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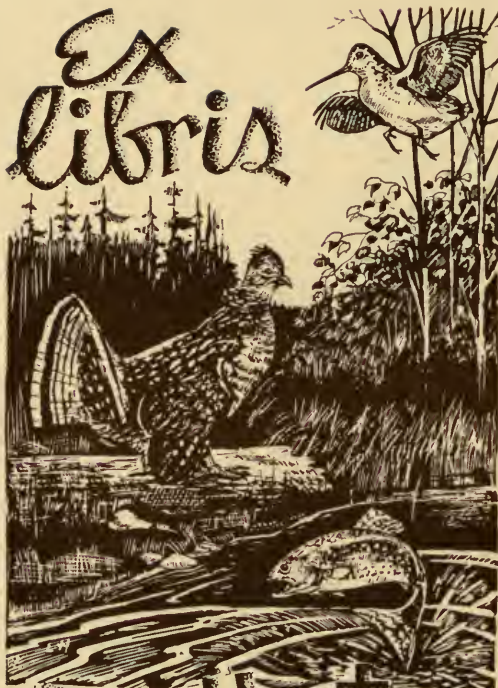
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FRASER SANDEMAN

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JUNE 30<sup>TH</sup> 1887.

9½ lbs.

HENLEY BRIDGE

THAMES TROUT.

# BY HOOK AND BY CROOK.



BY

FRASER SANDEMAN.

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR.

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SECOND EDITION.

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DEDICATION.



*Without the desire to evade criticism for what may be considered errors in the detail of this volume, it is a relief to share the onus of its production with my kinsman, Lieut.-Col. JOHN GLAS SANDEMAN, R.B.G., for, indeed, without his valuable encouragement and assistance these pages would not yet have been submitted to the public.*



## P R E F A C E



THE contents of this little volume claim no literary or artistic merit, but simply purport to be reproductions of impressions fixed upon the mind of an angler during his wanderings by the waterside,—worked out while resting upon the river-bank or at the close of the day—endorsed by subsequent observation.

The lessons taught by friends which Nature has ordained to dwell in the water, by the waterside, or on the moorland, are merely repeated, with the hope that no trust is betrayed, and that the word “Finis” may not sever friendships which have been full of interest, while beguiling many a lonely hour.

Should these repetitions gain some little attention, and the failures described form a chart by which perils may be avoided, the object of these pages will have been achieved.

FRASER SANDEMAN.

July 1892.





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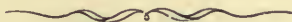
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# BY HOOK AND BY CROOK.



## CHAPTER I.

*“THERE’S MANY A SLIP ’TWINX THE CUP AND THE LIP.”*

It was towards the end of April, the cold winds of a late winter had apparently departed, while the budding hedgerows proclaimed the approach of spring and the termination of the spring salmon-fishing; so we were fortunate in having a few days at our disposal before putting up the rods for their summer holiday.

Rain was reported by the papers to have been pretty general for the few previous days over the district which we proposed to visit; but upon arrival we found, as is often the case, that it had not affected the river, and a glance at “the stane abeun the brig” caused our hopes to fall, as, instead of “lepping” over it, the water was leaving a good eight inches dry.

This state of affairs was no good augury ; nevertheless, with four days at our disposal, and a thorough "ken" of every pool, we did not despair of some sport.

We fished the first two days, and by Saturday evening had only landed one kelt, which of course was returned to the water, and things would have in all probability gone badly with us had not some rain fallen in the hills that same night, which, by Monday morning, brought the river down some four or five inches, showing a fair tinge of colour.

This was a decided improvement in our prospects, giving us renewed hope, as although this slight rise was not sufficient to bring fresh fish up from the sea, yet it would have caused those lying lower down to shift up, and, as is often the case under such circumstances, might induce them to take.

Full of hope and breakfast, we made any early start on the Monday, and fished two or three pools with every care, but without success, and, strange to say, although the fish were jumping all over the place, not one could be induced to pay the slightest attention to delicacies in the shape of fly or angel (minnow).

In no very cheerful mood we moved up to the next pool above, which was always our favourite on account of the sport it generally afforded and the variety of casting it entailed to properly fish it.

The head of the pool breaks over large boulders of rock, which raise the stream into miniature billows and afford excellent resting-places for the fish ; lower down

the currents gradually subside into fast-running curling water, only to be commanded by wading down under the high cliff of red sandstone rock, from the crevices of which trees of many sorts projected, overhanging and shading the pool.

