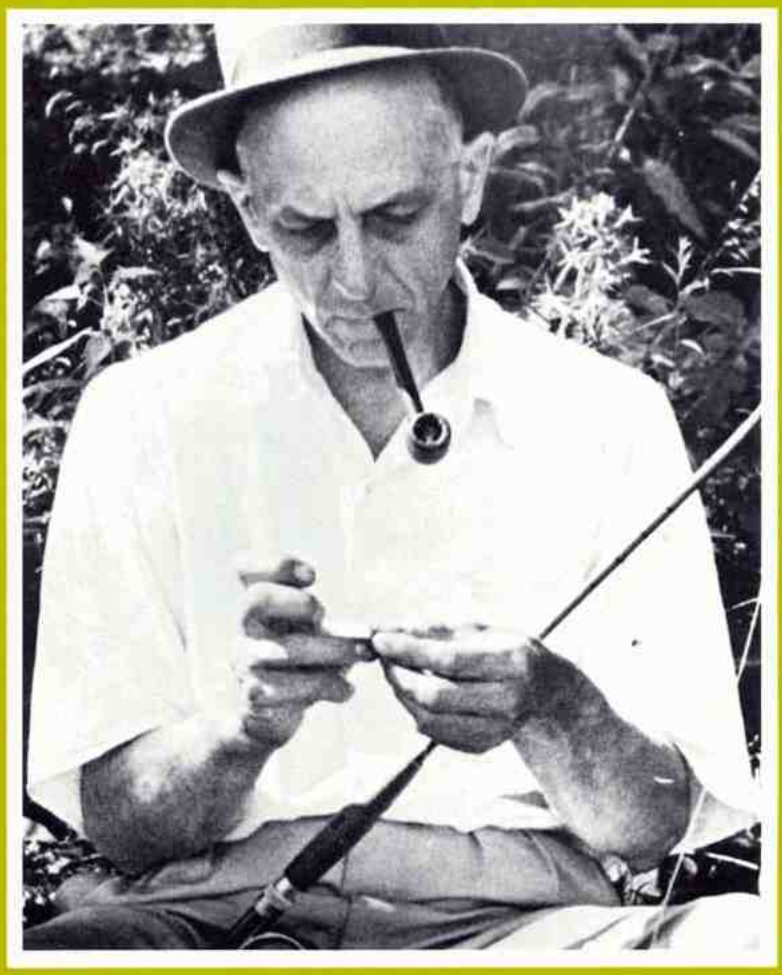

The American Fly Fisher

Volume 12 • Number 3 • SUMMER 1985

How To

So you say you want to write a piece on some phase of angling history. Well, after you have chosen your topic, the next task is finding information. If you're lucky, if you have an extensive library or live near a university that does, you're way ahead in the game. But most of us are not that fortunate, and obtaining pertinent information can become a frustrating problem. Don't despair though, most libraries have available to their members an interlibrary loan service. So if you know the title of a book you're interested in, you can usually get a copy via the library's loan program. If you need photocopies of articles from periodicals, you can obtain these also, providing you know the volume, title, and page number. Reference sources at the library that can be very useful are encyclopedias, *The Dictionary of American Biography, The Dictionary of National Biography, The New York Times Obituaries Index, Poole's Guide to the Periodic Literature, The National Union Catalog, The Union List of Serials,* and various street directories. Also, don't forget that local historical societies have specialized information that is not always available from libraries, and they are usually willing to research material for an interested party. And, if you're interested in obtaining information concerning, for example, a tackle manufacturer, or a fishing personality, sometimes a call or a letter to the library in the town where the manufacturer or personality resided can be most helpful. Usually, there is someone at, or associated with, the local library who can directly give you the information you are seeking or at least point you in the right direction. So get involved—get out there and beat the bushes! Chose a topic, research it, and write an article for us. You'll be doing us and your sport a great service. If we can be of any help, let us know. We look forward to hearing from you.

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On the cover:
Rodmaker Lyle Linden Dickerson (1892 to 1981).
The photo was taken circa 1939.

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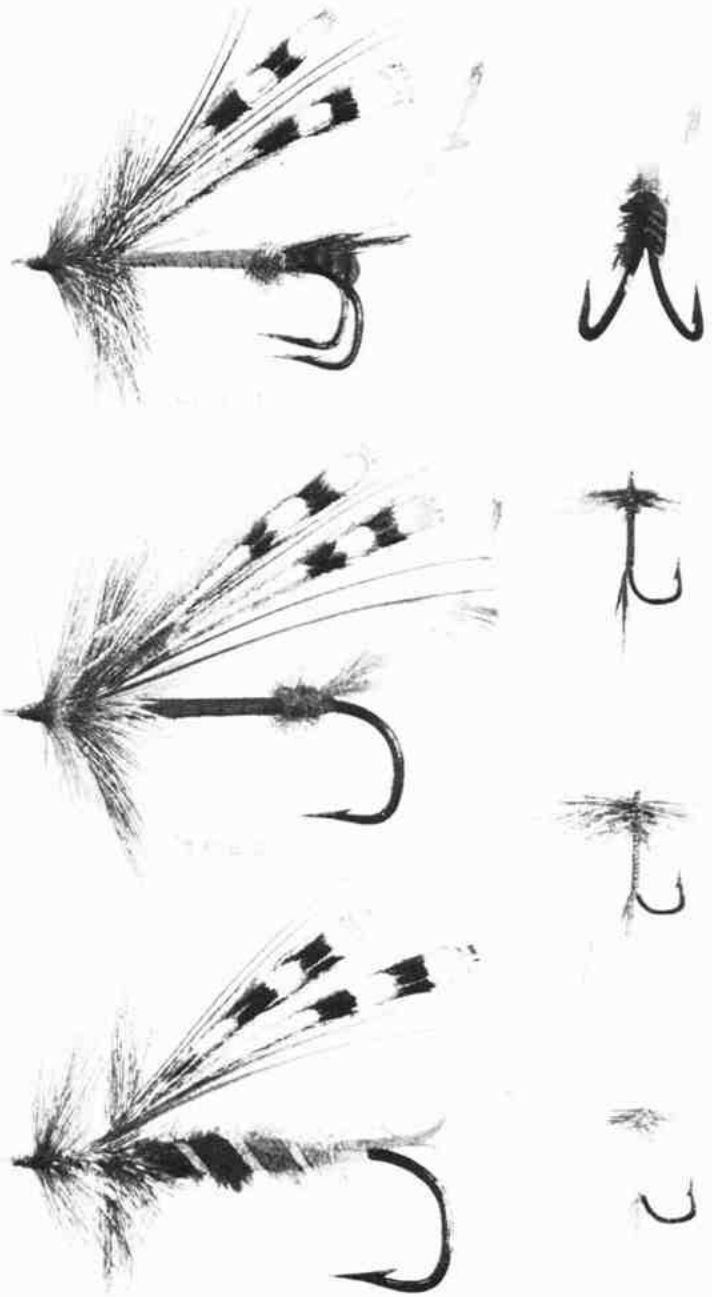


Frontispiece from H. Cholmondeley-Pennell's Modern Practical Angler *(1870). He recommended the "Gold" fly, dressed on a small-sized grilse hook (# 13, old size), for taking trout in the Thames. Perhaps the fair Minnie employed a similar fly in hooking her huge Thames trout?*

How I Caught my first Thames Trout

by John Harrington Keene

Born in Weybridge, England, in 1855, John Harrington Keene, angling author, fly tier, and graphologist, came to this country in 1885. He settled first in Manchester, Vermont, where he was associated with Charles F. Orvis for approximately two years. Keene was a prolific writer on subjects piscatorial. He published one book, The Practical Fisherman *(1881), while in England and three more fishing books after he arrived in the United States:* Fishing Tackle, Its Materials and Manufacture *(1886);* Fly-Fishing and Fly-Making For Trout *(1887), three editions of which were published; and* The Boy's Own Guide to Fishing, Tackle-making and Fishbreeding *(1894). He published numerous articles on fly-fishing for periodicals both in this country and in England. His articles in the* American Angler *in 1885 are the first (that we know of) to describe for American anglers the construction of the dry fly. In a future issue of the* American Fly Fisher *we plan to publish a detailed biography of Keene and to comment on the contributions that he made to American fly-fishing. Although he was years ahead of his time, because of illness and an early death in 1902 he did not have a chance to make a full impact on the general angling public. As a means of introducing our readers to John Harrington Keene, we include below a short story written by Keene in which the protagonist eventually wins the battle, but loses the war, so to speak. As far as we know, the story is not autobiographical; it appeared in a special holiday edition of* Belgravia, *an illustrated magazine published in London in 1879.*

I am disposed to narrate in a most veracious manner 'How I caught my first Thames trout' for two reasons. One is, because the narration carries with it the momentous moral, 'never pretend to know what you do not'; and the other is, because the circumstance brings with it a train of old associations from twenty years ago which are ever pleasurable—ay, indeed, as pleasant as were the summer verdure and lowing herds, singing birds, and bright blue skies, which formed a part of the scene whereby the death of the trout was accomplished. As I sit in my study inditing the story, my eyes wander to yon glass sarcophagus in which this fish hath his apotheosis. He is dimmed with age now, but the beauties of his whilom incarnadined sides are yet suggested; though the splendrous sheen of his real eyes is replaced by a close imitation in glass. Ten pounds two ounces he weighed. Behold his aldermanic proportions of stomach and small thoroughbred head, and notice, most observant reader, that in the side of his jaw, beside the still brilliant flight of spinning hooks with which I captured him, there also remains a No. 1 hook, on which some gaudy feathers and fur still remain, though spoiled and partially disintegrated. These formed a small grilse fly, made by delicate and deft fingers. Let me explain how this and the other hooks got there.

Squire Mawby was an old friend of my father's, and his two sons Harry and Alfred were my bosom college chums. We rowed at Magdalen, we cricketed, we swam, we boxed, we—in short, we did everything but fish, and that we hadn't patience for. The Squire lived at Chertsey, in an ivied old house surrounded by a garden after Lady Bountiful's style—roses, gilliflowers, daisies, wallflowers, carnations, picotees, pansies—everything, in short, that was calculated to impress one with unrestrained luxurious loveliness. I hate trim parterres and shaven lawns attached to a house of this kind even now and did more so then. The Squire evidently unconsciously shared my opinion.

The time was June. And as the cobwebs from hard reading—(we read as well as rowed)—hung thick about our brains, Harry petitioned his kind-hearted 'governor' to invite us all down for a few days among the roses. Sly dog! I know now his ingenious thought. His pretty orphan cousin Minnie Mawby, who had been brought up as a sister of the two boys, and taught all their romping habits, would suit me, he thought. Ha, ha! Let us see how his match-making succeded [sic].

Back came the invitation from the genial old Squire—himself a widower—ernestly desiring his 'dear boys,' as he was pleased to term them, to run down and bring whomsoever they liked. Now, there were three of us. Four would be an excellent company, so we decided to ask a man named Wadden—who couldn't do anything but chatter to girls, and fish, but who was a capital fellow, nevertheless—to bear us company. 'You see, Wadden,' I urged, when representing the matter to him, 'there's the little niece, and I'm told that of all the charming little fisherwomen in the world she is supreme. She can throw a fly or spinning bait—whatever that may mean' (for I didn't understand fishing then)—'as well as anyone on the Thames, and Alfred says her eyes are as black as sloes, and her cheeks like—well, you know—come, there's a good fellow.'

'Yes, be a brick and come,' seconded Harry, which elegant sentiment seemed to clinch the bargain.

'Well, answered Wadden, 'if I come and anything happens, don't blame me after your enchanting description of the fair Minnie.'

'All right, old fellow,' was the answer; 'to-morrow at ten sharp, so as to get to Chertsey in good time for a change and dinner.'

The morrow came, and, not to weary the reader with superfluous details, I may say we safely reached the quaint old town aforesaid during the sunny time of the afternoon. We alighted at the insignificant station which then existed, and, after duly seeing to our moderate luggage, jumped into the Squire's brougham and rattled on towards Ottershaw, where the Hall stood. At length, and to our relief, the lodge gates were reached, and were opened by the neatest little blue-eyed damsel one would wish to see. We speed-

ily traversed the smooth gravel walk and rounded into the sweep amid fan-like cedars and huge waves of rhododendron. The massive Corinthian pillars of the porch, round which the eglantine and clematis wound their tendrils, next presented themselves. The brougham stopped, the door flew open with a bang, and the bald-headed ruddy-faced old Squire, with a hearty peal of almost boyish laughter, welcomed each son, who hugged the dear old fellow with real affection.

Not a whit the less welcome did we—Walden and I—seem to be. We were friends of his 'dear boys,' and consequently his 'dear boys' too. One of the trimmest of housemaids showed us our rooms—for the ancient butler was rusty of limb—and we were soon discussing the luxuries of cold water and soap. Wadden and I occupied the large double-bedded room, and the two brothers were quite near us.

Presently the dinner-bell rang. Eheu! but eating and drinking, when one is really in the humour, *are* of the joys of life. Such a dinner! not very elaborate, either; but just nice. The said Minnie was there. Before this time I had never seen her, but her cousins had of course sounded her praises in my ears. The recollection of these, indeed, so embarrassed me by their truthfulness as far as appearance was concerned, that I believe I actually blushed when Harry introduced me. Wadden, cool and imperturbable as ever, didn't flurry himself, however. Not he. (I saw him once jump into the boiling water of a weir and rescue young Ainley, reappearing on shore again with his cigar wet and limp in his mouth.) He simply bowed, and looked up at the lady's face with a slightly earnest gaze.

And that lady's face, dear and patient reader! It's twenty years ago, yet I can't forget the impression. (Hang that Wadden, for a dexterous angler!) She had the prettiest lips in the world—perfect Cupid's bows and of coral hue, making one mad to kiss them, her nose, flexile as her lips when she spoke, was 'Tip-tilted like the petal of a flower.' Her eyes were not sloes, as I had told Wadden, but gleamed like live liquid lightnings formed of the electricity which is the result of sweetness of temper, wit, and modesty; her complexion was alternately peach-like in its velvety softness, and anon warm and tender as the moss-rose. Her stature was below the middle height, and her round, plump figure rather gave an appearance of *embonpoint* which did not really belong to her, the vivacity of her movements precluding the ordinary lethargic idea of plethora associated with stout people. Dark, not black hair, plenteous and fine, encircled her head in plaits, and reposed in a cleverly-adjusted knot behind; and her complexion was set off to a perfect nicety by the prune-coloured square-cut velvet dress which fitted her exquisitely. Ah! that lark-like tremulous ivory throat!—not to speak of the milkiness of her rounded arms, revealed under the guipure lace which floated caressingly down to her tiny wrists and delicate hands. I dared not look at her wicked, mocking eyes, but sat opposite silently worshipping, while Wadden made all the 'running,' as that donkey Harry afterwards remarked.

Dinner passed off well, and as Minnie 'rather preferred smoke,' and would have a 'glass of '37 port, thank you,' the Squire, like a dear old fellow as he was (his bald old pate glistening with good living!), complacently put up with her presence. We talked and talked, sometimes nonsense, sometimes sense, until at last that brute Wadden led up to his favourite foolish hobby—fishing. I know *now* what for; he wanted to interest Minnie, and he succeeded. Of course all their conversation was double Dutch to me and her cousins, so we discussed with the Squire the desirability of visiting a kennel of setters at Thorpe on the morrow for the purpose of selecting one or two for forthcoming campaigns. This was about to be decided, when suddenly Wadden broke in—

'Jack, old fellow, you can fly-fish, can't you?'

'Oh—oh! yes,' I faltered, not wishing to appear foolish before the lady.

'What do you think of this fly, then?' he inquired, turning to me a conglomeration of fur, feather, and steel such as I had never before seen.

'Capital, capital!' I heroically exclaimed, meeting Miss Minnie's eyes at the same time. 'Is it of your make?'

'No,' he replied, 'it's one of my old tutor's, away down of the Coquet.'

'Ah!' I said, with a sigh of intense relief, 'it'll kill.'

'It will not, I think, sir,' chirped Minnie; 'that is, I answer for our trout in the Thames. I will show you one of my own make, if you will allow me, with which last season I captured five of those princely fish, and landed them *all myself*, sir'—this last with extra emphasis.

I bowed blushingly, and Wadden smiled, I know he did, maliciously, as the lady left the room.

In a few moments she returned with a bundle of white papers like seidlitz-powder papers more than anything else, and unfolding one, she passed on to me a most beautiful nondescript, which appeared like no real fly in heaven above, or the earth below, or the waters under the earth. I examined it, of course, with due learned gravity, and then again expressed the original opinion that 'it would kill.'

'I am sure it will,' replied the fair fly-maker; 'and if to-morrow turns out fine, I mean to try. There's a trout feeds just below the Point—you know, uncle—opposite Woburn Hill, off the Meads, which must be ten pounds, and I mean, with old Galloway's assistance, to take it.' The old Squire shook his head slowly. 'But I will have him,' she replied determinedly, 'see if I do not. Will you come with me, Mr. ————, I forget your name; well, Harry calls you Jack, and so will I. Will you come, Jack?'

