June is the recognized time for the beginning of the best of this sport, but indications this year point to an exceptionally fine opening, brought about by an unusually warm spring.

The secret of the growing popularity of this sport lies in the fact that it is an art, and like all art it has an ideal which one is ever striving for but never quite attains.

One who begins in proper form can with practice continually improve in distance, accuracy and delicacy. Accuracy and delicacy are the main requisites of the practical fisherman, distance casting figuring principally in contests and exhibitions. The distance record is something over 140 feet, but the average fisherman will seldom use more than sixty and never more than eighty feet of line.

Fly-casting is simply a motion of the wrist and forearm, a quick twitch back at the proper time and another forward when the line has had time to straighten out behind. The more line cast the more time is, of course, required for the back cast. Theoretically these casts should be the same.

The novice bungles for several reasons, because he uses not only the wrist and forearm, but the entire arm and the body as well; does not give the back cast sufficient time, or throws the rod too far forward, thus making it impossible for the line to unwind and come down easily and naturally.

Accuracy and delicacy come from long practice and are most essential accomplishments. The big trout which lie in wait for tempting morsels under logs and lily pads or beside rushing eddies, pay little attention to a fly unless it is put down in the right spot and in the right manner.

Long experience has taught them that there is something very suspicious about dainty bits which come into the water in unnatural ways. Heavy, splashing casts may attract the small and inexperienced trout, the kind of trout that one may take one minute, throw back, and catch again ten minutes later; the frolicsome, festive trout which jump for everything, from tiny bits of wood up to big maple leaves; but the big fellows, the oldtimers, do not pay any particular attention to this sort of casting.

And for these reasons, and many more, there is a deal to learn in fly fishing. In quick or running water trout will often take the fly when it is allowed to float down past their retreat naturally with the current, while they will refuse to rise to the same fly dragged against the current. In one instance the lure is following natural laws, and in the other it is violating them, and the big trout have sense enough to know it.

For the same reason, in pond fishing, it is necessary to put a fly down just as a natural fly alights, as gently as a falling feather. It is often necessary to make a cast so that the flies will hang upon a bush that overhangs a pool for a few moments before dropping into the water below. This trick will often fool the oldest trout, when a cast made directly into the water would attract no attention whatever.

The reason is plain. The trout below lie there hiding, waiting for flies to light upon the bushes. They see them light, and wait for them to fall. When a fly comes suddenly into view from nowhere, and suddenly disappears just as mysteriously, they know something is wrong.

Big trout will not rise close to a canoe or boat. Place two fishermen in the same craft at the right point, and have one cast twenty feet and the other fifty. Nine times out of ten the one casting twenty feet will be taking trout running six and eight to the pound, and the one casting fifty will be landing trout weighing from half a pound to a pound and a half. Let two men fish from the same boat, and upon opposite sides, and let one make bungling casts, and the other place the flies upon the water with delicacy, and much the same results will follow.

There is also a difference in the way the flies must be handled when once upon the water. For instance, early in the season, trout take a wet fly that is an inch or so under water, simply because they are not rising freely, but feeding mainly under the surface.

Later on the flies must be trolled gently on the surface, and at times when the trout fly is in evidence a hopping fly tempts even the most indifferent fish. This is because the trout fly, of which the fish are very fond, differs from other flies in possessing the ability to light upon the water, rest a moment and fly off again. The average fly or miller is down for good when once it strikes the surface.

The idea that trout may be taken upon the fly at all times is decidedly an error. Trout will not rise well unless conditions are favorable, in the majority of waters.

There are, to be sure, places where they seem little affected by unfavorable conditions, but they are very few, and invariably the sportsman soon tires of the sport where these unnatural conditions exist. Water, wind and temperature have much to do with bringing about the best fly fishing, and for just this reason it is not every day that the fisherman finds the fish in the right mood, even if he is where the fish are.

Early in the season warm weather draws the trout from the deep to the shallow water, but later on warm weather sends them from shallow to deep water, and cool weather brings them back to shallow water again. There are days when the trout are rising continually, but generally a few hours at morning and evening afford the best fishing of the day.

Small trout require much more food than larger fish. It is making a conservative estimate to state that a six-inch trout rises fifty times where a pound trout rises once and a pound trout twenty times to once for a four-pound fish.