Here and there the angler could wade out into the pool; but, for the most part, to command the catch the Spey cast had to be adopted, and even so it was difficult to fish it systematically down to the tail, as the eddies at the side sank the line at the angler’s feet and prohibited everything but the use of a very short cast.

We fished it down assiduously with the fly without even a touch, but as the sun was beating straight down on the pool we could not but feel that failure was not entirely the fault of the fish.

In this state of the water we knew it was not the slightest use trying any but broken water, so we replaced the fly with the minnow and prepared to fish it down again.

Large fish were continually jumping, as if to jeer at us; and as, flashing in the sunlight, their silvery sides now and again fell flat on the surface of the water, the smack they made resounded for some distance and was sufficient to spur any angler on to redoubled efforts.

When fish are jumping all over a pool in this manner it seems incredible that not even one will make a mistake; but experience teaches that, whichever way they are inclined, they are, nine times out of ten, all of one mind. One keeps saying to one’s self, “If only one



would take hold!" but they don't, until perhaps one is getting thoroughly sick of it, and then at a most unexpected moment a fish takes the fly with a bang, and it is such a surprise that one is very likely to lose the fish in striking him too hard.

In the present instance we had only fished a few yards down, and were casting the angel from the point of the rod with a short line in the very roughest water, when a big fish came at it with a bang that nearly pulled the rod out of hand and rendered any striking impossible and unnecessary. Fortunately we had put on a treble gut cast, or without doubt there would have been an accident. However, this time everything was safe and sound; and after the rod had replied to the tug we were delighted to find the fish well hooked and a big one.

He ran about thirty yards off the reel at top speed, and then commenced to lash out with head and tail upon the surface of the water. It was a case of "Hold hard, good tackle!" and hold hard it did, so that he then settled down in a more orderly fashion. This gave us our opportunity, and while holding him lightly we carefully threaded our way out amongst the boulders, until we gained shallow water on the level surface of the rock, then reeled up to him and, thinking he had enjoyed sufficient inactivity, put extra pressure on, to which he replied by a leap, showing himself to be a large fresh-run cock fish.

He next rushed down to the depths of the pool, then



up to the surface, and so on, until in about fifteen minutes from the start he was dead beat, having had a real warm time.

We then gained possession of our net, which at the commencement of hostilities we had placed up against the rock; but our man, upon seeing the position of affairs, waded down to us, took the net, and tried to pass it over the head of the fish; but the net being small we feared that the triangles in the snout of the fish might get hitched up in the meshes, so we told him to drop the net and tail the fish.

This he did, and we breathed freely, thinking that the fish was as good as landed; but such was not to be, as the sequel proves.

The fish’s tail was very thick, and our man, thinking he had not a sufficiently secure hold to enable him to get safely to land, lifted him high up with his right hand, while with the left he tried to hold the net under him, intending to drop him into it, to make assurance doubly sure.

We told him to put the net into the water, so that when he let the fish go the water might take the weight off the net. However, before he could follow orders, he somehow or other let the fish slip from his grasp, with the fatal result that he went through the net like a flash of lightning, the hooks tearing a hole for him to pass. We were still hoping to feel the line tighten; but no, it came back to us severed just above the bait, the triangles remaining in his mouth, while the body of

the angel fell on to the rock. He was a bright new-run fish, and a rare deep one, of at least 30 lb.

The loss was most annoying; however, there was nothing to be done but to try for another. But fish, like cards, never forgive, and we had not another touch. The moral we noted was, that if you have an attendant who is not up to his work you had better by far net or gaff your own fish, and leave him to confine his energies to the transport of the bag.

The poor chap was fearfully cut up at the loss; so we had not the heart to say much about it, especially as we knew that he was most anxious for us to land fish. But it was a sore point with him for a long while, and many a bit of good-humoured chaff he had to put up with upon the subject.

## CHAPTER II.

*A GAME AUTUMN FISH.*

ON the receipt of news that the river was in flood for the first time since the summer, we arranged to arrive there a couple of days later, by which time the water would probably be in order, as, although it was just a bit early for a run of large fish, yet there would certainly be a lot up fresh from the sea and so likely to take.

Upon arrival we were somewhat disappointed to find the river much lower than we had expected, and came to the conclusion that, in the first place, the advice we had received of the height of the flood had been somewhat exaggerated, and, secondly, that the two nights of frost which had intervened had caused the river to fall in quickly. However, there was no doubt that the fresh-run fish could not have yet passed by to the upper waters, so we determined to have a few days with them.