Why did not she ask Wadden? However, I replied, 'Most assuredly, Miss Mawby, but I have no tackle.

'Oh, I've a very good little single-handed rod you can have, if you care to fish; and if I hook the fish, you must land it, and vice versa!'

'Certainly,' I replied with fearful calmness, seeing a loophole out of my inability in the 'landing' business, and feeling certain all the fellows were laughing at me. 'Certainly, Miss Mawby, I shall be most happy.'

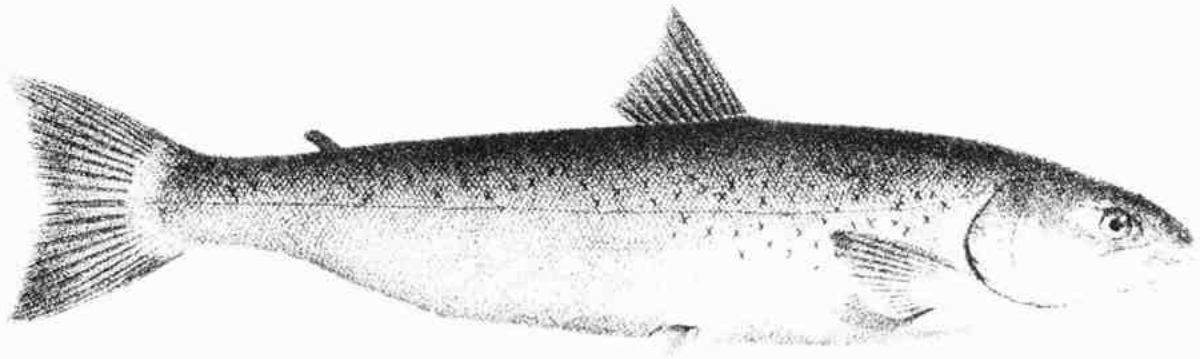
'Very well, thanks. I suppose, sir (this to Wadden), you will not come because of your books, etc. etc.?'

'Well, he answered, as if quite unconcerned, 'I'll come and look on—sit on the bank and watch.' (Why didn't I slay him there and then?)

Next morning, an anxious night having passed, I arose, and, after plunging into the bath, felt in a somewhat better and less nervous temper than on the previous night. Nevertheless, when I descended to the breakfast-room and saw our dear little mistress (the Squire wasn't up as yet) in a delicious morning gown which set off her fresh round cheeks and rippling hair with new beauty, and lost itself in folds of gracefulness round her enchanting figure, my courage evaporated. Harry saw my embarrassment, and asked what was the matter. How could I tell him? It was all that stupid fishing. How I prayed for skill to not render myself ridiculous, and how I sought amongst my recollections for the tenets of the art, I cannot express. Breakfast was nauseous to me. Wadden seemed not to trouble. He was as cool as ever, and I—well, I wished that the earth had remained without form and void ere it had allowed fishing to form itself into an important pastime.

'Come Mr. ———— Jack, we must be getting along,' said Minnie, after the maintinal meal. 'I have ordered the trap, and James has arranged with Galloway to meet us at the bridge; and to-day, you know, we must bring home that trout if, as you say, the flies I am going to use are sure to kill.'

We stepped into the dog-cart, and my fair companion took the reins with no certain air. She evidently knew what a horse was, and how to govern it, and I found myself, as we lightly sped along, wondering if those neatly gloved tiny hands would ever govern a member of the



A steel engraving of a typical Thames trout from the Modern Practical Angler

genus homo as well as they did the mettlesome mare in the shafts. What a magnificent morning it was, to be sure! The hedge-rows were budding with the white hawthorn bloom, and the wavy verdure of the Chertany meads lay to our right, overshadowed by the expansive Woburn Hill. In front approached the winding Thames, sparkling in the morning beams; and the especially harmonious voice of the not very distant weir saluted our ears as, throwing the reins on the mare's back, Minnie descended in my arms from the lofty dog-cart.

James touched his hat. 'What time, miss?' he querried.

'Bring the carriage at five, James,' was the answer, 'and ask the Squire to come and assist us home with the fish.'

The '*fish*,' I thought, ugh! However, I said nothing, and followed Minnie to the boat, where Galloway, the fisherman, awaited our coming.

'Well, Galloway,' she said, as she lightly stepped over the high side of the punt (oh! that charming tiny foot and slender ankle), 'are we to get that ten-pounder to day?'

Galloway was a very old weather-beaten one-eyed man, and after a portentious pause and an up-and-down glance at me, he sententiously replied, 'Well, miss, m'hap ye may m'hap ye medn't.'

Minnie laughed a cheery laugh, and turning to me said, 'What of that answer in an Aristotelian argument, Mr. Ja—— — Harrington?' (my name, dear reader). 'There's not much admission which can be afterwards used there, eh?'

'No, indeed,' I replied, 'and not much answer to your question.'

She laughed again, showing those pearly teeth, and returned to the siege.

'What of these flies, Galloway? they are my making, of course?'

Galloway did not reply directly. 'Her wer at it this mornin', and agin 'arf a our ago, miss. Them flies'll kill her, I'll be bound,' he at length remarked.

'That is what Mr. Harrington told me, Galloway,' was the reply; 'let us go.'

The man looked me up and down again as much as to say 'He did, did he! who's he?' and his one optic seemed to estimate my opinion at its proper worth, with intuitive and unerring certainty.

We put off, and I took my seat on the till of the punt mechanically. I don't know what sort of a creature I looked, but I certainly felt very asinine while the boat floated slowly downwards to the spot indicated by our fisherman as here 'she' was.

As we gently progressed, the fair Minnie armed herself with her fly-rod, which, with its ivory handle and silver-plated end, looked very elegant. The oxidized reel was attached and the line duly passed through the rings; then a fine gut line was fastened by her deft fingers, and finally this gaudy imitation of some insect before referred to was attached.

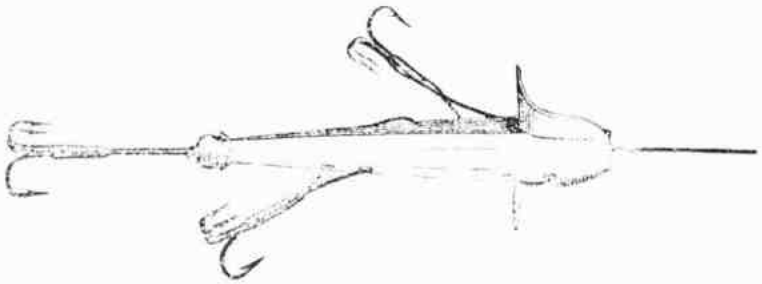
'Now, Mr. Harrington,' she cried, as our eyes met, 'get your rod ready.'

'Oh,' I languidly replied, 'let Galloway; I'm too lazy' (wicked lie! I didn't know how). Galloway looked curiously at me, but complied, and presently I also had a fly-rod equipped like that of my companion. What was I to do with it?

We neared the Point, as I learned the jutting piece of land was termed which ran out into the water from the bank somewhat abruptly; and after some manoeuvring by the fisherman a weight was lowered overboard and the boat swung in the stream at anchor.

'Now, Jack—I mean, Mr. Harrington,' said Minnie, 'try your luck on that, and I will throw on this side. I give you the first chance; he feeds about twenty yards from the shore, near yon alder-bush.' So saying, she gracefully twirled her rod round her head, and the fly flew through the air and dropped like a snowflake on the stream.

I watched this with keen attention, and essayed to do likewise. The keen solitary grey eye of Galloway was upon me, as he steadied the boat with his ashen pole. I, too, whirled the rod round my head, and thinking, as novices do, that extraordinary muscular exertion is necessary for a cast, I put into the whirl some of my cricket and rowing strength. Down fell



Wheatley's brass minnow. According to Cholmondeley-Pennell, it was one of the most effective artificial spinning baits for river and lake trout. Keene took his trout with spinning tackle; it is not clear whether he used live or artificial bait.

the fly, of course, and down equally of course went the top of my rod into the water with a splash. A quick, scornful glance from Minnie told me I was discovered. Never mind; I could do it next time. Round whirled the rod—smash! went something; oh! my prophetic soul, it was my fly-rod against Galloway's pole. That cool solitary grey eye was still upon me.

I apologised, and muttered something about the pole being in the way, all of which was received with well-bred, frigid courtesy. Oh, dear! to crown my failure, there was Wadden on the bank! He had seen my discomfiture, and—confound him!—was enjoying it, as I saw by his amused face.

'Will you come on board, Mr. Wadden?' cried Minnie.

'Pleasure,' answered the Imperturbable. And forthwith the weight ascended, and two or three vigorous pushes with the pole sent us into the opposite bank. In stepped Mr. Wadden, book in hand, remarking, 'I saw your accident, Jack; very sorry, I'm sure; but fly-fishing is difficult if you don't understand. Have you another rod, Miss Mawby? Thanks. I'll give you a lesson, Jack, if you'll allow me.'

Confound the fellow! making capital out of my failure!

'Thanks,' I drawled, with Galloway's grey eye still upon me 'don't care for fishing, it's hard work.'

'Everything is hard when you begin,' said Minnie, with an emphasis on the 'begin.'

Wadden threw his line with consummate skill, and Minnie was delighted. The punt was gradually lowered down stream, and all on a sudden I saw the water divide, and a resonant splash and roll proclaimed to the ears and eyes of my companions that a trout had risen—*i.e.* was seeking its food.

'Hush,' whispered Minnie, with flushed cheek and beaming eye, 'don't move; let me throw for him, please,' and she let out from her reel half-a-dozen yards of additional line as she spoke. Round whisked the line and rod, and, gently as a mother's kiss on the face of her sleeping babe, the fly fell on the water close to where the fish had risen a few moments before. A moment of suspense. Habet! he has it! A mighty plunge; the rod bends double; out speeds the line; down stream follows the punt before the mighty exertions of our fisherman. Presently the fish turns and rushes upstream; the punt is stopped; slack line wound up, and the nervous, delicate wrist of the little angler-hero seems instinct with volition as she quickly and skilfully now checks, now concedes the onward career of her quarry. Hither and thither the stern strong trout speeds up and down, across and athwart; finally, with a mighty spring, he shows himself a yard above the water, in the bright sunshine, and falls again to renew the struggle. But the die apparently is cast. Twenty minutes of clever manipulation and foiling has wasted that gigantic strength and exhausted that gallant courage, and Galloway has led us quietly into a lagoon behind the Point, where the water is shallow, and the operation of landing the fish to all appearances easy. I seized the landing-net, determined to retrieve my awkwardness. Surely there was nothing technical to be learned in landing an exhausted fish. The huge trout was nearing us.

'Let me have the net,' cried Wadden.

'No, I'll land him,' I rashly insisted, and as I spoke I stepped over into the shallow water, and quietly reached out the net for the fish, which was quietly floating towards us on its side.

'Be careful,' exclaimed Minnie; 'put it well under.'

And I sought so to do. For this purpose I went a step or two nearer the fish, as if to meet it; one step more and it would be in the net—the net was almost touching it. I took that one step—a shout—and I was over head and ears in a ballast-hole.

I came up, of course, and was on my feet in shallow water in an instant. Where was the fish? The faces of Minnie and Wadden and Galloway's solitary eye told me. I had, as I disappeared, struck the fish with the iron of the net, and so broke off the hook. Oh! shame and horror! would that the ballast-hole had held me tight! Wadden smiled a faint, quiet, satisfied smile.

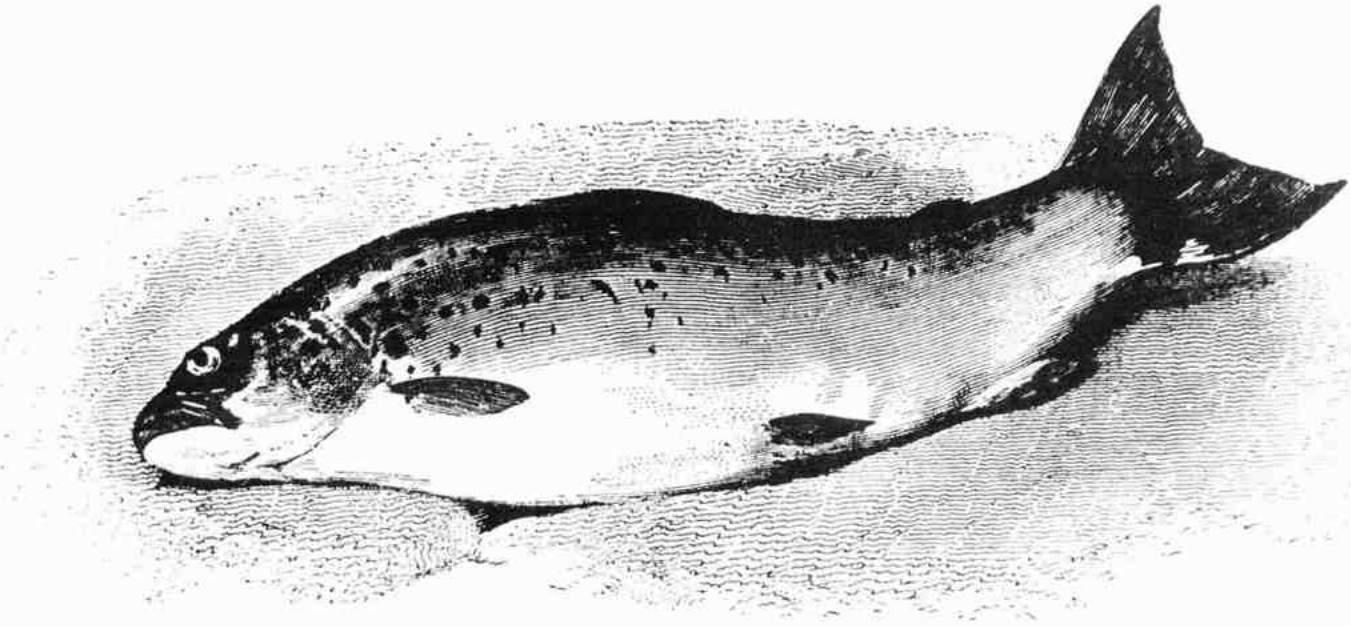
That very night I returned to Oxford without having had the face to look at anybody. I was a sadder if not a wiser man.

Wadden came back engaged to Minnie, of course. I never told my love, but let concelament, like a worm i' th' bud, etc.,etc., for a little time, and then I swore a solemn oath that I would catch that (adjective here, please, Mr. Printer) —— —— trout, or perish in the attempt. I went to Hampshire and entrapped a wild native, and he taught me how to throw a fly. I grew enamoured of the gently craft, and I learned the mysteries rapidly. Too late! too late! Minnie became Mrs. Wadden in the Septermber, and I returned thanks for the 'ladies' at the wedding breakfast. Heigho! [sic] it's twenty years ago, and I'm still a bachelor, and gouty to boot, or rather to foot.

However, I caught the trout in the April following. I wrote to Galloway and engaged him for a week. 'Ah, sir,' he said 'that wor a miss o' yourn, that wor, but I b'lieve she's a playin' agin, and m'hap ye'll nab her this time.' He was talking about the trout.

Reader, to make a long story short, I did catch 'her.' One morning, ere the pearly mist of dawn had cleared from the translucent river, I was fast into a splendid fish. I had been spinning—not fly-fishing—and I knew it was a case of the tackle giving or the fish being caught. The fish was landed, and *in the side of its jaw, as now, were the remains of Minnie's artificial fly*, which you can see for yourselves, if you like, in the preserved effigy before me.

Mrs. Wadden and I often laugh at my blunders on that day, but she doesn't suspect that it is possible I am still unmarried because of that visit to mouldy old Chertsey. §



The Brown Trout *(Salmo Fario)*

by R. B. Marston

The following letter by Robert Bright Marston appeared in the First Annual Report of the Commissioners of Fisheries, Game and Forests of the State of New York *(1896). Marston was well known to anglers of his day. He was editor of the British* Fishing Gazette, *and he authored* Walton and Some Earlier Writers on Fish and Fishing *(1894) and the supplement to* Bibliotheca Piscatoria *(1901). Marston relates in his letter that "some years ago" he sent a shipment of brown trout eggs to angling writer and fish culturist A. Nelson Cheney (Glens Falls, New York). This was one of the earlier shipments of this species of trout eggs to this country. According to a recent article by J. R. Luton, in the* Bulletin of American Fisheries Society, *1985 (vol. 10, no. 1, p. 10), the first shipment of brown trout eggs to the United States was made to W. L. Gilbert of Plymouth, Massachusetts, sometime before 1881 (probably 1880). The von Behr shipment (see letter), considered to be the first serious effort made to introduce the brown trout to the United States, arrived in this country on February 23, 1883. We are grateful to Robert J. Behnke for bringing Luton's article to our attention. Marston's remarks concerning the skill required to capture the wily brown trout certainly strike a chord in the hearts of those of us who have seriously pursued* Salmo trutta. *In future issues of the* American Fly Fisher *we will publish additional articles germane to the development of fish culture in North America.*

Some years ago I sent some thousands of the eggs of our brown trout to the United States and thanks to the great interest taken in them by my friend, Mr. A. Nelson Cheney, a good quantity hatched out successfully. Brown trout eggs were also sent by the late Herr von Behr, and the late Herr von dem Borne from Germany to the United States, and there is no doubt that the fish is established in some parts of the States.