There is a general belief among non-fishermen that trout bite the fly. Such is not the case. The trout, attracted by the fly, rises for it with the intent to take it in its mouth, carry it away and devour it. The fish runs with its food from other fish, just as a chicken runs with a worm from other chickens, but on touching the fly the trout's keen nose tells instantly that it has been deceived and it spits the lure out at once.

For this reason the strike is necessary and the fisherman must be quick. Not too quick, not too slow. The novice will be slow about nineteen times out of twenty.

There is no tug such as the bait fishermen experience. The trained fisherman's eye notes the rise and instinctively he strikes. He does not give a jerk that will throw the fish clear over the boat, but just pressure enough to hook the fish, and this is very little.

Try to set a sharp hook into the fleshy part of the thumb, and see how easily it can be done. Too hard a strike makes a rent in the jaw of the fish and renders escape easy. The right kind of strike sets the hook firmly and even permits a moderate amount of slack line.

The artificial fly is not necessarily an imitation of some natural fly, although the body, hackle and feathers are in imitation of the body, legs and wings. Some standard flies are close copies of natural flies; for instance, the white and gray millers, the black gnat and the like, but other killing flies have no parallel in nature, the red ibis and the Parmachenee Belle, in particular, the latter being the favorite of fishermen. The attractiveness of the lure is what seems to appeal to the trout and to whet the appetite.

Bait fishing has about the same relation to fly fishing that shooting a covey of quail on the ground and picking one from the flying bunch has to hunting. One is sport, the other recreation, pure and simple.

Fly-fishing requires skill, judgment, experience; bait-fishing requires little more than stout tackle. It is the easiest thing in the world for a trout to escape when lightly hooked with a fly, it is next to impossible for it to get away when caught on the average bait-fishing rig.

And for this reason, the tendency of modern fishermen is more and more to give the fish a chance for life. Within the past few years trolling rigs have evolved from dragging irons to single hook devices, and many fishermen have come to use bait only when trout for food can be secured in no other way.

Rods have gone down from ten and eight to four and five ounces in weight, leaders from double and treble gut to single, and many changes have been wrought which call for the best the fisherman can give. The time when bait-fishing will be consigned to pot hunters and farmers' boys, except when the fish cannot be successfully taken in any other way, is not far distant.

The fly-fisherman's outfit is of prime consideration. The rod should be of split bamboo, which is now recognized as having the most resilience and strength. Its weight should not be more than five or six ounces nor its length more than eight feet.

A small waterproof line will last longer than the plain silk, but will not cast so well. Two twenty-five-yard coils will be sufficient. A plain click reel is better than a multiply and a landing-net is a necessity.

The fly book need not contain an endless variety of flies, for a good many of the lures are evidently made for no other purpose than to sell. Half a dozen of the standards will answer every purpose of the Maine fisherman—the Parmachenee Belle, brown hackle, gray hackle, Queen of the Water, Montreal, Silver Doctor and black gnat. For special occasions the gray and white millers, the yellow May and the red ibis, may be added.

Hackles should be wound with silk bodies, and not with peacock feathers.

If the fisherman is to work into the wilderness two rods should be taken, because a fly rod breaks easily and repair shops are not plentiful in the jungle. An antidote for black flies is also an indispensable part of the outfit, and a pair of pocket scales will show many trout that weigh less than estimated—and a few that weigh more.

One prime requisite is to find where to go, and this can best be discovered by consulting some fisherman. The important thing is to find where the trout are. The novice will find a little preliminary backyard casting very helpful. No fly is necessary, but if one is used it should be broken at the bend to make it harmless.

BIG TROUT OF SAULT STE. MARIE.

Giants That May Be Caught Only in the Early Spring.

In the early spring suckers in immense schools run up from St. Mary's River, between Lakes Superior and Huron, into the small streams that come in on both sides of the river, and there deposit their spawn. They are followed by brook trout in droves, and among them are specimens larger than can be found anywhere else in the Northwest.

These trout are after the sucker spawn, and leave the upper waters of the streams when the spawning of those fish is over. While following the suckers they furnish rare sport to the angler, and catches with five and six-pounders among them have been made.