After a few hours at the waterside it was evident there were but few fish up, and those very careful of

their skins ; so much so, that all we did that day was to hook a fish which, after a few minutes' play, got away, the probability being that he never was properly hooked.

To reach him it was necessary to cast a very long line, and, as is invariably the case under such circumstances (especially, as in this instance, when the stream is slack), the strike, by the time it reached the fish, was a very mild one ; and although we suspected he was but lightly hooked, we had not sufficient pluck to give him a second dose.

In these cases it is very difficult to determine what to do—whether to catch hold of him hard by the head, in the hope of driving the hook home, or to play him lightly and trust to luck.

In all probability the result would be the same whichever tactics might be adopted, viz. the loss of the fish ; at least that has, unfortunately, been our experience. Yet, after the loss of the fish, one always thinks that other treatment might have been attended with a different result ; but, unfortunately, there are no means of proving the matter.

This was the only chance we had that day ; so all we could do was to mark down the rising fish for future use.

We started off next morning, accompanied by a friend, who had arrived from the North enticed by our description of sport obtained upon previous occasions, and being anxious to blood him, put him into the pool,

having first of all described the salient points and indicated the most likely spots for a taking fish.

It is curious how so many anglers accustom themselves to cast over one shoulder only, and more curious that if right-handed casting is requisite the angler is pretty certain to be an adept at left-handed, and *vice versa*; and often, after fishing under these difficulties for some time, he crosses over to the other bank and then thinks that the left-handed practice has anything but improved his right-handed casting.

Most anglers are fine fishermen during the after-dinner smoke, and it is a rare thing to find one at that time who can cast less than 30 yards; this cast appears to be much more easily accomplished in a 30-foot room than at the waterside: perhaps the wind may account for this!

Upon this occasion right-handed casting was necessary; so, of course, our friend from the day of his birth had been casting over the left shoulder. As his own style was useless, and he could not manage the other, he made a compromise by casting left-handed over the right shoulder.

By this method the line, when at full length in the air, instead of being pretty well in a line up stream, flew direct inland and hovered over the high bank, upon which turnips had elected to grow; and it was in a plucky attempt to transplant one of these into the river that, unfortunately, his top joint came to grief, causing a cessation of hostilities until a second top was fetched.

We then fished the pool without result, even in the shape of a casualty; and as not even the movement of a fish did we see, both strolled down bank, drew several pools blank, feeling pretty sick of it, although a fish rose at our friend's fly, but, missing it, refused to make a second attempt.

It was now getting late; so we proposed to walk up to the top pool, then, if our friend could not hook one, to give it up for the day. But he was tired of the business, and went home to do some letter-writing; so we decided to give it a cast over.

The first time down, at about the middle of the pool, a fish took the fly with a bang; and a rare lively one it was. However, she came to bank in about a quarter of an hour—a pretty hen fish of about 16 lb., and fresh run. Thus our day finished better than we anticipated. We had a piece for dinner, and a better never was tasted, the flesh being as firm as possible, with curd between the flakes.

The water by this time had considerably fallen in; so the next day we determined to try some of the pools lower down, which, as a rule, fished best in a lowish water. But we soon had cause to regret our decision, as, after some hours at the waterside, we had not seen a fish move. We then dropped down to our favourite pool, in which we generally got a bit of sport.

Some pools seem to favour particular anglers, and get known as so-and-so's pet pool; and the remark may often be heard, "That's the pool in which so-and-so



gets all his fish." It may be that a particular angler's method of casting and working the fly may suit a pool better than that of others; but more likely that, in the first instance, having been lucky in a certain pool, the angler bestows more attention upon it in the future, in the same way that one angler gets most of his fish with a particular pattern of fly, for the simple reason that he mostly uses it; but this is no proof that he would not have done equally well with another pattern.

This, our favourite pool, was a difficult one to fish, the sandstone rock towering out of the very river to a height of 200 feet or more, and supporting many trees, which extended their branches over the stream down to the water-level.

The combination of left-handed casting and switching, which the background necessitated, caused our friend, by his recent experiences, to decline the contest; so we commenced to cast it, and about halfway down, under an overhanging tree, felt that peculiar tug which no one but an angler can appreciate.