In his report to the United States Commission of Fish and Fisheries, dated May 15th, 1886, a superintendent of the New York Fish Commission thus refers to the brown trout, *Salmo fario* (called also *Trutta fario* in Germany): "This fish is strong, quickgrowing and game, and I have on several occasions declared it to be the finest trout that I have ever seen. In Europe they endure waters considerably warmer than our Atlantic brook trout *(S. fontinalis)* can stand."

Knowing that the character given to our brown trout by this gentleman was perfectly true I confess that I have now and then wondered that so little is said in the American sportsmen's papers about the fish after ten years' trial. The last report I heard was not quite so favorable as it might have been, and I sincerely hope that our trout is not going to prove such a disappointment in America as the American brook trout has proved in England—at any rate from the point of view of the angler. Millions of fry and yearlings of *S. fontinalis* have been put into English rivers and I know of no single instance where the attempt to stock a river or stream with them has been successful. After a time, not much more than a year as a rule, they disappear. I have seen a long stretch of a trout stream alive with thousands of healthy two year and three year old *fontinalis* one season, and the next there was not one to be seen, and yet they do well in both this country and in Germany when kept in trout breeding ponds, and so our fish breeders keep on breeding them and selling them. I suspect the real secret of their non-success in our rivers is that they find the water in the summer months is too warm for them. *S. fontinalis* is a char; we have no native char in our rivers though we have in many of our lakes, and this fact seems to point to the natural unsuitability of our rivers for char of any kind. For this reason I have not much faith in the rainbow trout for English rivers, although so much has been said in praise of them that our fish breeders are unable to supply the demand. I should like to know how the rainbow trout has succeeded in the streams in the State of New York. I see from the Superintendent's report, already quoted, that 14,500 fry of rainbow trout were placed in streams within the State of New York as long ago as 1885. I notice that Mr. Frank N. Clark in his report of operations at the Northville and Alpena (Mich.) stations for the season of 1885-6, recommends the discontinuance of the propagation of rainbow trout at the Northville station on account of the meagre and unsatisfactory results obtained. "It would seem," he says, "that the species will not acclimatize to the waters of

this station notwithstanding the special effort that has been made for a number of years to bring about this result." Of the brown trout he spoke much more hopefully, "the stock fish of this species in the Northville ponds show a better and more uniform growth than our brook trout and promise exceedingly well."

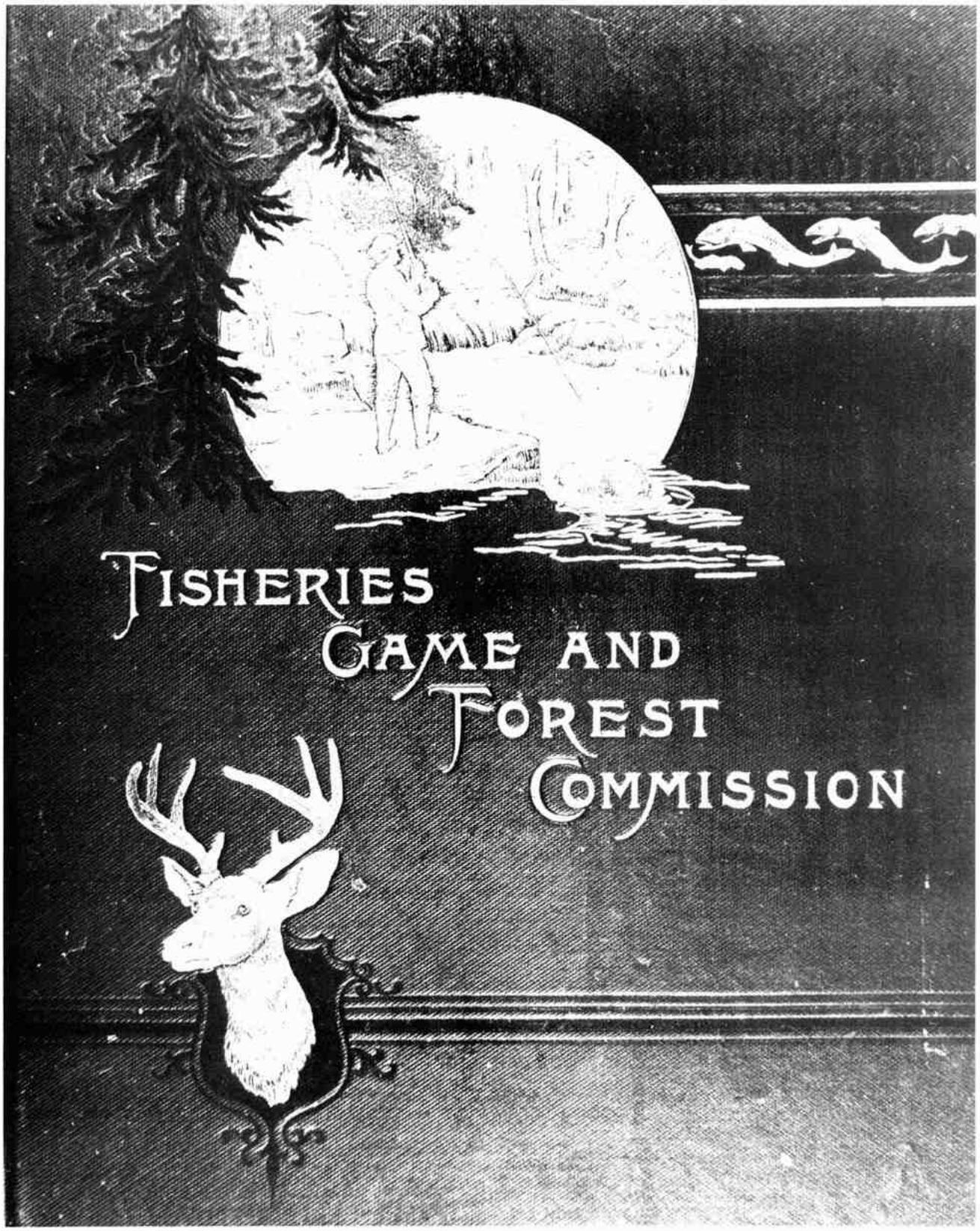
To attempt to stock American streams which are already well stocked with native brook trout seems to be unnecessary if not unwise. But the advance of civilization and the alterations in the natural condition of the country consequent on it, appear to be as inimical to the native trout as the the native Indian. If this is so, then it seems unwise to attempt to restock such streams with *S. fontinalis*. The natural conditions under which he once flourished in them are no longer the same.

For such streams our European trout should be, it seems to me, admirably suited. In this country no angler would think it necessary to say a good word for the trout, he is so universally prized and esteemed that to praise him would be as Shakespeare says:

> To gild refined gold, to paint the lily,
> To throw a perfume on the violet,
> To smooth the ice, or add another hue
> Unto the rainbow, or with taper light
> To seek the beauteous eye of heaven to garnish.

What our trout may develop into after becoming a naturalized American citizen, time alone can prove. In New Zealand he has for years been quite at home, increased naturally and rapidly and far outgrows the average size of his English cousins. In England the finest trout are found in the slow streams watering the richest parts of the country, streams flowing through old fashioned villages and quaint country towns. The better cultivated the land and the water is, the better the trout thrive. So rich in aquatic vegetation are many of our best south country streams that if they were left alone, in a few years' time they would desappear and the valleys they run through would be swamps. Given fairly pure running water and our trout do well anywhere if they have a good supply of food. Although varying in color and marking, wherever he is found, *S. fario*, in good condition, is as handsome, as game, and as good a fish in every way as an angler could wish to catch. That is why so many thousands of our best anglers wish to catch him, and why he is so difficult to catch. And it is this very difficulty which places the trout so high in our esteem. Our trout are so well educated that the angler who can with the fly kill a few brace of them in a day must be a good hand. I remember taking that very jolly, genial and skillful American angler, the late Reuben Wood, to fish for trout in the Kennett at Hungerford. There is a long and broad shallow below the bridge which was then alive with rising trout, fish from half a pound up to two pounds. I could see as he put his Leonard split cane rod together and looked at the river that he had made quite certain he was going to pull those fish out one after another. I offered him what I thought was the artificial copy of the fly on the water, but he guessed he would use one he had shown me in the train as we traveled down. He threw a splendid line and in half an hour had cast over every bit of the water. Not a rise could he get, nor could he find words enough to express his astonishment. I introduced him to some members of the Club and they took such a liking to him that they invited him to stay two days longer as the May-fly was just coming on, and although many splendid trout were killed he only got one half-pounder. But he assured me he never spent a more delightful time in his life. It was quite in vain that we told him his reel line and gut cast were far too heavy, but he admitted our trout were far more difficult to catch than those of any water he had fished in America.

If the brown trout retains in American waters the same characteristics that he has here, then I think American anglers will find that it requires more pure skill to deceive him and successfully land him than any other fish in the world, weight for weight. If this is so it will give him an additional value in their eyes. §



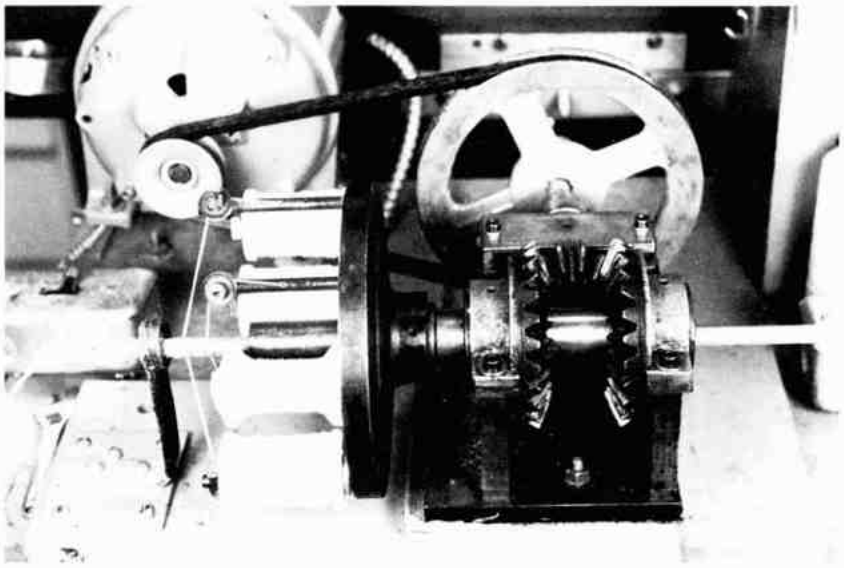
Photograph of the cover of the First Annual Report of the Commissioners of Fisheries, Game and Forests of the State of New York, *1896, in which Marston's letter appeared. The other photographs illustrating this piece are from the same volume and originally accompanied the R. B. Marston letter.*

Lyle Linden Dickerson, Rodmaker (1892-1981)

Part II

by Tim Bedford

*In the first part of this series, (*The American Fly Fisher, *vol. 12, no. 2), Tim Bedford gave us an account of Lyle Dickerson's life and spoke to the development of Dickerson's rodmaking business. We have chosen to divide Part II into two sections: one dealing with the actual rodmaking process employed by Dickerson, another dealing with the details and characteristics of some of the rods he produced. The latter is presented as a pictorial section with appropriate captions. We remind our readers of Tim Bedford's forthcoming book:* Custom Bamboo Flyrod Making with Precision Machine Tools. *It will contain much more comprehensive explanations of the processes touched on in the present article.*



Dickerson's rod-wrapping machine. The cover has been removed to show the gears he salvaged from a model-T Ford.

Tonkin cane (*Arundinaria amabilis*, "the lovely grass") does not grow straight. It may look straight in the culm, but close inspection shows considerable deviation in the grain, especially near the nodes. When split along the grain into narrow strips, the strips are often too crooked to go through a milling machine or to fit onto a planing block. Most volume-production rod shops handle this problem very simply. First they saw the strips out in straight sections, then sand off the nodes and the exterior skin on a sanding belt to level the cane surface. This avoids the laborious process of splitting and heat-straightening the strips.[1] Some cross-grain and cut fibers, showing as white flashes in the finished rod, are the result.

Rodmakers who are willing or able to devote the time can produce straight-grained rods with short node-sandings. This is considered evidence of higher quality by discriminating cane-rod aficionados. The additional manhours required are considerable, even more than twice as many at times.

Dickerson chose a middle course. This was available to him because, first, his cane was better quality than can be obtained today; second, he had a unique wrapper; third, his mill design let him take some liberties; and fourth, he used what is referred to as the two-culm three-and-three node pattern.[2] The latter, while not unique, was essential to his process.

Dickerson first selected two straight-grained eight-foot culms with alternating node spacing and similar fiber thickness. Then he split each culm into four quarters. The split quarters were then sawed into strips—the saw fence guiding against the split edge. The resulting strips were not entirely straight, as the grain bends at each node. The strips were then lightly heat-tempered in a gas furnace, which lowered the moisture content and increased the modulus of elasticity of the cane.

Dickerson did very little hand straightening of the strips. His milling machine allowed the strips to float horizontally on the pattern so that deviations in the strips did not result in undersized V sections. In the three-and-three node pattern, nodes from the same culm oppose each other at an angle of one hundred twenty degrees. When the strips were glued, the powerful rod wrapper forced the sections together, each deviation being opposed by the two opposite deviations.

Dickerson's wrapping machine (see photo) wrapped four threads around the glued blank simultaneously—two in each direction. He made the machine with gears from a model-T Ford. It carried two counterrotating pairs of spools

of thread. As the glued rod blank was pulled through the center tube, the spools wrapped thread around the blank and squeezed out the excess glue. The wrapped blank was then straightened and cured. Dickerson's wrapping device was faster than the better-known Crompton wrapper, and by wrapping both ways simultaneously, the Dickerson wrapper avoided putting a twist in the blank.[3] However, the Dickerson wrapper required very close adjustment of the thread tension in order to avoid twisting the blank.

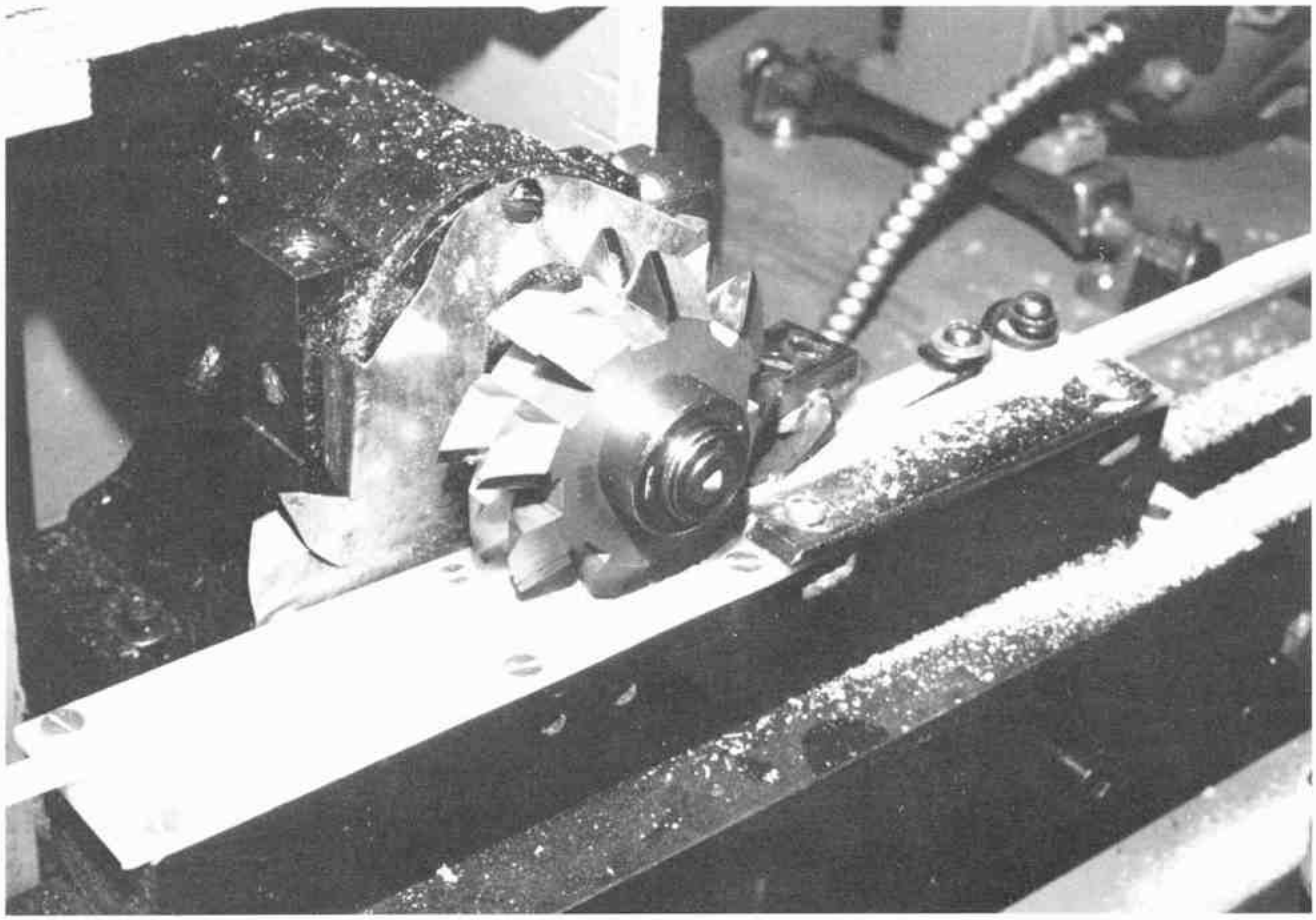
Rod tapers determine the character and action of the finished fly rod. These tapers are produced by tapering the individual strips of cane before gluing. Rodmakers do this with planing blocks, with bevels, or with any of various types of milling machines. Dickerson started out using mostly straight tapers, where the slope of the taper is uniform from one end of the blank to the other. By trial and error he worked out a series of straight tapers for tip, middle, and butt sections that gave him finished rods, which he

The Dickerson mill with Tim Bedford at the helm. This photo was taken in 1974.

