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AN
ODE
TO
LAKE
BASS

George J. Seabury

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- Dr. W. L. Fisher -

Respectfully dedicated to Dr. J. A. HENSHALL,
in recognition of his conspicuous abilities, not only as a skillful angler, but
also as a scientific writer on the habits and behavior of
Game Fish, more especially Lake Bass.

(1590)

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GEORGE J. SEABURY.

CANTO 1.

TO THE OSWEGO OR
LARGE MOUTH BASS

WALTON'S SLAVES, WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT
BEND TO YOUR OARS, THE GROUND'S IN SIGHT,
FEEDING BASS THE SURFACE BREAK,
ROLICKING O'ER THE PLACID LAKE.

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'MID ROCKS AND STUMPS, NOW ON THEIR GROUND,
OUR DIPPING OARS THE ONLY SOUND,
ABOVE THEIR HAUNTS WE SMOOTHLY GLIDE,
AND NOISELESS CAST FROM SIDE TO SIDE,

LASHING THE LINE IN GRACEFUL CURVES,
WHEN LO! THE TOUCH THAT THRILLS THE NERVES
EXCITES THE PULSE, AND LENDS SUSPENSE,
TO SPORT THAT GLADDENS EVERY SENSE!

RESPONSIVE TO THE NERVES' APPEAL,
INSTINCTIVELY WE TURN THE REEL
THE LINE IS STRAINED, THE TIP IS CROOKED,
A BRAVE OSWEGO, FIRMLY HOOKED.

COMES SLOWLY IN, EACH INCH RESISTING.
PLUNGING, SWIRLING, JERKING, TWISTING;
NOW IN THE AIR NOW FIERCELY DIVING.
THEN MADLY FOR THE LAKE'S DEPTHS-STRIVING.

SEEKING IN SOME ROMANTIC NOOK,
TO FREE HIM FROM THE CRUEL HOOK,
'ROUND OBSTACLES HE WILDLY SHOOTS,
NEATH WEEDS, LOGS, BRUSH AND SNARLY ROOTS.

BUT NAUGHT AVAILS, HE'S HOOKED TOO WELL,
THE REEL'S SHARP CLICK SHALL SOUND HIS KNEEL

AS QUICKLY THE LINE TO OUR VIEW BRINGS THE CAPTIVE,
WITH DESP'RATE RESISTANCE CONTESTING HIS FATE;
THE LUST OF THE SPORTSMAN BY VICTORY EXCITED
SURPASSES THE OSWEGO'S GREED FOR ITS BAIT.

ALAS, POOR CREATURE! THOUGH LOSING THY FREEDOM,
BECAUSE IN THY STRENGTH THOU WOULD'ST PREY ON THE WEAK,
SO BOLD, YET SO HELPLESS, WE GRIEVE AT THY STRUGGLES,
THAT MAN, IN SUCH CRUELTY PASTIME SHOULD SEEK.

ABOVE THEE THE WAVES ARE SINGING SAD DIRGES :
THY DOOM IS FORETOLD IN EACH BRIEF LASTING NOTE :
THOU LASHEST THE SURFACE AGAIN BUT IN FURY .—
ONE WHIRL OF THE ROD—THOU ART SAFE IN THE BOAT !

FROM SIDE TO SIDE REBOUNDED,
RISING, DRUMMING, JUMPING, POUNDING,
ROLLING, GASPING, WEAKENING, FAST,
STRUGGLING TO THE VERY LAST.

WHEN EXHAUSTION AND DESPAIR
BLEND IN MUTE APPEALING PRAYER,
WITH A TREMOR AND A SIGH
YOU FIX YOUR RED-FRINGED EYE.
THEN IN DEATH YOU QUIET LIE.

BRAVE OSWEGO! NO WATERS HOLD
MARAUDING CANNIBAL MORE BOLD
THAN THOU, WHO KNEW NO FEAR,
MERC'LESS HUNGER HAS BROUGHT THEE HERE,
THE PREY OF MAN, WHO LIES IN WAIT,
TO LURE THEE WITH A PHANTOM BAIT.