We gave him another in response, when he settled down in mid-channel, which was most obliging on his part, as it enabled us to wade quietly back to the edge of the pool, and while so doing shouted for our attendant with the gaff, whom we were soon glad to see wading up along the base of the rock.

Then the fun began; for the fish, in answer to the increased pressure applied, took a run of about 60 yards straight down stream, then came to the surface, lashing

out with head and tail on the rough waves, making us tremble for the fate of our single gut.

He next came slowly back, enabling us to reel up, but was no sooner at a handy distance than he made a grand rush straight across the river, only halting within a yard or so of the opposite bank, a distance of 70 to 80 yards. He then jumped clean out of the water, and as soon as he fell in, without the slightest warning, rushed straight back to our feet. It was simply impossible to reel up so as to take in the slack line; and consequently we did not for some time know if he were still on. However, when we did reel up, rather to our surprise he *was* still on.

He then gave us a bit of a rest, remaining stationary at a depth of 15 feet of water for a quarter of an hour, until, getting tired of his inactivity, we took a long, steady haul at him, which had effect, as he replied with a grand run down stream at such a pace that our reel (a 5½-inch, with strong check) overran itself, coiling a lot of line loosely the wrong way.

Thinking that first of all we had better put this right, we waded a few yards back, paying out the line until all was clear, and had scarcely reeled up five yards while dropping down to the fish, when off he went again, taking with him 30 or 40 yards of line, which caused us to congratulate ourselves upon having taken an early opportunity of getting it clear on the reel, or we should certainly have parted with something. The fish then came slowly up until opposite to us, and continued to



make way up to the head of the pool, obliging us to pass under the branches of the trees with the line reeled up until the gut cast touched the rod top; no sooner there, than off he went down stream again with another run, and again settled down.

This business was real good sport, such as one rarely gets even with the best of springers; still we must admit that after a certain length of time docility in a fish *can* be appreciated: however, this fish was unfettered by the influence of school boards and prided himself upon the eccentricities of his own sweet will, so, as soon as he had rested awhile, indulged in a dive of about 30 ft., or perhaps more, and just as we were speculating as to what would be his next move, we felt the cast grate and held hard against what was undoubtedly a rock in the depths of the pool.

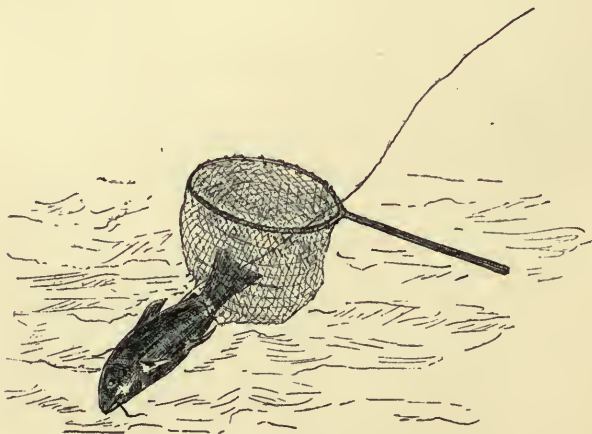
Here was a case of neck or nothing, and, for choice, selecting the neck, we instantaneously dropped the point of the rod to the level of the water, and felt the line draw clear off the boulder, while immediately after the fish jumped clean out of the water, almost under our eyes, with the fly and cast hanging from his jaw.

With grave doubts we reeled up, as there so far was nothing to prove that the line was not cut; however, these were soon dispelled, as the gradual draw on the line indicated that the *ruse* had been successful and the fish was still on.

By this time the effects of his exertion were beginning to tell, and his runs became shorter and shorter,

signals of distress, intimating that the end was not far off. No convenient place for gaffing presented itself, so we encouraged him in making up stream, where the water ran shallower over the rocky bottom, enabling our friend to gaff him nicely behind the shoulder—a fresh-run cock fish of 23 lb., as bright and shapely as any spring fish, without mark or scar upon him.

We were playing him for  $1\frac{1}{4}$  hours, during which he never gave us, or we gave him, a moment's rest, being hard on him all the time: we never killed a better sporting fish in spring or autumn, or one which employed such a variety of means to effect escape; he was game to the last, dying with his back up, never having showed a side throughout the long encounter.



Lost!

## CHAPTER III.

*THE ANGLER'S FRIENDS AND ENEMIES.*

THE angler, by keeping his eyes wide open at the riverside, may frequently obtain valuable information from the movements of the animals and birds making their homes by the water. For instance, the flight of a heron, water-hen, or mallard will often denote the presence of other anglers at adjacent pools, and when everyone is fishing "jealous" such information may be valuable and occasion a change of tactics.