1. For a description of the heat-treatment process used for bending the bamboo strips, see E. Garrison and H. B. Carmichael's *A Master Guide to Building a Bamboo Fly Rod* (Martha's Glenn, Katonah, NY: 1977).

2. In the two-culm three-and-three node pattern, three strips from the same culm are at one hundred twenty degrees from each other; the nodes on adjacent strips alternate; and the nodes on alternate strips are in the same plane.

3. Crompton's wrapper wrapped in only one direction. This put a twist in the blank on the initial pass. The blank was then reversed for a second pass to remove the twist.



A close-up of the cutters of the Dickerson mill. In this photo the mill is set up for rough milling of the bamboo strips; that is, a sixty-degree V shape with no taper was first milled.

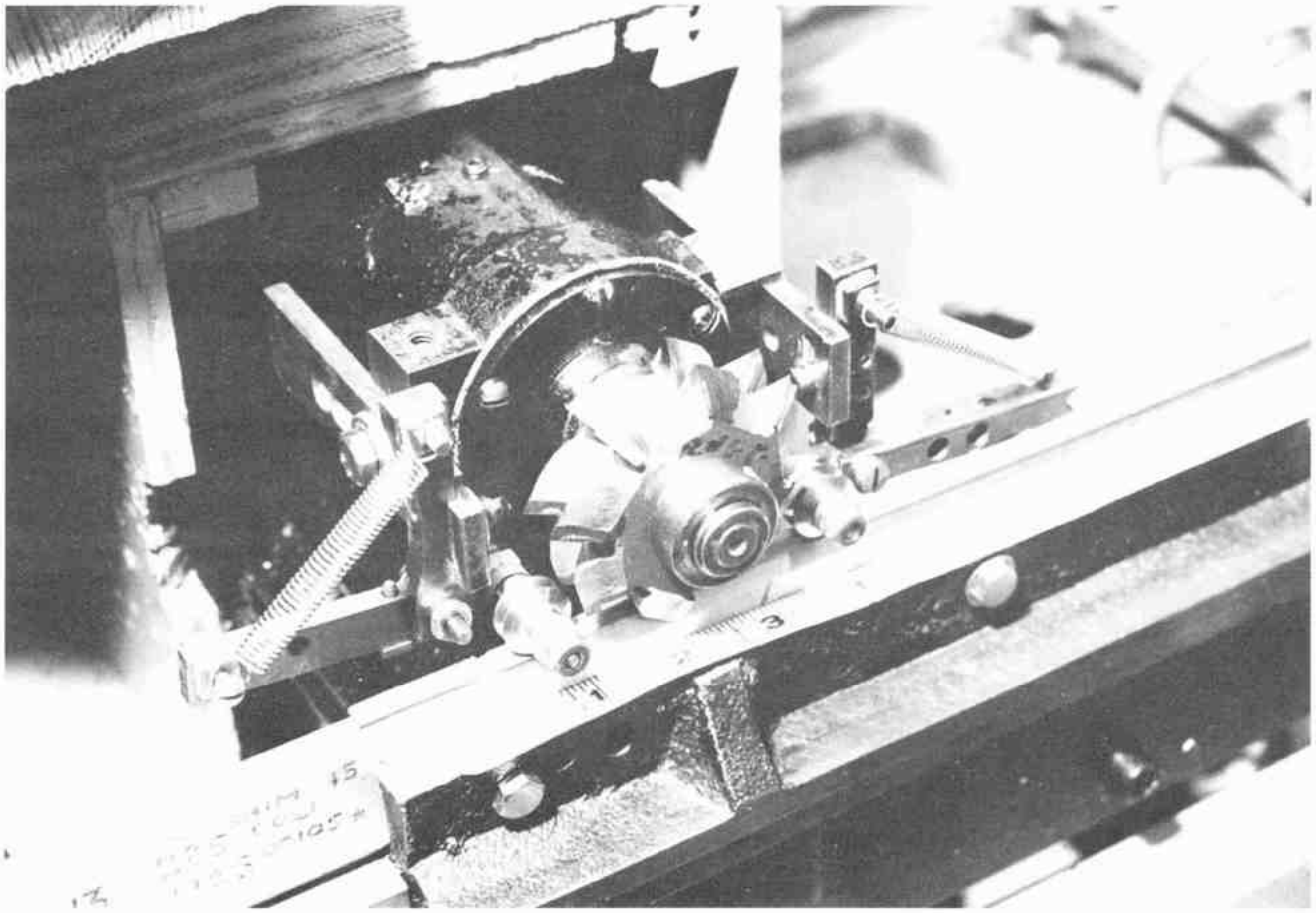
and his customers liked and which fished well. As he began to make two-piece rods and to enlarge his clientele to include people who fished in more varied waters, he also began to make changes in his rod tapers for individual customers. Some of his smaller rods have rather sophisticated compound tapers. Dickerson's mill design made it possible for him to make these tapers without making an individual pattern for each individual rod. Executing a compound taper is a complex and difficult task, but it enables the rodmaker to vary the character of his rods in various ways: to control vibration, to influence the rate of energy release, and to change the feel in the caster's hand. In effect, the taper determines the character of the rod. It still very much surprises me to see how greatly rod action is affected by minute dimensional changes. Other factors that can affect a rod's character are heat tempering, quality of the cane, and wall thickness in hollow rods.

The Dickerson mill, like everything else Dickerson made, is simple and sturdy. Other major and minor rodmakers have used the same basic design, although evidently Dickerson was not aware of it at the time. I have visited most of the commercial cane-rod manufacturing shops in North America and Europe and observed various tapering practices and devices. The bevels and the cam-operated millers do not provide the convenience of making custom changes in tapers by simply flexing the patterns, as the Dickerson design does, and the shops using a mill similar to the Dickerson design do not do *custom* work as I would define it—i.e., making changes in rod action to accommodate individual customers.

Now, we'll go to a description of the Dickerson mill (see photo). This was the heart of the rod-building operation where the strips of bamboo were reduced to tapered sections of sixty degrees, ready to be assembled and glued in groups of six to form hexagonal blanks. The bed was made from two eight-foot pieces of cold-rolled mild steel-bar stock. To the bars were added two sliding surfaces of cast semisteel that were welded on the top of the bars. The two bars were separated by a set of machined and ground steel blocks that controlled the spacing. After welding, the bed was annealed, then the four top and inside surfaces were precision milled to provide the sliding surfaces. The bed was fastened on top of a heavy welded-steel frame, which supported it at waist level by means of a heavy hinge at one end of the frame. The other end of the bed was raised or lowered with a micrometer adjustment that controlled the relationship between the bed and the cutters.

The set of two milling cutters that formed the milling head were mounted on one end of a spindle shaft. The other end carried the V-belt pulley, which was driven by a one-horsepower motor. The spindle housing and the motor were mounted on the same steel frame that carried the bed. They were located at the center of the bed.

A sliding carriage five-feet long, of cast semisteel, was made to slide on top of the bed. The carriage carried the pattern, which in turn carried the bamboo strip. The strip was placed skin down on the pattern, then the bed was raised to the proper height to remove the proper amount of material as it passed under the cutters. This sliding carriage consisted of a single bar with a cross section in the



Another close-up of the cutters. Note that the sliding carriage has been replaced and that a taper pattern (B-13) is in place. In this configuration the mill is ready for putting the final taper on the bamboo strips.

shape of a cross. The down leg fit in between the two bars of the bed. The two side arms of the cross rested upon the flat upper-bed surfaces. The pattern was mounted on one upper corner of the cross. The machined surfaces of the sliding carriage and the bed were finished closely enough so that no gibs for adjustment were required, although I have now installed them to compensate for a small amount of wear.

Dick made the foundry patterns of wood for all the cast parts of his mill, including the cutter-spindle-bearing housing. After the parts were cast, he machined them in larger shops where he borrowed machine time, sometimes paying for it with fly rods.

Patterns for the various tapers of his rods were made on the same milling machine. Each pattern was originally made from wood—hard rock maple backed with steel. (I still have these early patterns.) However, they were unstable with changes in the weather, so Dick went to aluminum. His latest patterns were made from a ⅜″ by 1½″ aluminum-alloy bar six-feet long. One edge of the bar was milled its full length to a sixty-degree V form, using sixty-degree standard milling cutters. Then a flat milling cutter was mounted on the spindle, and the top edge of the V was milled off. The amount of material removed represented the amount of bamboo that was to be left in the finished tapered bamboo strip. The completed pattern was the reverse of the finished strip. Dick purchased the cutters, the motor, and the bearings for the mill; the rest he made himself.

In using the Dickerson mill, the cane strips were first prepared by sanding off the outside- and inside-node projections to produce a rectangular strip. Then the strips were rough milled to an untapered sixty-degree V shape, slightly larger than the largest dimension of the finished strip, with the outer skin and fibers remaining intact. This rough-milling operation (see photo) was done by removing the sliding carriage and mounting in its place, on the bed and under the cutters, a fixture to hold the cane strips in a fixed position relative to the cutters. The strips were pulled through the mill by hand.

After a set of selected and matched rough-milled V strips were prepared, the fixture was removed and the sliding carriage reinstalled for the final tapering of the strips (see photo). This could be done in a single pass through the mill, but Dick preferred to make successive light cuts with intermediate measurements taken to verify dimensions. He did this by tightly binding together the matched group of six strips (unglued) and measuring the dimensions across the flats at specific control locations. By allowing for the glue and for the skin of the bamboo to be removed, he could produce his design dimensions with accuracy.

Many cane-rod aficionados judge a rod's quality by measuring the dimensions across the flats of the hexagon and comparing the three measurements. Dickerson checked this to see if his strips were within tolerances, and he checked finished dimensions at intervals along the rod in order to compare them with his intended design. He paid particular attention to points of high stress. The outer skin of the bamboo was not removed until after the blank was glued, cured, and ready for finishing. Then he removed the skin and excess glue, at the same time, by judicious scraping, followed by light sanding. He was very care-

A 1933 (top) and a 1937 rod (bottom). The 1933 rod is one of Dickerson's very earliest. It was made on a wooden planing block. The hood cap is two piece, with the reel-foot pocket added to a cylindrical cup. This rod was loaned to me by Robert Summers, a Michigan rodmaker who made rods in Paul Young's Detroit shop for many years. He has restored the rod to its original condition.The 1937 rod, made for Dickerson's brother Fred, is in its original condition and has very fine workmanship (see photo at right for detail of workmanship). There are no visible glue lines, as there are on the 1933 rod. The hood cap on it was made on dies that Dick made and was oxidized so that its color matched that of the ferrules—a dark olive brown, which also matches his guide wrappings. This practice was discontinued on later rods. The rod also has a metal grip check at the end of the cork. The decorative wrap colors on the rod are black and brown, the black sandwiched between two brown winds. On his later rods these colors are reversed and sometimes, if he ran out of the brown silk, he substituted a yellow silk. He decided to use black for the edging color because he could get the black thread in a much smaller diameter (6x) than the brown silk. Thus, the edgings could be kept very narrow. It gave the rod a more finished look.

He used a silk thread without color preserver or laquer; after varnishing, a transluscent brown color slightly darker than the heat-treated cane was obtained. The ferrules were left bright where they were to be wrapped; that is, this portion of the ferrule was not oxidized. The ferrule metal and the grain of the cane are clearly visible through the varnished, brown silk. The brown silk starts only three to four turns before the foot of the guides.*

Aside from the black edgings, the only decorative feature on the trout rods is a group of four windings seven, eight, nine, and ten inches above the termination of the cork grip. These decorative wraps were put on to help people judge the length of fish they caught. On the salmon rods a decorative spiral winding was often used in place of the four decorative wraps.

After the Second World War, Dick dispensed with the metal grip check, left the hood cap bright, and changed his reel seat from a rounded eight threads per inch to a finer sixteen threads per inch. The Fred Dickerson rod is unusual in that it is a two-piece model—most of his rods at that time were three piece. Indeed, I believe it was the first two-piece rod that Dickerson made. The Fred rod has a very powerful fast taper and dry-fly action, and it is a pleasure to cast. The three-piece rods are a bit softer and are delightful for small dry-fly and nymph work, but they lack the power of his two-piece rods.

* *Dick used two or three light coats of varnish on his windings; thread texture can be seen on the winding surfaces.*

DOUG TRUAX

Four pre-Second World War rods. The top two are undated 861711Ds with one-piece reel-seat hood caps made on the present tooling. (D is the designation for line size. The "D" line was supposed to be .045" diameter and the "E" line .040" diameter (both level). These designations preceded the present AFTMA designations.) These were the most popular three-piece models and were made with the three-and-three node patterns after 1937.** The other two rods were made with two-piece reel-seat hood caps, and both were manufactured prior to 1937. One, the 86E, is dated 1933. This is the earliest dated Dickerson I have seen. The fourth rod (81711) is undated, but is probably of the same vintage as the 86E, since it has the same two-piece hood cap. The 86E and the 81711 rods were made with a random node arrangement, as was the 1937 Fred rod.*** Dickerson evidently went to the three-and-three node pattern after 1937. The three-and-three pattern was used in practically all Dick's rods after that date. He occasionally used a two-and-two node pattern (like the E. C. Powell rods), but this was rare.*

The 81711 rod is, of course, a three-piece rod similar to the 86E but shorter and lighter in weight. Dickerson's records show that many of these 8-foot, three-piece rods were made prewar, but I have seen very few of them.

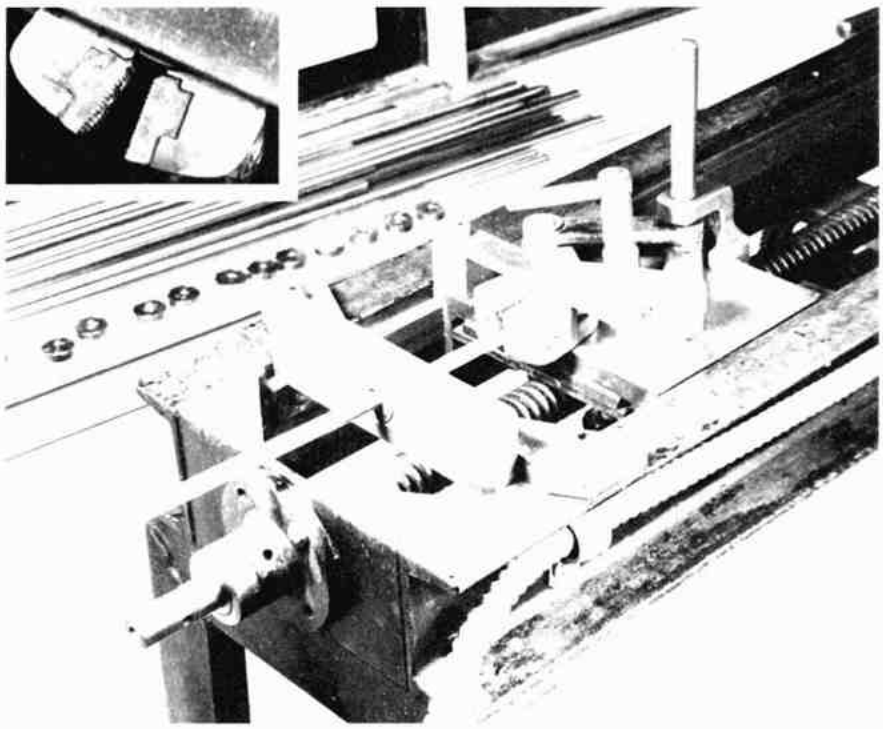
* *We remind our readers that 861711 means 8½-foot, three-piece rod with 17/64-inch and 11/64-inch ferrules. See "Lyle Linden Dickerson, Rodmaker" Part I,* The American Fly Fisher, *vol. 12, no. 2.*

** *For an explanation of the three-and-three node pattern, see section on the rodmaking process.*

*** *As the term implies, the nodes were in a random arrangement on the finished blank.*

Renowned guide Norval Stephan (left) and his client Don Valley (right) fishing the Au Sable from a typical Au Sable riverboat. Both men were good friends and customers of Lyle Dickerson (Valley was board chairman of the Detroit National Bank. He and Dickerson often tried out new rod tapers at the bank on Sundays. They would cast on the marble floor of the bank's lobby.) In the early days, these long, narrow craft were the preferred means for taking float trips on the Au Sable. The guide in the rear poled and steered the boat and adjusted a chain that was dragged to keep the boat floating at a speed slower than the current. This gave the angler a better chance of floating his fly in pockets tight against the bank, where the brown trout liked to hold. The Dickerson 8014 rod was designed specifically for this. The rod had enough power to easily pick up thirty to forty feet of line, dry the fly on the back cast, and get the fly back over the hot spot again. The guides preferred the 8015 Guide Special, which was even more powerful. It had a very fast action but was expecially good for night fishing with big deerhair flies on size-4 hooks.