By the end of May the trout have returned to the deep pools and to the St. Mary's River, and the large ones will not rise to the fly again during the season. Now and then a big one will be tempted by an attractive minnow on the hook, and a small white troll, without feathers on it, often proves a good killer of them. The smaller trout, however, continue to give excellent sport to the angler all through the season.

ALLIGATORS IN CAPTIVITY.

Many Refuse to Eat, and So Starve to Death—One Way of Feeding Them.

"The alligator," said a showman, "is commonly supposed to have a good appetite. In fact, from the stories we read about its roaming around in the streams and bayous of its native regions, picking up and eating colored pickaninnies and stray dogs, and biting off the legs of men it finds asleep on the banks, and even taking in a man whole, and swallowing calves, and that sort of thing, one would think that the alligator had a very voracious appetite, which was always in good working order.

"And this is all true enough of the alligator down there under natural conditions, and free. But the alligator in captivity is a very different proposition. It is often very difficult to get the alligator in captivity to eat at all, especially at first.

"So thousands of little alligators that tourists send up or bring up from Florida starve to death after they get here. They live a few weeks, or a month or two, without eating anything, and then just die.

"Maybe this is just as well in the case of these alligators, for the alligator would hardly do for a household pet, and, as a matter of fact, the owners of these small alligators are likely to be pretty well tired of them anyway before they die.

"But now, with alligators kept for show purposes, especially the larger ones, it's different. You can't afford to have them dying off on you and you've got to get 'em to feed somehow; if they won't eat you've got to devise some way of making 'em.

"One way of doing this, with the larger 'gators, is to throw food into 'em. To be able to do this you have got, of course, to get them to open their mouth, and in doing this you must, of course, exercise due care, for you don't want an alligator to bite your hand off, or anything like that.

"One way of feeding these larger alligators is to stand off at a safe distance with a stick of suitable length in one hand and a chunk of meat in the other. With the stick you scratch the alligator's head until you get it angry and it raises its upper jaw, opening its mouth, to snap at you if it can. Then, when its mouth is wide open like that, you hurl the meat down its throat and so give the animal nourishment even though it had refused to take it of itself.

"Many a sizable alligator of, say, three or four feet and upward in length that would otherwise have been lost has been saved in this manner by experienced animal feeders. After the 'gator once gets to feeding, why, then it will eat all right."

WHICH WINS, BARNS OR TROUT?

TAXPAYERS OF CALEDONIA, N. Y., CUSS THE FISH COMMISSION.

You Men Get Your Barns Off Our Brook, Says the Commission to the Voters—Can a Trout Vote? Does It Pay Taxes? Barn Owners Inquire of the Wide World.

CALEDONIA, N. Y., May 17.—The New York State Fish Commission has ordered that all barns and outbuildings along Brady's Brook, a stream feeding Spring Creek, which supplies the State's big trout hatchery here, be moved. The Commissioners say that the buildings are nuisances and endanger the lives of the fish which they are trying to propagate. Many Caledonia people take a different view of the matter. They say that trout are a nuisance when they interfere with men's barns and that the Fish Commission can go to thunder with its fish. They also allege that trout eat angle worms and other dirty things, and as for the men who are employed at the hatchery and have got to drink the water, why, they are working for the State, it's argued, and must drink what the taxpayers give them. Besides, fishermen here say the trout in Spring Creek haven't been hurt any by sewage in the past and are, if anything, finer trout than can be found anywhere else. One local sport, who signs himself "Justice," writes to the town paper:

"I take this opportunity of sending you a few lines to express my mind on the subject that everybody is interested in; that is, liberty. Are we living in a free State? Do we own the land we bought and paid for? If not, why not? I am referring now to those Fish Commissioners issuing such an outrageous order compelling us to stop using that nasty little ditch as an outlet and sewer. Why, the people below have always used the water at the Snapp and Connor springs. And the people at the fish ponds don't look unhealthy. They have always drunk it, and while they have complained once in a while they had no right to—they are at work for us and must take what we give them.