Again, an inspection of the banks may discover foot-prints, and by their impression the angler can frequently determine when the pool was last fished and in which direction the fisherman departed.

Care should be taken not to leave any kit within reach of cattle, as they are very curious about any uncommon object, and will push it about until by chance it falls into the river. This once happened to a friend of ours with whom we were fishing, and upon returning for his bag he could not find it anywhere, so came to

the unsatisfactory conclusion that either it had been stolen or the cattle had pushed it into the water: the former seemed unlikely, but still the more probable explanation; however, nearly six months after his fly-book was returned to him by some fishermen who had caught it while fishing with dredge-nets in the estuary 15 miles lower down; his name was just legible, but the book was worthless, and the flies it contained ruined, still the mystery was cleared up.

When otters are known to exist in a river, the angler should be careful to put any fish he has killed out of their reach, for, as we know to our cost, they are capable of making off with a fresh-killed salmon in broad daylight—the tracks of the animal in the sand left no room for doubt in the instance we quote; likewise pigs will worry and devour salmon left within their reach. Not long ago we left a large fish on the bank while fishing the pool over a second time, and happening to look round saw an old sow worrying it. We were casting from a boat, and shouted aloud as the man pulled to shore; fortunately the fish, being over 30 lb., was too large to enable her to mouth it until she seized it by the tail and dragged it up the bank through a hedge. When the man got to her she dropped the fish and made for him open-mouthed, but she went off with a well-directed kick on the snout. We fully expected to view the fish badly mauled, but were glad to find that a good washing in the river revealed nothing more serious than a split in the tail.

It appeared that she and her companions were well used to fish, being in the habit of grubbing up the diseased ones which were taken out of the river from time to time by the watchers; and the farmer told us that he had often observed the animals searching the river edge for these, and that they would even enter the water in their endeavours to make a capture.

Poultry also will eat such refuse; it is said to make hens lay well.

## CHAPTER IV.

*THE ANGLER'S DRESS.*

ALTHOUGH a matter of minor importance, a few suggestions upon the subject may not be entirely unprofitable; and as necessity exists that the angler should be clothed somehow or another, there is no reason why he should not select the kit best adapted for the purpose.

The coat should be made with plenty of room across the chest and back, and the sleeves large at arm-pit and elbow, as nothing is more uncomfortable than to be hindered by tightly-fitting garments when casting; the collar should be cut deep and made so that it can be buttoned up under the chin when wanted.

Perhaps the pattern known as the Norfolk blouse is the best suited for fishing, made with attention to the above points, and provided with pockets in the breast, which can be reached when the waders are on, the material being such as will keep out both cold and rain.

A Shetland knitted jersey to wear under the waistcoat will be found very useful in cold weather.

Knickerbockers and stockings are good, but breeches



of homespun made loose and to button down to the ankle are easiest to put inside waders.

A waterproof coat or cape made long enough to overlap short waders and provided with hooks and eyes, so that it can be shortened for use with high waders, will be found very useful at times ; the sleeves should terminate with india-rubber wristlets similar to those of a diver's suit, so as to prevent the water running down the arm when raised to cast.

It is just as well that the angler should be as invisible as possible to the fish, and with this object he should select the colour of his clothes.

There is not much room for doubt upon this subject, as nature provides such an admirable pattern in the heron, who gains his living in identically the same positions as the human angler—sometimes up to its breast in water, at others standing on the stones at the border of the stream ; so that if materials are selected of a colour to resemble this bird's plumage the angler will not be far wrong.

A cap made of cloth of loose texture is handy, as the hooks can so easily be fixed in and released from its threads, likewise the loop end of the gut attached to the fly.

Wading-boots or brogues should be well studded with stout nails, to prevent slipping on the rocks, which is a matter of serious importance upon many rivers.

Wooden clogs with iron rim on the sole are far the best and cheapest for the purpose if the angler can

learn to walk with them, the great advantage being that the iron-rimmed sole holds so well upon rocks, and when worn down can be readily renewed.

Waders should always be tried on at time of purchase, as the different sizes are made of the same proportions, whereas with men it is not so.