Canto II

TO THE BLACK OR SMALL MOUTH BASS

Micropterus.

Dolomieu.

Lacépède.

TO THE LAKE AGAIN WE CONSIGN OUR LINE,
THE CASTING ROD FOR THE TROLL RESIGN;
AT DREAMER'S PACE, ALONG WE FLOAT,
LIGHT RIPPLES SPLASHING 'GAINST OUR BOAT;

WHEN, LIKE A FLASH, THE SIGNAL'S FELT,
THAT TELLS OF SAVAGE STRIKE JUST DEALT
THE SHINING BAIT FAR OUT OF SIGHT:
JUPITER! WHAT A VICIOUS BITE.

SEE! UP HE LEAPS WITH LIGHTNING SPEED,
THE PRISONER STRUGGLING TO BE FREED
FROM TORTURING HOOK HE CAN'T DISPLACE;
NOW HIGH HE'S JUMPING INTO SPACE,
SHAKING IN MID-AIR HIS RUBY GILLS,
THRESHING THE WATER INTO BUBBLING RILLS

VAULTING AGAIN, WITH CLOWNISH MIEN,
THEN PLUNGING BACK, NO MORE IS SEEN:
PUNTER, BE WARY! THE LINE IS CAUGHT.
ROW SLOW, A BATTLE'S TO BE FOUGHT!

HOW GALLANTLY HE COMES ALONG.
PULLS LIKE A SAILOR LONG AND STRONG.
GIVE HIM NO PARTICLE OF SLACK ;
HOLD STEADY. THOUGH THE LINE CRACK.

THE TENSION NOW IS FAR TOO GREAT.
FOR 'TIS A BASS OF MIGHTY WEIGHT.

CAUTIOUSLY WE REEL HIM IN,
ON THE SURFACE 'PEARS A FIN,
NOW ON HIS NOSE HE TAKES A SPIN,
FOR FREEDOM FIGHTS WITH ALL HIS MIGHT,
NOW IN THE AIR, NOW LOST TO SIGHT.

SWIRLING, CHARGING, THEN RETREATING,
PERHAPS OUR FONDEST AIMS DEFEATING,
UNDER THE BOAT NOW DEEPLY DIVING,
FOR LIBERTY STILL BRAVELY STRIVING;
THEN GLISTENS IN RESPLENDENT LIGHT
A FIVE-POUND BLACK—ENCHANTING SIGHT!

ROW FAST! INTO DEEP WATERS SETTLE:
HE FORGES AHEAD WITH MARTIAL METTLE.
'MONG ROCKS AND BRUSH AWAY HE GOES,
WRITHING IN AGONIZING THROES.

AHA! HE WEAKENS: PUNTER! STEADY!
BE FOR EVERY MOVEMENT READY.
BRAVO! THE WORK IS COOLLY DONE:
KEEN IS THE ARTFUL ANGLER'S FUN.

BENEATH HIM PLUNGE THE LANDING NET
ON VICTORY NOW ALL EYES ARE SET.
WITH TREMBLING LIMBS AND MIND EXCITED,
OUR FONDEST HOPES ARE QUICKLY BLIGHTED

SPELLBOUND! A YELL! A FAULTY SNEEL!
THE BASS BREAKS FROM THE ANGLER'S CELL.
SPLASHING, DASHING, AWAY HE GOES,
MOCKING THE ANGLER'S FRANTIC WOES.

CHAGRINED BY DEFEAT, THE PASSIONS INFLAMED:
EACH FOR THE LOSS BY THE OTHER IS BLAMED:
THUS ANGLERS MERRY, WHO RUDENESS DISDAIN
NOW RAVE IN THEIR FURY LIKE FISH IN SEINE.

RIGHT HERE, DEAR FRIENDS, LET US RE-BAIT OUR LINE.
TO NARRATE THE SEQUEL, EXCUSE, TRULY THINE.

GEORGE J. SEABURY.

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 10, 1890.

These are what he says he caught,
Not including an 8-lb. small mouth bass he says he lost.

Romance and Reality—you know how it is yourself.

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