The work horses of the Dickerson line were the 8013 (top), 8014 (middle), 8015 (bottom), and 8016 (not shown). They were as fine a set of 8-foot rods as a fly fisher in large rivers would ever want for fishing dry flies. The 8014 was the largest single-volume rod. The 8013 was for small dry flies and small nymphs. I have heard of an 8012, but none is listed in his records nor have I seen one. I once owned an 8016; it was very heavy—suitable for salmon or bass. At the time Dickerson was manufacturing his rods, most people were fishing with relatively large flies. There was not much demand for less powerful rods that could be used for fishing midge or Tricorythodes *imitations (hooks of size 20 and smaller) on delicate, ultra-fine tippets.*



The precision tube-drawing machine that Dickerson used for making his ferrules. The mandrels and dies are shown behind the tube-drawing device. The inset shows the detail of the vise that held the tubing as it was being drawn to specification.

ful to preserve intact the round form of the outer layer of fibers, which he believed to be the most dense and subject to the hightest stress.

Dickerson also made his own ferrules. He designed and built a precision tube-drawing machine (see photos). He could not afford to purchase a large stock of hard-drawn tubing in all the fifteen sizes necessary to cover his market. Besides, at that time hard-drawn nickel-silver tubing was not sufficiently uniform to meet his quality requirements. Using his own machine, he needed to purchase only three sizes of soft annealed nickel-silver tubing (¼", ⅜", and ½" outside diameter). From these he could produce ferrules from 10/64" to 24/64" diameter in 1/64" increments.

The tube-drawing machine pulled the soft annealed tubing through a die and over a precision-ground mandrel. This elongated and reduced the tubing diameter and made it stiffer, while maintaining a uniform wall thickness. After a series of draws over successively smaller dies and mandrels to reach the proper size for the ferrule, the material's strength and stiffness (modulus of elasticity) had greatly increased. The ferrules were then honed to final dimensions. The bearings of the tube-drawing machine are of Babbitt metal, an alloy used during the first half of this century for automobile-engine bearings and the bearings of other heavy equipment. Dick salvaged the Babbit from the remains of machinery in a wood-products factory in Bellaire, Michigan, which had burned down. He poured it for his own bearings. Three sizes of tubing were required to make one set of Dickerson ferrules and a set of bulkheads (to seal out moisture) for a two-piece rod. To make bulkheads Dickerson made a small punch press and a set of dies (see photo). For preparing ferrule stations to receive ferrules, Dick made a set of inside mills graduated in 1/64" increments (see photo). The blanks were cut to length and inserted in the lathe headstock. The inside mills in the tailstock then milled the ferrule station to the correct dimension to receive the ferrule.

Dickerson also made his own reel seats.The threaded barrel, lock nut, and jam rings comprising the reel seats were made on a standard ten-inch lathe. The hood cap (see photo) for the reel seat was made from 25/1000" twenty-percent nickel-silver flat stock. A blanking die was used to cut a circular blank; a cupping die and plunger was used to draw the cap. A reel-foot recess was formed with another die. Finally the hood cap was mounted on a trimming die in a lathe, and the surplus skirt was trimmed off.

Dickerson's tooling could be used to make reel seats in any number of styles. However, almost all his rods were made in the down-locking form, with provision for an extension butt in his tarpon and salmon rods. His sliding-band reel seats are now quite rare. Small Dickerson rods display a swelled butt, or sharply increased taper, just above the cork handle. I asked him if that was an essential part of his taper design. He replied that the only purpose of this increased taper was to permit the rodmaker to make reel seats all the same size in large quantities. He considered it a disadvantage, as it prevented the caster from feeling how the rod was flexing above the oversize part.

With all this equipment, Dickerson was self-sufficient except for his dependence on the supplier of guides, cane, cork, and nickel silver. He was fortunate to have bought enough bamboo to last through the years of the embargo on raw materials from Red China. I purchased two hundred preembargo eight-foot culms from him, which he still had when I bought the shop equipment. Today, all culms of Tonkin cane from China are shipped in twleve-foot lengths and are much easier to work with.

It is interesting to note how Dick's homemade machine tools have fared after more than forty years. Rodmaking, like almost all other aspects of life, has become more complex, but the old mill still turns out some good rods. I have made a few changes. Whereas Dick pushed the ninety-pound carriage (carrying the pattern and the bamboo) through the mill by hand, which was very hard work, the mill now has a power feed and also a secondary milling head for forming hollow rods. A microprocessor will soon be added to mill compound tapers, with a continuous variation in taper. Each rod design is now analyzed and charted on a computer for stresses and smoothness of action by Donald Barrer, a retired mathematician and loyal member of the Museum living in Rockville, Mary-

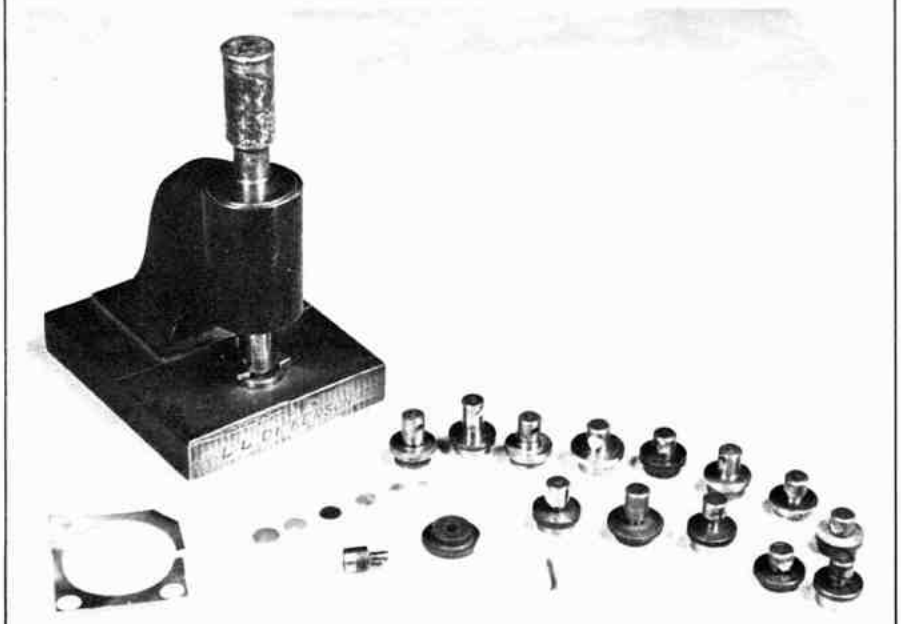
land.[4] A very skilled angler and good friend, he enjoys writing computer programs and crunching numbers. Ferrule design and ferrule stations are now radically different from those of Dickerson's time. However, all the basic Dickerson machinery still does its job with remarkable precision. In all my travels, I have yet to see a bamboo-milling machine that is fundamentally better. Some of them are higher-volume production units, but for low-volume custom work, the Dickerson mill is first class. Indeed, with one person working full time, it could produce blanks for a hundred cane rods per year.

Running a one-man shop is a demanding occupation. Imagine a small company where a single person handles design, maintenance, woodworking, metalworking, chemical treatments, gluing, furnace operations, rod windings, varnishing, bag sewing, tube making, warehousing, packing, shipping, billing, bookkeeping, sales, purchasing, financing, and correspondence, as well as research and new-product development —and to top it all, complaints and repairs, besides! Rodmaking, particularly as practiced in one-man shops, was a grueling, hazardous, and difficult business. I graduated from college in 1931 during the depression and am still unable to fathom how Dickerson raised a family making handmade fishing rods that started at twenty dollars apiece.

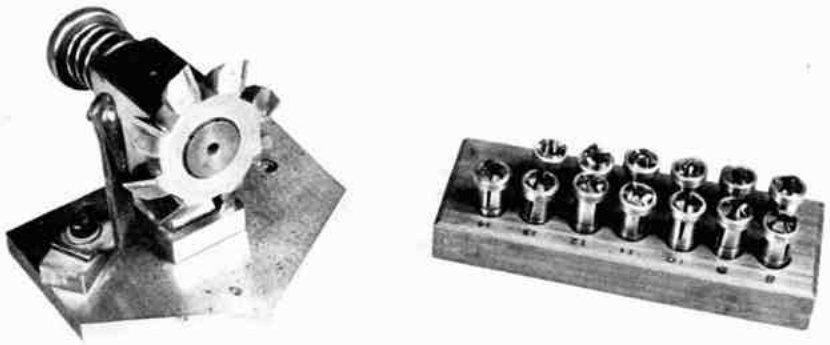
Of course there was a lot more than rodmaking in Dickerson's life. To me, rodmaking is a challenge and a pure joy. I enjoy the look, feel, and smell of bamboo as I work with it. To Dick, it was a way to make aliving while remaining independent of employers (who had let him down so many times in the past).

In Dickerson's day, most people either worked for larger companies, farmed, or starved. It is an indication of his fierce independence that he found self-employment at a time when so very few had the courage to try it. Although he didn't talk a lot about it, I know that he was inwardly proud of having had a successful carreer on his own terms. When the bamboo revival came along in the seventies and he got a lot of attention, he accepted it and enjoyed it, but refused to let it take precedence over personal satisfaction. On the whole, Dickerson lived a most fruitful, rewarding life, and he raised a fine family. To have managed this in spite of difficulties that might have stopped others is a good, solid accomplishment.

4. *Action* is a nebulous and often-misused term. We can crudely define it as "bending under a load." Attempts to clarify and explore the term comprehensively will be found in the author's forthcoming book, *Custom Bamboo Flyrod Making with Precision Machine Tools.*

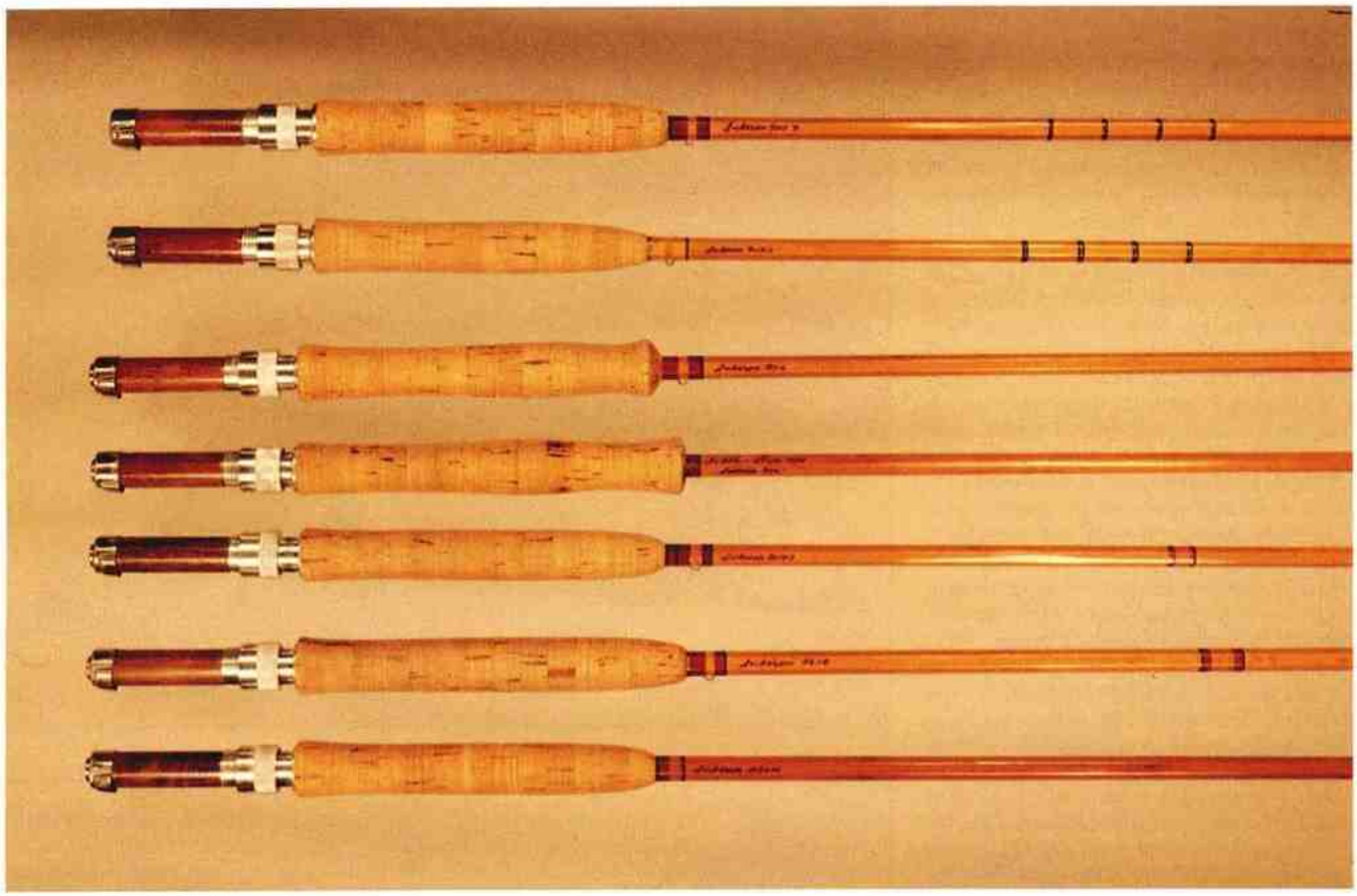


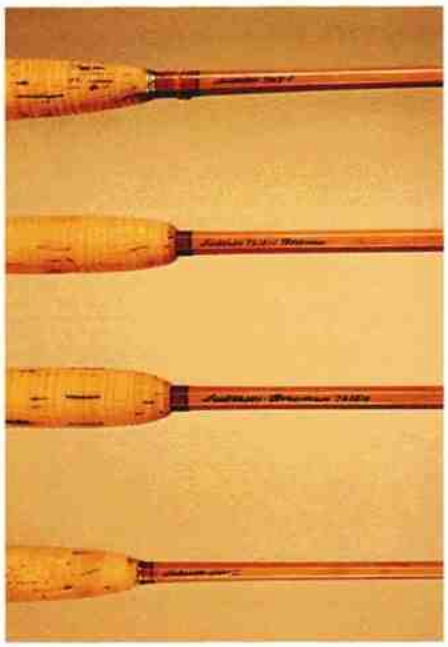
Dies and punch press used for making bulkheads



A set of inside millers that Dickerson made for preparing ferrule stations

Tool and dies for manufacturing hood caps. For a description of the cap-making process, see text.





Photos by Tim Bedford unless otherwise noted

Dickerson produced a wide variety of rods. Seven of his "large" rods are illustrated here (photo above). They are, from top to bottom: 9015, two piece, light streamer; 901913, three piece, salmon; 9618, two piece, salmon; 102014, three piece, salmon dry fly. The photo on the left illustrates a selection of Dickerson's small rods: 7012E, two piece (marked A. B. Flick); 761510, three piece with slide-band reel seat; 761510, three piece with standard reel seat; 6611, two piece with standard reel seat. Most of Dickerson's rods were fast-action rods for dry-fly fishing. Relatively few were of the so-called parabolic taper that was popularized by Dickerson's contemporary, Paul Young. Young's rods had a much different action and were much different in appearance also. After splitting, Dick heat-tempered his cane in a long, enclosed gas furnace. This imparted to the cane a uniform brown color. Paul, on the other hand, used a big ring of gas burners, through which he passed the entire 8-foot culm. By rotating the culm alternately light and dark areas were produced. It was quite a sight to watch Paul do this. The resulting candy-cane effect (no pun intended) harmonized with Paul's flamboyant personality.*

Dickerson's rodmaking operation was remarkable in a number of ways, one being the breadth of his products. Counting all the types of rods, he made on the order of two dozen different models, and he varied these models individually to suit the buyer. Since he was a one-man shop, he managed to make one reel-seat-tooling setup do for everything except for the few sliding-ring units, which he made up individually. The same standard, down-locking reel-seat hardware was employed for his extension butts for trout, salmon, steelhead and tarpon rods.