## CHAPTER V.

*AUTUMN SALMON-FISHING.*

SPRING fishing, there can be no doubt, is held in higher esteem than back-end or autumn fishing, and generally most anglers will say rightly so, although we do not think the argument is so one-sided as many would have us believe, as we have landed many and many a plucky autumn fish after having afforded as fine sport as any spring fish we have ever grassed, and unfortunately we must admit that many have succeeded by their struggles in either making escape or breaking us.

Yet, generally speaking, the spring fish must be considered superior for sporting and kitchen purposes to their later running brethren, for the simple reason that they, ascending the rivers in the early months of the year, leave the sea with their spawn in a much less developed state than those running up in the autumn; the spawn also in the initial stages advances more slowly towards ripeness, and is further retarded by the lower temperature of the water in early months, so the spring fish naturally retain the condition in which they enter

the river longer than the autumn fish, and, in consequence, afford the angler more sport.

To resume: the condition of the fish they capture and the amount of sport afforded in the process appear to some anglers to be secondary considerations, as compared with the actual attainment of something for the pot; the golden-coloured fish which has been in the river for weeks hanging about a pool until the milt is almost dropping out of him is quite as desirable an acquisition as the fresh-run autumn fish; a fish is a fish to him, and he may be observed sticking for days together into a pool of slow-running water, from which he occasionally hauls an old red *he* with as much satisfaction as he would a fresh-run fish.

Such anglers must know from the nature of the deep silent pool that it is no resting-place for a fresh fish; they can see the great red hes wallowing now and again upon its surface, yet delight to confine their efforts to their capture; and should they perchance at the termination of the day's sport (?) have three or more killed on the bank, the thin flanks and golden scales will not detract one iota from the pride of their achievement.

We lately met one of these sportsmen (?) who was gloating over the capture of three such fish, weighing from 25 lb. to 30 lb. apiece, of a deep golden colour from head to tail, and ornamented with snouts like that of a pig. We had watched him land them from the opposite bank, and the process was simple in the extreme, for as soon as the fish was hooked he sulked

at the bottom, then gradually became exhausted, and allowed himself to be hauled in to within reach of the gaff, the behaviour of the fish and fisherman being precisely similar upon each occasion.

As the fish lay on the bank the milt was fairly exuding from them, and altogether the spectacle was so repulsive that, in order to bring home to the angler some truth of his wanton destruction, we were prompted to inquire, "Whatever will you do with them?" In a tone of surprise the answer given was, "Why, kipper them, to be sure, and they will serve *me and my friends* in Liverpool all the winter!"

It was really a sickening sight, and we were glad to pass on; but never shall forget it, and the visions which we conjured up while thinking how, perchance, if they had been allowed to perform the functions of nature, they would have gained finer proportions in the sea and returned to give sport and food fit for man.

We saw this sportsman's takes duly recorded in the leading sporting papers, the weights all given, but not a word as to the condition of the fish.

This class of sportsman would probably argue that, as the fish in that condition were of as much value to him as if fresh-run, he was fully justified in laying himself out for their destruction; but by any one who did not hold the virtues of the pot so immediately in view, the system of killing the goose which would lay the golden eggs (or, strictly speaking, fertilize them) would be deprecated.

The extension of the angling season, which of late years has been granted on many rivers, has given great scope to this doubtful class of sport ; and as it is beyond argument that hundreds of fish are killed annually just prior to the time when they would fulfil the requirements of nature, it is a very open question whether, generally speaking, these extensions are not a mistake.

The extension was granted to give anglers the opportunity to kill fresh fish which ascend certain rivers at a late period of the year, and also to give those fishing the upper waters a fair chance of sport, and with these objects was right enough, but unfortunately with the use came the abuse.

The intrinsic value of the kelt in the economy of nature cannot be compared with that of the ill-conditioned unspawned fish, and thus it would seem an anomaly that the latter is denied the legal protection which is provided for the kelt.

Kelts and ill-conditioned unspawned fish usually frequent the same portions of a pool, viz., the slow-running deep water, for the simple reason that neither has sufficient energy to combat the fast-running streams; so as a rule any sportsman who is worthy of the name can confine his efforts to waters which will give him sport, avoiding catches which will in all probability only yield what to him are worthless fish.

To such as these the extension is a great boon, and it would be very hard upon them if the laws were repealed on account of the unsportsmanlike practices of others ;

every sport or pastime has its unwritten laws which the amateur (in the literal meaning of the word) loves to respect, and to him a measure to prohibit the capture of ill-conditioned unspawned fish would be welcome, but inasmuch as no particular stage through which they pass to this end can be readily defined, legislature cannot intervene beyond fixing the close time.

