

## AUTUMN ANGLING.

THE BLACK BASS, MASCALONGE AND PIKE.

ALL through the month of October, and often until late in November, the black bass in the Middle States, will, under favorable conditions, rise to an artificial fly in running water. Particularly will they do so in the Indian Summer days of November.

The black bass is not only a late biter but an early spring feeder. I have taken them with an artificial fly in the Schuylkill River, fourteen miles above Philadelphia, on March 22nd, when a rim of ice extended a foot or two from the banks of the pool. On the other hand, I have caught them in the Susquehanna River as late as November 2nd. These bass in their autumn migrations had followed the young shad in their voyage to the sea, down the Susquehanna River, and were feeling sumptuously upon the delicious fingerlings, the bodies of which were sheened in bright silver and the flesh translucent.

The black bass take the line in the deep waters of lakes all through the winter, but if a sudden change of temperature comes, as sometimes happens in November, when the thermometer falls 20 to 30 degrees, and the bass are at the time in comparatively shallow water, they will often be found benumbed and floating helpless on the surface. After such a change of temperature it is useless to fish for bass in rivers; they have either gone down stream to deeper water or sought safety in hibernation, in which state they are sometimes found in hollow logs sunken in water of only a few feet in depth.

MASCALONGE are in their prime of flesh and vigor of fighting qualities in the autumn months. They are taken through the ice during the entire winter season, but an October or November "mossbacker" (as they are locally termed) is the peer of any fish that flirts a fin. There are three species, one from Lake Chautauqua, N. Y., which has dark spots vaguely outlined and narrow dark cross shades or crossbars; another species from the lakes of Northern Wisconsin and Minnesota has no spots, and a third, the typical fish, reaching a weight of 100 pounds or more, is a habitant of the great lakes, their outlets and tributaries. It has distinct black spots on a light background and may be distinguished on sight from the pike, which has whitish or yellowish spots on a darkish background.

The macalonge or muskalunge, muskalonge, maskinongè, muscallunge, *et al.*, is usually caught by trolling with a large spoon, generally a No. 8, without the addition of any natural

bait, but the most scientific and enjoyable method is by casting the spoon or live minnow along the edges of the lily pads or other plant growth, the boat being rowed about seventy-five feet distant from the line of vegetation.

When hooked the mascalonge usually leaps at least once into the air to the height of about three feet and then settles down to a deep, strong pull, with desperate surges in all directions. The leap is more constant and characteristic in the Wisconsin species. Those of the St. Lawrence system, though occasionally aerobic, are generally content to fight fiercely at or near the surface, before resorting to deeper water, where they have been known to fight an hour or more before they were brought to the gaff.

THE great Northern pike, originally so named by Frank Forester, grows to a length of four feet or slightly more, and a weight of forty to fifty pounds, but specimens of that size are now only taken from virgin waters. It may be known by its light-colored spots and a grayish V-shaped speck which appears on each scale. It is called the "pickerel" very generally in the Northern and Western States, a misnomer, which leads to much confusion among angling writers, and one that gathers force from the fact that the perch-like, walled-eyed pike or pike-perch is universally called in the West "the pike," and in some sections of the Northwest, to render confusion worse confounded, the pike-perch is known exclusively as "the pickerel." In this connection it should be noted that the most common of the true pickerels found in waters west of the Alleghanies never grows larger than twelve inches, and may be recognized by its greenish-gray color, curved streaks on its sides and dark bars extending downward and from the eye.

THE large pond pickerel, with irregular reticulation or crossbars on the sides, and no spots, is seldom found west of the Alleghanies, except in the Ozark regions. It grows to a weight of six to ten pounds and is very abundant in some of the lakes and large rivers of Sullivan County and rather more northern sections of New York and in the New England States. The pike and the pickerel are usually taken by the same methods as those used in mascalonge fishing. When still angling for them it is best to give line until the fish start to run the second time. They halt, as a rule, to turn the minnow bait and swallow it head first, after which they are easily hooked.

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