It is interesting that Dickerson described himself as a "Custom Rod Maker" on his letterhead. In addition to making his standard models, Dick actually did quite a bit of custom rod work, that is, he designed and built a rod to meet the individual buyer's needs. He accomplished this by varying his basic taper patterns; there was also enough flexibility in his reel-seat hardware so that a reel seat could also be custom designed. He made straight tapers, compound tapers, parabolic tapers, hollow rods, and many other variations. I still have his wood and his metal patterns, although I no longer use them. §

* *The so-called parabolic-tapered rod flexes more at the butt and less in the tip than the common straight or continuous-tapered rod.*

Why Trout Don't Read

by Verlyn Klinkenborg

Illustrations by A. Hassall

Granted, Jane Austen was not a fly fisher. But there is a moment in *Pride and Prejudice* when Elizabeth Bennet and Mrs. Gardiner, her aunt, find their stroll through Mr. Darcy's estate delayed by Mr. Gardiner. "Their progress was slow, for Mr. Gardiner, though seldom able to indulge the taste, was very fond of fishing, and was so much engaged in watching the occasional appearance of some trout in the water, and talking to the man about them, that he advanced but little" (volume 3, chapter 1). Such is Austen's knowledge of fishermen that without improbability she makes this trout-induced delay a pivotal episode in the romance of Darcy and Elizabeth. The mark of Darcy's esteem for her is his offer of trout-fishing to Mr. Gardiner, who no doubt considered it a compliment due only to himself.

Nor was Alexander Pope an entomologist. But where is there a better description of emerging mayflies than in lines 59 to 68 of the second canto of "The Rape of the Lock?"

Some to the sun their
Insect-Wings unfold,
Waft on the Breeze, or sink in
Clouds of Gold.
Transparent Forms, too fine for
mortal Sight,
Their fluid bodies half dissolv'd
in Light.
Loose to the Wind their airy
Garments flew,
Thin glitt'ring Textures of the
filmy Dew;
Dipt in the richest Tincture of
the Skies,

Where Light disports in
ever-mingling Dies,
While ev'ry Beam new transient
Colours flings,
Colours that change whene'er
they wave their Wings.

Pope decribes the imaginary creatures who flutter around Belinda as she sails down the Thames, but I have seen them a hundred times rising from rivers in the Catskills in May.

If it is stretching a point to call these quotations from Austen and Pope examples of *fishing* literature, then it is also an exaggeration to call many of the books and articles written about angling examples of fishing *literature*, unless by literature we agree to mean the kind of printed matter that gets packed in toaster-oven cartons at the factory. No century since the seventeenth has been without its boring angling books, but we are witnessing a new phenomenon: an explosive growth in tedium. Whole suburbs of verbiage are erected daily. Just when it became impossible to reconcile decent writing, technical instruction, and good storytelling, I am not prepared to say. But the freight of recent interest in fly-fishing seems to have forced the ass of prose to its knees.

In *My Moby Dick*, William Humphrey describes his first impressions of modern fly-fishing literature. His account will register with anyone whose reading leads him beyond the narrow perimeters of the fly-fishing fold.

> Participles dangled, person and number got separated and lost, cliches were rank, thesaurusitis and sesquipedalianism ran rampant, and the rare unsplit infinitive seemed out of place, a rose among nettles. Yet, instead of weeding their gardens, these writers endeavored to grow exotics in them: orchids, passionflowers. Inside each of them was imprisoned a poet, like the prince inside the toad. What came out was a richness of embarrassments: shoddy prose patched with purple—beautifully written without first being well written (pp. 53 and 54).

Much of the badness in modern fly-fishing writing is the direct result of a peculiarity inherent in the tradition. During the past three centuries, the technology of fly-fishing and its literature have both developed. Some of the literature serves the change in technology, and some of it addresses the perennial realities of the sport. It is not uncommon to find the two strains side by side, but they must not be confused. One has a heavy chronological and evolutionary burden to bear, like the literature of science, while the other disports itself freely among the universals of angling experience. Confusing these two lines of development is like assuming that the history of English literature and the history of printing technology are the same. One gave us greenheart and bamboo and graphite (and Cotton and Ronalds and Whitlock), the other gave us Walton and Hemingway and Bill Barich. A few exceptional writers, like Walton and Gordon, have worked in both camps without loss of literacy.

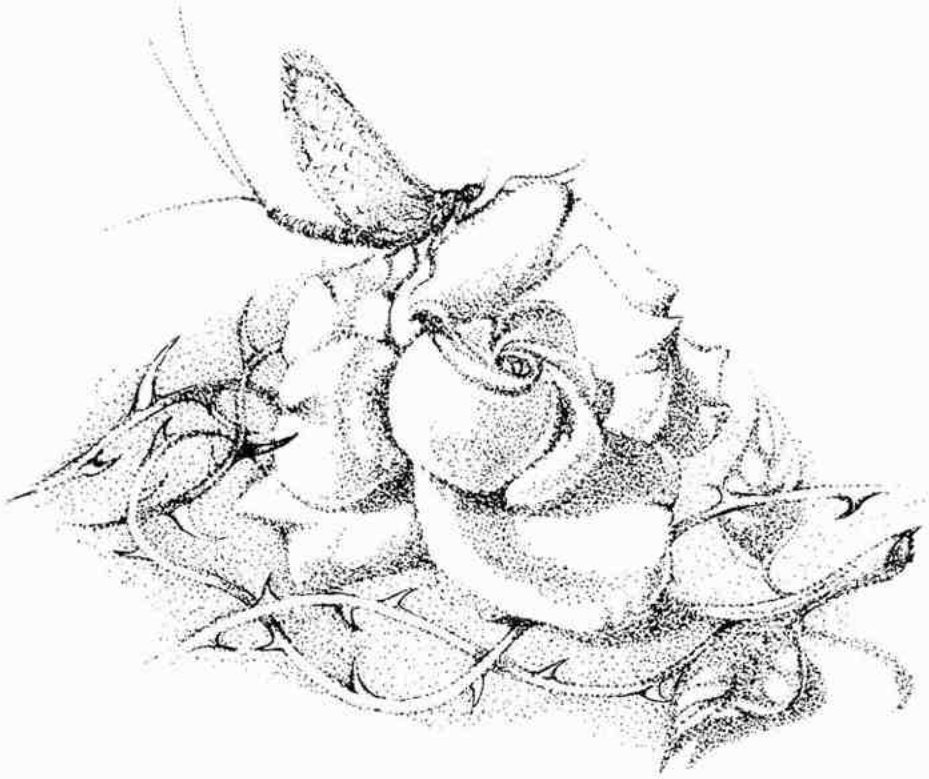
Arnold Gingrich recognized this double line of development when he named his "twelve peaks of angling progress" in chapter seven of *Fishing in Print*. He writes, "Now wait. I didn't say these twelve were the greatest names in angling literature; in fact, in a couple of cases, pretty far from it" (p. 83). He then admits that *influence* is a better word than *progress* for what he had in mind. But he does not mean literary influence; he means influence on angling techniques: "because they were in print, you and I fish today the way we do" (p. 84). Gingrich's *twelve peaks* is a cenacle of anglers, not a canon of writers.

Readers have not always assumed that technical instruction and aesthetic pleasure were incompatible. In the Augustan period, one could read Virgil's *Georgics* to admire his hexameters and to bone up on beekeeping. In the eighteenth century, one could learn to juice apples or to dip sheep by reading those remarkable poems, *Cyder* (1708) and *Fleece* (1757). But the end of the eighteenth century also marked the beginning of scientific farming, which required more prosaic form of didacticism. Agriculture overwhelmed the artistic medium of the *Georgics*.

Fly-fishing threatens to do the same to its traditional medium, which is prose. Three hundred years ago, plain English sufficed for technical writing about fly-fishing and for celebrations of the sport. Walton discusses philosophy, technique, and natural history, often on the same page, without radical shifts in diction. Things are more complicated now. The dominions of technical language have expanded enormously; whole provinces of angling lore are now scientific fiefs. Entomology and icthyology divide our tongues with limnology and engineering. This is not bad in itself, for the language of entomology just hapens to suit bugs. Such things ought to be subject to scientific rigor. But fly-fishing remains a sport, not a science, and any attempt to treat the whole as a science produces not *scientific*, but *scientistic* language. I can think of few more potent sources on linguistic barbarity.

Comparing Cotton to Walton, Gingrich writes, "Cotton was as much inferior to Walton in the pure pastoral (in which, after all, Walton has never had a peer in all literature) as he was his superior in the art of fly fishing." To say that Walton has no peer in pastoral is mere hyperbolic chaff (to call it by no worse name), but it does suggest the literary mode to which most nontechnical angling prose belongs by tradition, if for not other reason. In *Rambler* (1750), Samuel Johnson says that"whatsoever... may, according to the common course of things, happen in the country, may afford a subject for a pastoral poet." He also remarks that pastoral "exhibits a life, to which we have been always accustomed to associate peace and leisure, and innocence." And although pastoral was conventionally the first form a young poet sought to master (Virgil, Spenser, Milton, and Pope all attempted it), it was a delicate art, liable to acquire a sort of treacly vapidity in the wrong hands. Modern angling pastorals are prose, but nothing else has changed.

The "good bits" in the *Compleat Angler*, the ones that in Gingrich's presence exuded "perfume and charm," are exercises in what Johnson would call *piscatory eclogue*. They are enchanting. They are also the source of a pastoral ooze, replenished by many reservoirs along the way, that flows down to the twentieth century, where it washes over adamantine lumps of scientific terminology. Think about that combination for a moment: a largely technical language,



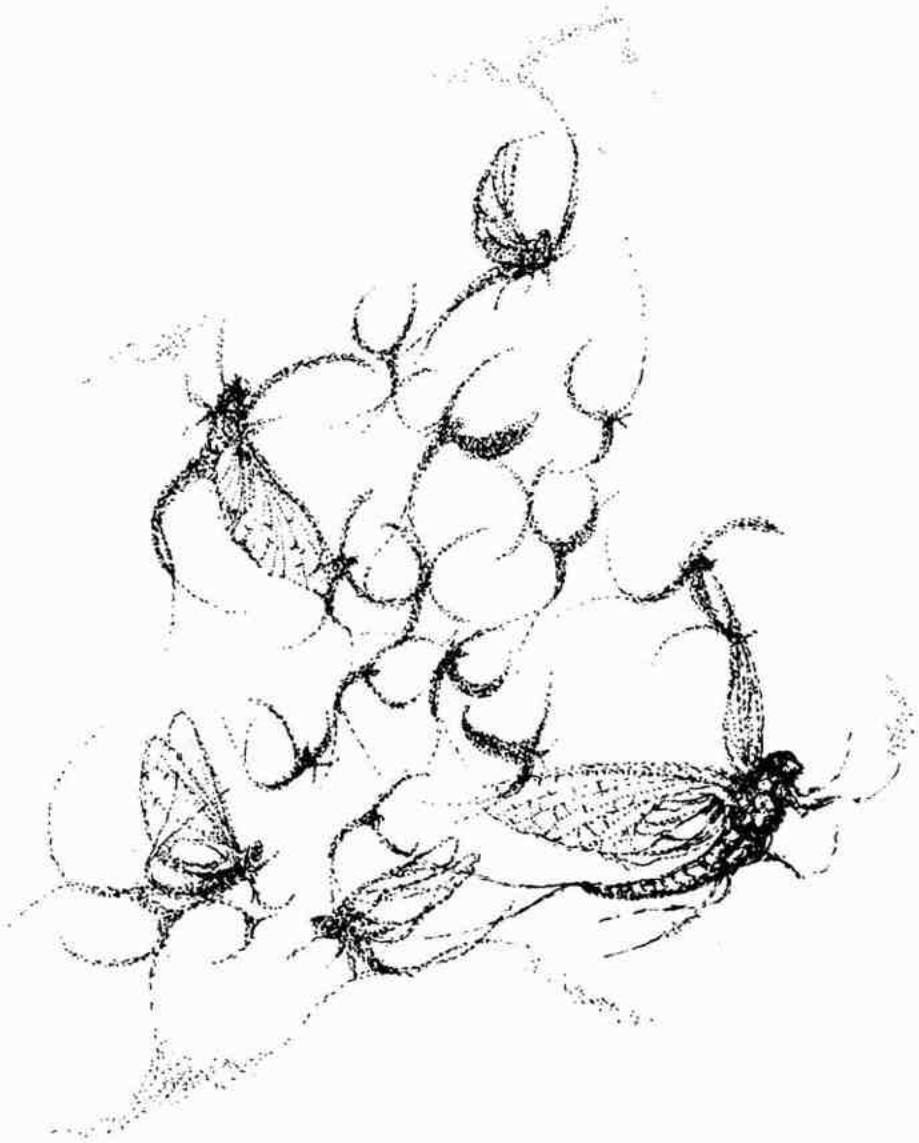
often adulterated with bureaucratic mannerisms, and an absurdly imitative pastoral sludge. Sentimentality and scientism form a generic trap for amateurs and professionals alike.

Some of the problems in modern angling literature can only be solved with a blue pencil, but others can be eliminated by returning to Walton, not as to the fountainhead of pastoral, but as to a wise critic of prose. Before I do so, let me cite Gingrich one last time. Having quoted Andrew Lang's remark about "the piety, the perfume and the charm" of Walton, Gingrich says, "We can do without the piety... (p. 3). His test for the pure ether of angling writing is to sniff for perfume and charm. This is dead wrong. Most mediocre angling writers since Walton have been Walton without the piety. Scented, but unsubstantial.

Walton's piety includes an old habit of biblical interpretation that always watches for patterns of resemblance, or analogies. Walton applies this form of interpretation to the world at large and to angling. He is unwilling to segregate his experiences; by means of analogy he links them all together. His religion becomes a means of connecting angling to human and divine history. This consciousness of what Samuel Johnson calls "the general analogy of things," the interconnectedness of all human activities, including religion and angling, lifts the *Compleat Angler* well above the average of fishing literature. But it is not unique to Walton. Norman Maclean shares the same consciousness when, on the first page of *A River Runs Through It,* he says, "In our family there was no clear line between religion and fly-fishing." Openness to analogy distinguishes literature from toaster-oven warranties and fly-tying books.

One characteristic of bad pastoral, now as in Walton's day, is airlessness, a failure to sense the bond between what we do while fishing and what we do while not fishing. Pastoral poets and angling writers habitually depict dramas of breath holding, episodes cut off from the rest of human existence, perpetually isolated and perpetually the same. It is no more desirable to create pure angling pastoral than it is to create pure comedy. Good comedy toys with tragedy, and good pastoral implies the existence of a leaden world of obligation. Similarly, good fishing literature acknowledges the link between angling and the rest of the things we do in our lives. The best examples of this openness to experience are Maclean's *A River Runs Though It,* William Humphrey's novel *Hostages of Fortune* (not to mention the *Spawning Run*), Harold Blaisdell's the *Philosophical Angler,* and Bill Barich's *Traveling Light.* In these books, the pastoral is permeable. None of them offers undiluted escapism; instead, each recreates the feeling of escape to fly-fishing from a more burdensome world. The fishing in these works is better for being less pure.

But I said something about Walton as a critic of prose. On page 202 of Jonquil Bevan's fine edition of the *Compleat Angler* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), Walton remarks that in the Old Testament, Moses and Amos mention fishhooks. Then he says



> Concerning . . . the Prophet *Amos*, I shall make but this Observation, That he that shall read the *humble, lowly, plain style* of that *Prophet*, and compare it with the *high, glorious, eloquent style* of the Prophet *Isaiah* (though they be both equally true) may easily believe *Amos* to be, not only a Shepherd, but a good natur'd, plain *Fisher-man* (part 1, chapter 1, 1676).

Walton writes under the Ciceronian assumption that a man's prose style reflects his character. On the next page, he praises Dr. Nowel, because Nowel was a good man and because his catechism was good, plain, and unperplexed—virtues Walton is happy to attribute to any angler. Isaiah was not a better man than Amos, just higher and more glorious. But a high and glorious fisherman, or one who writes highly and gloriously about Walton's "simple" sport, is bound to be a pompous ass.

Fly-fishing authors are not a homogeneous lot. Novelists, poets, and journalists, who ought in duty to care greatly for the language, mingle with biologists, architects, and, well, fishermen, who do not always share the professional's passion for words. (Professionals make a career of handling words; amateurs write infrequently.) But the instinct to blame the general weakness of angling prose on amateur writers is unjust. Amateurs often leaven the language with a kind of colloquial yeast. They confront the task of writing with a profound sense of its inherent complications. And they know better than anyone else that humans conquer speech long before they learn, if ever, to write with art. If *they* don't know it, their editors are supposed to.