With the kelt, of course, it is different, as his condition is apparent to the practised eye or even hand, although to novices a well-mended one may cause some hesitation, when he first leaves the water.

It is unfortunate that towards the end of the angling-season upon some rivers hen fish are caught in far greater numbers than the cocks; to all appearances, judging from the rising or jumping fish, there are more hes than she-fish in the water, but the latter take more freely and are in much better condition, frequenting right up to the close of the season the swiftly-running streams which at the commencement of another season will be the home of the spring fish.

Of course at this season of the year the fresh-run she-fish, although as bright as a shilling, are what is known by the term "full-bellied"; yet in accordance with our experience their condition does not handicap them in their fight with the angler—in fact we have never had better sport than with many fresh-run autumn fish that have fallen to our share.

The he-fish would appear to run up the rivers in the autumn rather earlier than the she-fish; and having



selected some deep pool as a suitable abode, rests there until quite ripe for spawning, then shifts up to the spawning-beds just above. While resting in the deep pools many fall victims to the tinsel-bodied fly, which has a peculiar fascination for them in this condition. Now the habits of the she-fish differ from this, in that they appear to run up later and retain their bright colour, taking the fly freely during the first few days they are in the fresh water.

When they once commence to go off colour they would seem to seek the spawning-beds and show no desire for the fly, nor do they rise or jump out of the water so frequently as is the habit with the males in a like condition. It is more rare to catch a *she*-fish discoloured and full of spawn, although they can be seen easily enough lying adjacent to the redds.

In the kelt stage the she-fish appears to remain in the river much later than the male, and, to compensate for her self-imposed privations previous to spawning, devours the smolts in great numbers, following them down to the sea, or rather dropping down before them, and may be said to remain in the river until the smolts have departed.

Great numbers of smolts are thus destroyed before they have a chance of reaching the sea; but the prolific nature of the salmon renders this apparent waste a matter of detail, and in all probability the kelt of both sexes requires food to render him or her fit to face the sea and their enemies contained therein.

## CHAPTER VI.

*FLY-FISHING TACKLE.*

ANGLERS as a rule are very conservative in their ideas respecting rods and tackle, for the simple reason that they get accustomed to various makes and shapes, and after a certain amount of practice find they can get as much, and perhaps in each's own opinion more, out of their selections than any other angler gets out of his. Use is everything; and it is only when a man has ascertained how he can obtain the greatest effect with the least effort in casting, that he can say he is at home with his rod and tackle. Yet because he has arrived at perfection more or less with a certain make of rod, it is no proof that he could not do better with another; and as there are other points to be taken into consideration, the subject is worth a little thought.

When on the banks of a river two fishermen are seen—one fitted out with all the latest inventions sold by the tackle-maker in point of rod, reel, line, &c., and the other, may be, a working-man, to whom the proprietor has given an odd day, relying on tackle of local

or even home manufacture—we cannot but remark the differences of the two outfits, although if the two were followed up, the one apparently the worst provided might easily leave the river having had the better sport, irrespective of the probability of his being a local angler and therefore in possession of a thorough knowledge of the water.

By commencing in this strain we by no means intend to convey the idea that all new inventions are fads, as of course improvements are continually being made in angling appliances as in other articles; but we certainly consider that when an effective article has been obtained, the simpler it is in construction the better it is suited for work by the waterside, as, in the first place, it is less liable to get out of order, and, secondly, should it go wrong it is more easily put right.

*The Rod.*—The main points to be considered in a rod are—(1) Strength and durability, (2) capability of casting a long and light line, (3) the possibility of repair at the waterside in case of accident, (4) combination for convenience of carriage, and (5) the ease with which it can be put up and taken down.

The first three are all important, and the two latter should not be allowed to interfere with them in any way, as they are simply matters of convenience.

For salmon-fishing a three-jointed rod meets all requirements, and as the most usual length is about 18 ft., plenty of good sound timber is procurable for the manufacture of the requisite lengths, and at the



same time the rod is not inconvenient of carriage when down.

For trout-fishing a rod from 10 ft. to 12 ft., in accordance with the size of the river, consisting of 3 or 4 joints, is generally used, but details are not of such importance in a trout- as in a salmon-rod, as the strain is not as severe.