"The idea of their finding fault with us because we have outhouses located over their drinking water sources! It is a downright shame and disgrace that these officials can come here and interfere with a man when he is on his own property. I for one am willing to put up my share and hire a lawyer to fight them. Yes, fight them to the death! Let us force those fish men to drink our sewage as they always have done, and if they refuse—well, we have some good friends at Geneseo [Geneseo is the county seat of Livingston] who will help us in this matter, and what they say to the Governor goes. I don't know but what that would be the proper way to do at once. Have the Governor fire the whole durn shooting-match for insulting us and warn the people at the fish ponds to take their medicine and stop kicking or they will go, too."

Perhaps this letter isn't wholly sincere. The Brady Brook is about a half mile in length. It starts from a big spring right out of the lime rock in Jim Boylan's cellar, near Main street. Butter and other destructible farm products are kept in the spring, but the Commissioners don't object much to that. The surface sewage of Main street empties into the stream, near the source, back of Smith Bros.' blacksmith shop, and there are also two or three duckyards and henyards near the head. Trout have been known to come up to the spring of their own accord when the creek was so dirty with the sewage from the street that one couldn't see the bottom, and instead of being injured by the drainage they seemed to like it.

John Pullyblank's livery barn, also, is on the stream. He washes the mud off his buggies into the creek, but the Commissioners say that will be all right, if he cleans up his barnyard. Fred Daly's beer cooler and his henyard, which are about half way down the stream, also have got to be looked after, and there are several other places near the foot of the brook which, according to the Commissioners' orders, will have to be attended to.

The Commissioners are taking extraordinary precautions, it is said, because of the epidemic which occurred among the fish in Spring Creek four or five years ago. At that time they lost more than half the fish in the ponds and in the other parts of the creek, and the work at the hatchery was badly crippled. It is thought that the epidemic was caused by polluted water entering the creek from a millpond above, and ever since the Commissioners have feared a repetition of the experience. They have expended $5,000 in acquiring land and water rights to the millpond so that the water may have an uninterrupted flow from the springs to the creek, and in other ways have been unusually careful. The creek on which the hatchery is is only about a mile long, but it is one of the finest trout streams in the country, varying only a few degrees in temperature in winter and summer. The entire stream is protected and the State owns a large part of it. The hatchery, which is the one started by Seth Green, is said to be the largest trout hatchery in the world.

There is no love lost between the Fish Commissioners and some of the Caledonians. The Fish Commissioners come up here and fish on the State's property, and the local anglers, although the stream is a sort of Caledonia institution, are outside of the pale altogether. They are lucky if they can sneak in through the cattails and muck and drop a line on the sly.

But the Fish Commissioners, the local sports contend, haven't any more right to fish on the State property than other people have. They weren't appointed to eat the State's fish, Caledonians say, and in the opinion of some they don't contribute any more toward the support of the State's fish interests than the fishermen here do. So, what with the aggravation of not being allowed to fish on its own stream and of being obliged to move its buildings so that others may enjoy the sport and so that fish may be raised to stock foreign streams, Caledonia is discouraged about the general equity of things.

The reports published recently that local anglers "guddle" for their trout—that is tickle trout on the belly and catch them in their hands—is emphatically denied by everybody here who knows anything about fishing.

RETURN OF THE GRAYLING.

Fishing Again Good in Michigan Where Lumbering Had Ruined It.

"Both grayling and trout fishing are excellent again in the Michigan woods, in the Pigeon River district," said a Michigan man, "since the railroads went into the lumber woods and did away with logging in the streams. It was to the choking and jamming of the streams and the ploughing and tearing up of their beds by the interminable log drives that the apparent annihilation of trout and grayling in their favorite haunts for years was due. The lumbermen found that they could get their logs to the mills quicker, safer and cheaper by building railroads into the woods, and, consequently, most of the streams have been abandoned to the possession of their native fish again.

The marvellous recuperative powers of trout and their kind when not interfered with by unnatural causes is demonstrated in a convincing manner by the extraordinary recovery of these Michigan streams from apparent sterility to fertility in trout and grayling. A catch of grayling in Pigeon River, made by Col. Park of Columbus, Ohio, numbered thirty-three and weighed, after 300 miles of transportation, over thirty-six pounds, an unusual average for that fish.

"Col. Park also killed a nineteen-inch grayling, the largest ever taken from Pigeon River. It rose to the fly before the fly had reached the water and struck it in mid air. The big grayling was landed after a severe and exciting struggle. The weight of the fish was nearly three pounds, and leads the record."