Unlike fly-fishing, concern for language is not seasonal. Fly-fishing should engender literature that can stand, with humility perhaps, next to Austen and Pope. Walton quotes George Herbert, after all. And like him, a few modern writers have felt compelled to broaden the conventions of our narrow tradition. They cut across the borders of angling prose. They get in their cars and go home from time to time. Even the technical writers can profit from Walton: let their books be good, plain, and unperplexed. A tradition as narrow as fly-fishing needs to be reopened to literature again and again, just as a writer often needs to get out to the river. I think simetimes I would rather have fished with Jane Austen, or Elizabeth Bennet, than with Theodore Gordon. But then I don't know. Gordon might have packed a better lunch. §

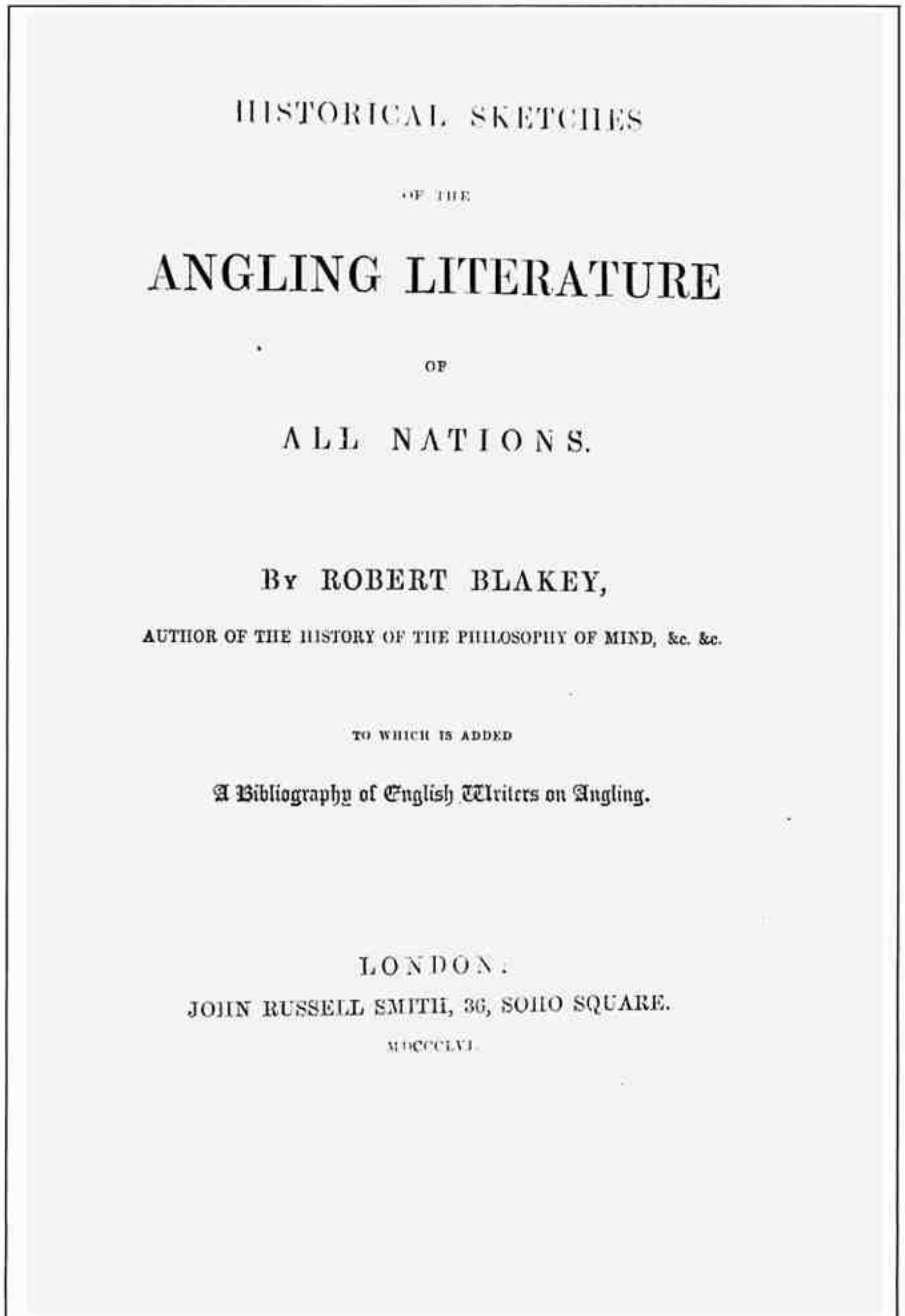
Verlyn Klinkenborg is assistant professor of English at Fordham University, where he teaches eighteenth-century literature. He is currently working on a book about Samuel Johnson and authority. His articles on angling have appeared in Random Casts, Fly-Fishing *and* Esquire. *A native of Colorado, and of late a book editor for* Rod & Reel, *Verlyn makes a regular habit of fly-fishing on Long Island trout streams.*

America's "Lost" Angling Books: Robert Blakey's Tantalizing References to Early American Fishing Books

by Paul Schullery

The study of angling bibliography has its share of mysteries. Perhaps one of the oldest occurs in the *Treatise of Fishing with an Angle* (1496), when at one point the author refers to information that can be "Found written in trustworthy books." Angling historian John McDonald, who wrote *Quill Gordon* (1972), proposed that this broad statement meant nothing at all; he suggested that authors of that day commonly tossed in such remarks to improve their credibility. I'm inclined to be more cautious about discounting the statement, having no substantial reason not to take it at face value. Considering W. Braekman's recent findings of manuscripts in British repositories, it seems more than possible—almost probable—that much additional material is still unknown or irretrievably lost.[1] But there are other such mysteries, including the "very curious" manuscript that George Washington Bethune owned and described in his notes to the first American edition of the *Compleat Angler* (1847), which he edited. The manuscript was written by one Robert Noble in the seventeenth century; Bethune suspected that it may have been used by Cotton when he wrote his instructions on fly-fishing for the fifth edition of Walton's *Compleat Angler*. This manuscript has since disappeared.[2] There is something immensely attractive about such items, not only for their revelations about past authors, but in the way they appeal to us; we fishermen are always looking for new (or old and forgotten) wisdom about our sport. Nothing is quite as appealing as the idea of an ancient lost manuscript that has things to tell us, things someone learned long ago but which now are lost and cannot be shared.

American angling literature has fewer such mysteries, of course, but there are some. Among the most perplexing are those that arise as a result of Robert Blakey's *Historical Sketches of Angling Literature of All Nations* (1856). Blakey (1795 to 1878), a professor of logic at Queen's College, Belfast, wrote widely in philosophy, history, and biography. He wrote a number of angling books, and



HISTORICAL SKETCHES

OF THE

ANGLING LITERATURE

OF

ALL NATIONS.

By ROBERT BLAKEY,

AUTHOR OF THE HISTORY OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF MIND, &c. &c.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

A Bibliography of English Writers on Angling.

LONDON:

JOHN RUSSELL SMITH, 36, SOHO SQUARE.

MDCCCLVI.

Title page from Blakey's Historical Sketches of the Angling Literature of All Nations *(1856). The bibliography alluded to was compiled not by Blakey, but by John Russell Smith, the publisher.*

those are the volumes for which he is now best remembered.

His history is suspect, at best. Westwood and Satchell, in their milestone *Bibliotheca Piscatoria* (1883), give the following opinions of *Historical Sketches:* "A slip-shod and negligent work, devoid of all real utility. A mere farrago of matter relevant and irrelevant, of indiscriminate sweepings from miscellaneous sources, of quotations incorrectly given and of so-called original passages the vagueness and uncertainty of which rob them of all weight and value. Names and dates are seldom given, or are given inaccurately..." They then go on to catalog a few of the grosser errors and conclude that the book's only value is in its excellent bibliography, which, as we will see, also has its problems.

R. B. Marston, in his very congenial little work, *Walton and Some Earlier Writers on Fish and Fishing* (1894), was kinder. He forgave Blakey his many careless errors because there was so much interesting reading to be had in Blakey's book. Considering the magnitude of the errors in question, and the infuriating lapses of reporting (whereby the attribution of many signigicant quotations are not included), I am more inclined to agree with Westwood and Satchell. Blakey's remarks on American angling are my best reason for being so unforgiving. He offers us some intriguing information about American anglers and their writings, information that is supported by no surviving evidence and is presented with all too little background information. His words are indeed a mystery.

He begins to discuss North America on page 276, talking vaguely about a body of angling literature that can now only be imagined:

> In the United States, and British America, angling literature has been cultivated with considerable ardour and success, particularly within the last thirty years. We find books on the subject in every section of this vast continent, where the English language is known, and English habits and amusements prevail, of more of less merit and pretensions, both in poetry and prose. In Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, and the New England States generally, angling has been long a fashionable amusement among the literary and active minds of the country; and the whole of the continent, considerably beyond the White Mountains, has been visited by these zealous piscatory ramblers. Some have even penetrated into the unfrequented tributaries of the Missouri.

There then follows a dialect story about trout and, possibly, salmon fishing. We are left to wonder if it involves the tributaries of the Missouri mentioned in the previous sentence; no more introduction is given. Here is the story, in its entirety:

> SAM SLICK ON ANGLING
>
> "So," sais I: "Jemmy, my boy, did you ever see a salmon caught with a fly?"
>
> "No, sir," said he.
>
> "Well, then, s'posen you and I go down to where the Eskisoony stream jines the river, and I will raise one for dinner in less than half no time. It's beautiful sport."
>
> "I will jist run up and put on my bonnet, and walk with you," said Sophy. "I have often heerd of fly-fishin', but never saw it. This week is my holidays for it's Mary's turn to be housekeeper."
>
> "Any chance of a shot, my little man?" sais I: "shall I take my rifle?"
>
> "O yes, sir: the minks and otters, at this season, are very busy fishin'."
>
> "There's some chance for a fur-cap for you then this winter, my boy," sais I. Having prepared all things necessary, and loaded little Jemmy with the fishin'-rod and landin'-net, I took Sophy under one arm, and slung my rifle over the other, and in a few minutes was on the best spot on the river for salmon. "Now, my little squire, look here!" sais I. "Do you see where the water shoals above that deep still pool? Well, that is the place to look for the gentleman to invite to dinner. Choose a fly always like the flies of the season and place, for he has an eye for natur' as well as you; and as you are agoin' to take him in so, he shan't know his own food when he sees it. You must make it look the very identical thing itself, or else he turns up his nose at it, laughs in his gills, and sais to himself: 'I ain't such a fool as you take me to be.' Then throw your line clear across the stream; float it gently down this way, and then lift the head of the rod, and trail it up considerable quick—tip, tip, tip, on the water. Ah! that's a trout, and a fine fellow too. That's the way to play him to drown him. Now for the landin'-net. Ain't he a whopper?"
>
> In a few minutes, a dozen and a half of splendid trout were extended on the grass. "You see the trout take the fly afore I have a chance to trail it up the stream. Now, I'll not float it down, for that's their game, but cast it slantin' across, and then skim it up, as a nateral fly skims along. That's the ticket. I've struck a nobliferus salmon. Now you'll see sport."
>
> The fish took down the stream at a great rate, and I in and arter him, stayin' but not snubbin', restrainin' but not checkin' him short; till he took his last desperate leap clear out of the water, and then headed up stream again. But he grew weaker and weaker, and arter awhile, I at last reached the old stand, brought him to shore nearly beat out, and pop he went into the net.

This peculiar story, which features fly-fishing for both trout and salmon (and which seems to discuss floating flies), is followed by no reference or additional comment. Immediately after it appears an extended poem, "On Spearing the Salmon in Upper Canada," leaving the reader to assume that this also is from an American source—book, periodical, or manuscript. The poem is followed by about six pages of quotation from a story called "Trouting" by Henry Ward Beecher, and then the following comments are made:

> The late Hon. Daniel Webster was an enthusiastic rod-fisher, and used to sally out form his country residence at Marshfield Marsh: and wander for days together among the streams of that part of the country. He wrote several interesting papers on the gentle craft, in one of the leading journals of the union. In the *Journal of Commerce*, New York, there have been, for several years, articles now and then, on angling, of great literary merit.
>
> We have been very much interested by the perusal, through the hands of a friend, of a little volume, printed at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1852, *On Angling*. There are some lines in it *On the Salmon Fly*, which struck our fancy. They are penned in the true English fishing tone; and had we not found them where we did, we should have thought them an emanation from the banks of the Tweed, or Tay, or some of the famous salmon streams in the North of Scotland, rather than in the heart of the American Continent. Such productions as these distinctly show how extensively the English practice of Fly-fishing, and the literary tone and sentiment that accompany it, are extending themselves over the world.
>
> THE SALMON FLY
>
> O! let me dress a salmon fly

The Trout Stream *(1852), lithograph by Currier and Ives. The work is contemporary with Dawson's mythical (?)* Trout Fisher's Guide.

With feathers bright and gay,
Of every hue and brilliant dye
That tempt the scaley prey,
With azure pinion of the rhom,*
The tail of buzzard brown,
Mix'd with the gorgeous colours from
The prairie-pheasant's crown.

With harle of the peacock's tail
I'll wrap the polish'd steel;
And carefully will blend the whole
With freakles from the teal.
The flossy silk so soft in feel
Right down the breast will hang;
While hackles, bright as cochineal,
Will form the under wing.

With purple wing of gay maccaw
The topmost wings are dress'd;
And tinsel bright in many a row
Binds round the gaudy vest.
A plume from out his orange crest
The cocatoo must lend,
Which drooping o'er, in graceful rest,
Will cover barb and bend.
My fly is dress'd, I'll throw the lure
To tempt the salmon bold;
With deadly barb, both sharp and sure,
All swath'd in shining gold.
The brightest rose bears 'neath its fold
The prickly thorn conceal'd;
While sweets that mankind dearly hold
Oft rankest bitters yield.

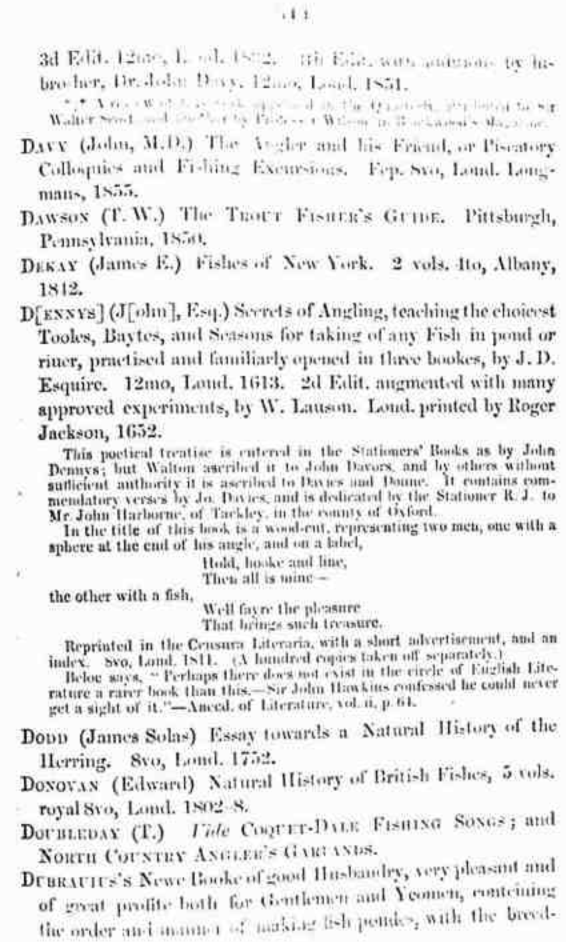
Vice oft appears in pleasure's garb;
Let giddy youth beware!
Beneath may lie the polish'd barb,
'Mong feathers bright and fair.
Deep hidden 'neath such tinsel glare
The wiles of life may lie;
And brilliant follies yield a smart
As deadly as my fly.

* The *jay* in England.

LINES ON ONE OF
THE CHIEF TRIBUTARIES
TO THE GREAT
ST. LAWRENCE.

Dark, rushing, foaming river,
I love thy solemn sound,
That makes thy shores quiver,
Spreading soft murmurs round.
Thy waters, like the unbridled steed,
Fly onward in their course;
Pouring thy waters down the mead
With unrelenting force.
I love thee, lovely river,
Thy cedar-girted shores,
The rocky isles that sever
The waves that round them pour.
But now I leave thy streams
To angle other rills;
Where a brighter eye beams,
To soothe my present ills.
—Montreal, 1850

In the above we get into the serious frustration that Blakey has caused his



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3d Edit. 12mo, Lond. 1822. 4th Edit. with additions by his brother, Dr. John Davy. 12mo, Lond. 1851.

, A review [illegible] appeared in the Quarterly [illegible] to Sir Walter Scott [illegible] by Professor Wilson in Blackwood's Magazine.

DAVY (John, M.D.) The Angler and his Friend, or Piscatory Colloquies and Fishing Excursions. Fcp. 8vo, Lond. Longmans, 1855.

DAWSON (T. W.) The TROUT FISHER'S GUIDE. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1850.

DEKAY (James E.) Fishes of New York. 2 vols. 4to, Albany, 1842.

D[ENNYS] (J[ohn], Esq.) Secrets of Angling, teaching the choicest Tooles, Baytes, and Seasons for taking of any Fish in pond or riuer, practised and familiarly opened in three bookes, by J. D. Esquire. 12mo, Lond. 1613. 2d Edit. augmented with many approved experiments, by W. Lauson. Lond. printed by Roger Jackson, 1652.

This poetical treatise is entered in the Stationers' Books as by John Dennys; but Walton ascribed it to John Davors, and by others without sufficient authority it is ascribed to Davies and Donne. It contains commendatory verses by Jo. Davies, and is dedicated by the Stationer R. J. to Mr John Harborne, of Tackley, in the county of Oxford.

In the title of this book is a wood-cut, representing two men, one with a sphere at the end of his angle, and on a label,

Hold, hooke and line,
Then all is mine—

the other with a fish,

Well fayre the pleasure
That brings such treasure.

Reprinted in the Censura Literaria, with a short advertisement, and an index. 8vo, Lond. 1811. (A hundred copies taken off separately.)

Beloe says, "Perhaps there does not exist in the circle of English Literature a rarer book than this.—Sir John Hawkins confessed he could never get a sight of it."—Anecd. of Literature, vol. ii, p. 64.

DODD (James Solas) Essay towards a Natural History of the Herring. 8vo, Lond. 1752.

DONOVAN (Edward) Natural History of British Fishes, 5 vols. royal 8vo, Lond. 1802–8.

DOUBLEDAY (T.) *Vide* COQUET-DALE FISHING SONGS; and NORTH COUNTRY ANGLER'S GARLANDS.

DUBRAVIUS'S Newe Booke of good Husbandry, very pleasant and of great profite both for Gentlemen and Yeomen, conteining the order and manner of making fish pondes, with the breed-

Dawson's mythical (?) work sandwiched in between Davy and DeKay in Smith's bibliography. The pencil annotation in the margin reads: "sold [Denny's Secrets of Angling*] at the sale of Corsers [?] books for £20."*

more studious readers. I have encountered no record of Webster having published anything on fishing, though he frequently wrote about fishing in his letters (as so carefully presented by Kenneth Shewmaker in past articles in the *American Fly Fisher).* More important, the book *On Angling* has never been heard of since Blakey wrote it. Charles Goodspeed, who wrote *Angling in America* (1939), pointed out that the title does not appear in any records he knows of, including those of the Library of Congress, the British Museum, and the libraries of Pittsburgh.

Yet another early American title is given in the bibliography of Blakey's book, on page 311, as follows: "DAWSON (T.W.) THE TROUT FISHER'S GUIDE. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1850." Westwood and Satchell dutifully catalog this volume without comment. Charles Wetzel, in his *American Fishing Books* (1950), also catalogs it, but observes that "this entry is taken from Westwood and Satchell's *Bibliotheca Piscatoria,* but it is doubtful if the above book existed. Charles E. Goodspeed and the writer have made a pretty thorough search for this work, but our efforts have been unrewarded." It would seem, from Wetzel's remarks, that neither he nor Goodspeed noted the Dawson title in Blakey's book. I assume that Westwood and Satchell saw it there and included it in their list. Had Goodspeed known it originated with Blakey, he probably would have been even more skeptical.

But where does this leave us? Here we have two titles—one even having a named author—that appeared in the earliest days of American angling books. They appeared in a region that was known for its population of avid fishermen. The circumstantial evidence makes it seem likely that someone would have written about Pennsylvania fishing; as Goodspeed and the present writer have pointed out, there were at least three commercial outlets for flies in Philadelphia by the 1780s.[3]

Blakey's annoying vagueness is the problem. We can wonder if he simply made up all this stuff, hatching up the verses to fill some space. He may, instead, have been merely a stupendously inefficient researcher who muddled dates, titles, and his own notes so badly that nothing he finally wrote down could be trusted. We must admit the possibility of one or both of these books having been published by a short-lived job-printing establishment that either printed very few copies or saw most of the press run lost in a fire or another disaster. (Also, why are they both from Pittsburgh? Did he have a correspondent there?) Additional local research in Pittsburgh historical records might yet prove fruitful. In the meantime, all of us who love a good mystery can mull over the clues available to us and try to sort out vagaries from truth in the various accounts of early American fly-fishing. §

NOTES:

1. See Richard Hoffmann's article "A New Treatise on the Treatyse," *The American Fly Fisher,* vol. 9, no. 3, 1982.

2. See "The American Editor and the Complete Angler," *The American Fly Fisher,* vol. 2, no. 1, 1975. Your editor (author of the aforementioned article) made an effort to locate the Noble manuscript some years ago. Bethune's collection of angling books was owned by Robert W. Coleman, a resident of Pennsylvania. In 1897 Coleman's books were sold in London at auction by Southeby, Wilkinson and Hodge. A British book dealer by the name of Nattali purchased the Noble manuscript. The trail ends there. We inquired at Yale and at Princeton (both universities have extensive angling holdings), but alas, neither had the manuscript. The Department of Manuscripts at the British Library has also been unsuccessful in locating the whereabouts of the Noble document. We suspect that Noble's manuscript resides in a private collection in Britain, and we welcome any inteligence concerning this point.

3. General George Gibson wrote an article entitled "Trout Fishing in Cumberland County, Pa." which appeared in the September issue of the *American Turf Register,* vol. 1, 1829.

Notes and Comment

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

Shortly after my article "Floating Flies on the Bitterroot, 1884" appeared in the *American Fly Fisher*, vol. 11, no. 2, I heard from a reader, Donn Johnson, of Fort Collins, Colorado, who introduced me to some extremely interesting material on floating flies and other fishing techniques. I have been gathering pre-1900 references to floating flies for some time, but these had escaped my attention and may be of interest to readers.

Donn obtained some of these references from Dr. Robert Behnke of Colorado State University, who has for many years been researching the history of the North American trouts. Donn introduced me to two comments in Theodatus Garlick's *A Treatis on the Artificial Propagation of Certain Kinds of Fish* (1857), both of which suggest an awareness of surface feeding by trout:

> When making a cast, the flies should be dropped very gently on the surface of the water, and should not be suffered to remain stationary at one place, but is to be drawn along.
>
> Grasshoppers are also an excellent bait, and may be used on the surface of the water, or sunk beneath it.

Donn also noted, in a copy of "Rio Grande Trout," an aritcle given to him by Dr. Behnke, the following passage about surface flies. The article appeared in *Forest and Stream* on August 30, 1877:

> But the eyes [sic—*this is presumably a typographical error for* flies] when floated on the ripples and sunk three or four inches in the pools and eddies at the foot of the ripples proved attractive, and were the means of capturing several hundred.

The article was sent by "Apache," a pen name I do not know, from Cimarron, New Mexico.

Perhaps most interesting of Donn's finds is the following material from "Editorial Notes on the 'Cut-throat Trout,'" an article that appeared on August 8, 1885, in the *American Angler*. It was written by the editor, William Harris, and tells of a fishing trip he made near Livingston, Montana, on the Yellowstone River that summer. After discussing which flies he used and telling a little about the fish, he explained a few local tactics:

> I was somewhat surprised at the fly-fishing methods of the resident anglers of Livingston. Casting the fly is not the practice, albeit every fisher uses a cast of from three to six flies weighted with a split shot, with which they plumb the depths, bringing the flies by successive short, quick jerks to the top of the water, and then allowing them to sink; then repeating the operation, which is very similar, hence successful, to the rise of the caddis and other ephemera from their watery home to assume the butterfly form. The favorite lure, however, with the natives is the "trout bug," found under the stones in the river. It resembles to some extent the helgramite, and from the dried specimens and from what I could learn of its habits, I judge it to be of kindred species.

These are some marvelously interesting items, foremost of which being that we see the fishermen actively imitating emerging insects, something that is often said to have been "invented" many years later. I think (and Donn does also) that this and other recently popularized fishing techniques were practiced here and there for many years by intelligent anglers.

Paul Schullery
Livingston, Montana

To the Editor:

I greatly enjoyed the two articles on Basurto's *Dialogo* in the summer and fall issues of the magazine for 1984. Herewith a few comments that may shed some light on parts of the document.

I have fished many parts of Spain, including Aragon, over the past thirty years, and I have yet to see a *fly* of the type described by Basurto in use by Spanish fishers. Basurto specifically links it to trout feeding on flies, that which appears to rule out its use as a streamer, a useful lure in many Spanish rivers at certain seasons.

On recent visits to the R. Aragon I encountered a number of locals fly-fishing and all were using the type of artificial described by Dr. Pariente Diez in his book on the Document of Astorga. No doubt Basurto's pattern exists but it doesn't appear to be in common use today.

Basurto's "little white butterfly with four little horns" (*cuerno* means, as well as "horn," "antenna" of an insect), although better described than any natural insect in Bergara's Document, poses a problem. No aquatic fly has four antennae, and those of mayflies are small to the point of invisibility. Some of the larger stoneflies common on Spanish rivers have two cerci as well as two antennae, all conspicuous. But these insects are diurnal, not crepuscular, and are yellowish brown, usually of a darkish shade. Nor are they gregarious to the point of creating an audible noise by massed flight.

If we can reconcile the "four horns" problem (the two cerci plus the forlegs, the usual attitude of which is held out in front?), the rest of Basurto's observations fits an extraordinary mayfly that has had no mention in fly-fishing literature in English because its range is restricted to continental Europe, and there is sporadic at best. This is *Oligoneuriella rhenana*, a large mayfly (body 15mm, wings ca. 16-20mm) that appears (or appeared?) in vast numbers at dusk in the summer, on the foothill rivers of the Pyrenees, emerging from fast water abruptly and all at once, and immediately taking up its bizarre nuptial flight, whizzing to and fro horizontally low over the surface—a flight like that of the hawk-moth and making a plainly audible whirring noise, from their numbers and the force of their wing beats. The transformation from dun to spinner (imago) takes place during this incessant flight; the shed subimaginal skin often hangs on the insect's tail, flapping like a pennant. Mating, egg laying and death all take place quickly, in a matter of two or three hours.

Unfortunately this remarkable insect is disappearing, its biology as yet incompletely known. Their habitat requirements are so rigorous and inflexible that they have not been able to cope with man's inroads on their environment. I haven't seen any in the past ten years, where they once occurred in vast numbers on the R. Nive and the Gave d'Oloron in the western Pyrenees.

Two other whitish crepuscular mayflies fit partly into Basurto's observations on the "little white butterfly" but neither has the audible flight nor the short aeriel life of *O. rhenana*.

Basurto speaks of barbel jumping for them. I have never seen barbel feed on (or above) the surface; they do jump at times but not to feed. This would be a remarkable exploit for a fish with its mouth on the bottom of its head. Was Basurto fooled by the darkness and leaping trout?

To conclude: *al andar* indicates a dead-drift float; one can fish *al andar* in one place, without moving. But most Spanish fishermen are formidable ground-coverers and don't waste any time in one spot if it isn't productive. *A la tendida* indicates with a tight line, no slack, in order to feel the take immediately.

George E. Beall
Anglet, France

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Membership Dues:

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Sustaining	$ 30
Patron	$ 100
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Membership includes a subscription to the *American Fly Fisher*.
Please send your application to the membership secretary and include your mailing address.

The Museum is a member of the American Association of Museums and the American Association for State and Local History.
We are a nonprofit, educational institution chartered under the laws of the state of Vermont.

Support the Museum

As an independent, nonprofit institution, the American Museum of Fly Fishing must rely on the generosity of public-spirited individuals for substantial support. We ask that you give our institution serious consideration when planning for gifts and bequests.

Back Issues of the *American Fly Fisher*

The following back issues are available at $4.00 per copy:

Volume 6,	Numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4
Volume 7,	Numbers 2, 3 and 4
Volume 8,	Number 3
Volume 9,	Numbers 1, 2 and 3
Volume 10,	Numbers 1, and 2
Volume 11,	Numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4
Volume 12,	Number 1

The American Museum of Fly Fishing

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Museum News

Lyman S. Foss Named to Museum Post

Lyman S. Foss, formerly international sales manager for the Orvis Company of Manchester, Vermont, has become the Deputy Director for Development at the American Museum of Fly Fishing, also of Manchester. Mr. Foss assumes responsibility for all Museum fundraising, including a growing series of national dinner/auctions that continue to be extensively supported by the fishing-tackle industry.

In announcing the appointment, John Merwin, Executive Director of the Museum, noted that the new position is yet another indication of the rapid growth and health of the Museum as a national institution. The Museum now cares for and exhibits the world's largest public collection of fly-fishing artifacts and memorabilia. As of September 1, 1985, the Museum had exhibits of various sizes on display at its Manchester, Vermont, galleries; at the International Flyfishing Center in Montana; in New Zealand; and at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco. The California exhibit encompasses more than 2,000 square feet of space and is expected to be viewed by more than one million visitors before closing on October 27, 1985.

Mr. Foss holds a degree in Spanish from the University of Colorado, is married with two children, and lives in Dorset, Vermont. Before his association with Orvis, he served as a special assistant to the U.S. Consulate in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Mr. Foss may now be reached at the American Museum of Fly Fishing, Box 42, Manchester, Vermont 05254.

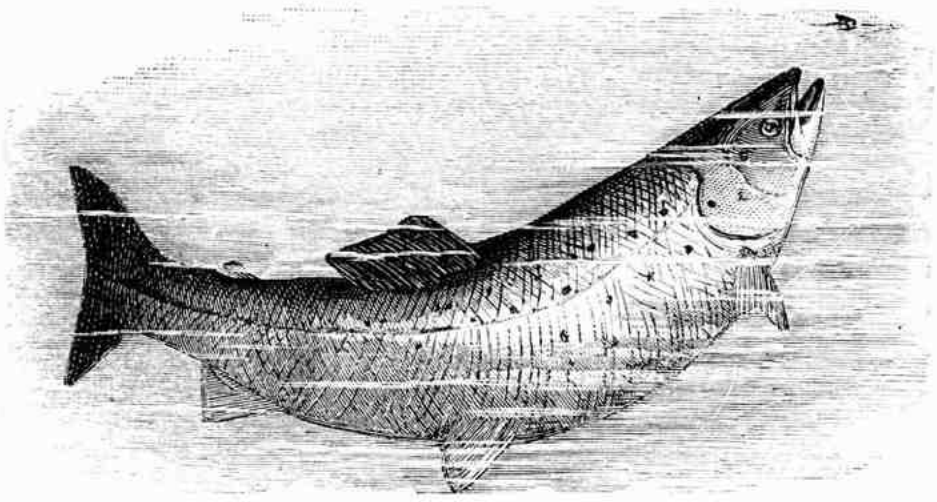
A Correction

Two statements in the last issue of the *American Fly Fisher* concerning Colonel Joseph D. Bates Jr.'s proposed donation of his outstanding collection of classic Atlantic-salmon flies and associated items to the Museum were seriously in error. We offer the following both as a correction and an apology.

Colonel Bates has written to us that he was "deeply offended" by the article's implication that his proposed gift was a "smart swap for a major tax deduction" arranged by the Museum's attorneys. He added that "tax deductions, if any, are private matters and should not have been mentioned. No tax deduction has been arranged, taken, or granted." He further added that the article's implication "greatly impairs the intention of my planned donation to the Museum, which is intended as a gift to posterity without consideration of gain."

Museum Director John Merwin did discuss the matter with the Museum's accounting firm in an effort to be helpful, but Colonel Bates emphasized again that our accounting firm had nothing to do with arranging the proposed gift.

The Museum regrets these errors and apologizes for the above misstatements. We hope the Colonel's generous intentions will be validated to enable the Museum to possess this outstanding collection, said to be the best and most complete in the world. Highlights of it are now on loan to the Museum and are currently being exhibited. §



To Be More Explicit

Of late, we have received several manuscripts on various aspects of angling history that have been well organized, well written, and informative; unfortunately, the material contained in these articles has been discussed previously (and thoroughly) in a wide variety of angling-related publications. It is with regret that we must inform the authors of these works that their material is not really appropriate for the pages of the *American Fly Fisher*. Our intent is to present to our readership new discoveries, new relationships, and new interpretations pertinent to the history of American fly-fishing. We don't see ourselves as being omniscient, and we certainly don't want to discourage anybody from submitting manuscripts to us. But it seems only fair to clarify our needs, to spare our readers false hopes and unnecessary work. That it is very difficult to develop an adequate background in the history of the sport is the problem. Because of the nature of the subject (i.e., historians have not been very interested in sport angling), accurate reference material dealing with the history of fly-fishing is not always readily available, is often out of date, and, generally, is incomplete. Therefore, in order to gain even a limited degree of expertise in this esoteric realm of history, one must spend a great deal of time searching out and reading pertinent, widely scattered references. So what can we do? How can we quickly and efficiently apprise prospective contributors of what has been written, what has yet to be written, and what we feel should be written about their sport? In an effort to come to grips with this problem, we plan to publish in the next issue of the *American Fly Fisher* an article entitled "An Introduction to the History of Fly-Fishing in America" by Austin Hogan. The piece first appeared in the Museum's first catalog (1974). It is our hope that it, and the references contained therein, will help to provide our prospective authors with sufficient background and perspective such that their contributions will be consistent with the goals of our unique journal.