In most patterns of rods, joints, or rather joint-fittings, are elements of weakness, and therefore it is as well to do with as few of them as possible; but as we have to endure them, why should we not select such as will minimize this weakness, or discard the patterns which possess this defect?

The rod whose joints are connected by splices is the strongest pattern of all, as by this simple principle what is usually the weakest is converted into the strongest part; whereas in the ferrule-jointed rod the actual joint is rigid, and consequently prevents the entire rod bending together, and causes a series of jars from butt to top, so much so that in time the edges of the ferrule cut into the wood, breaking the skin, the consequence being that sooner or later, when some extra pressure is brought to bear, the rod breaks at the point where nine out of ten breakages do occur in ferrule-jointed rods—viz., immediately above or below the ferrule. The bell-mouthed ferrules now in use to a certain extent overcome this difficulty, but the inherent cause of mischief still remains.

Another great objection to ferrules is that sooner or

later the water penetrates into them and destroys the glue with which they are fixed, and, as it cannot dry out, eventually rots the part of the joint contained inside the ferrule.

A pin of brass is sometimes driven through the ferrule and joint, which of course weakens the wood, and it is here that the breakage usually takes place, after which the angler will probably break every instrument he has in his attempts to extricate the portion still remaining, and when that is done he still has no easy task, without the necessary tools, to refit the joint.

A further objection still exists to ferrule joints—viz., that however much they may be soaped, oiled, or vaselined, they frequently object to come apart, and in the process of twisting the joints in opposite directions, or in the application of heat, damage is easily done, either to the grain of the joint or the glue which secures it.

Mineral oil dropped into the joint is about the best thing for stubborn ferrules, as if left a little while it will penetrate more quickly than any other oil.

The splice-jointed rod has none of these objections, yet it is not what may be called the most popular pattern, on account of the little extra time and labour in making the splices. In point of time there is only about a minute or two difference in putting up splice and ferrule-jointed rod, so no doubt the process of splicing is what handicaps it.

Splicing up a rod is certainly not the most pleasant of operations in a cutting east wind, but still it does not take long, and it is not always necessary to take down more than the top joint.

Should a breakage occur in the middle of a joint away from the ferrule or splice, it is of course as easy to repair one pattern of rod as the other; but should the splice-jointed rod go at or close to the splice, it is much more easily repaired than the same catastrophe with a ferrule-jointed rod, and with the former it will be generally admitted the casualties are few as compared with those of the latter.

In casting with either pattern of rod any one who is worthy to be called an angler should be able to obtain all that is necessary, giving of course a few hours' practice to get into the use of a new rod; but it is only fair to the ferrule rod to say that perhaps a lighter line can be cast with it than with the splice rod, yet against that the latter is far preferable for switching, or the Spey cast.

As regards length of line to be thrown, there is not much difference, but in the teeth of a wind we much prefer the splice rod.

Built or spliced-cane trout-rods are very good to cast with, but a breakage is too horrible to contemplate—the splinters they fly into defy repair at the waterside; so unless the angler is close to his own door, he had better take a second rod out with him. The cost of the rods also puts them beyond many

pockets, and complaints are frequently being made of the glue giving way, but with attention from time to time this should be obviated. It may be argued that they do not break, but we have seen many a one do so.

The same applies to this make of salmon-rod, and those we have tried built with a steel centre are very heavy in the hand as compared with our usual rod.

Each to his taste; but should the angler purchase a cane-built rod, he *must buy the best*, irrespective of price.

In some parts rods are almost entirely used having the lower joint (rather more than two thirds of the entire rod) composed of hollow bamboo, and the top of lance-wood or greenheart. We have seen a good line cast with these; but any one may have our share of them, as, in our opinion, they are unwieldy and cumbersome to cast and throw too much weight upon the top joint when killing a fish, and are decidedly bad against a wind, their cheapness being, in our opinion, their only advantage, costing as they do about 20s.

It takes a long time to kill with them, and the fact of their consisting of only two joints would be an objection to many.

Taking all things into consideration, for salmon and sea-trout fishing we prefer a splice-jointed rod, considering it the most serviceable in every way for the strong rough work it has to do and go through; for a rod gets some nasty knocks while being dragged through many a closely grown wood, and likely enough

at the same time over rough granite or sandstone boulders upon which it takes the angler all his time to keep his feet. Under such circumstances as these we very much object to be obliged to give the attention to our rod amongst the trees which should be bestowed upon the more important work of keeping one's feet.

For trout-fishing the rod does not so much matter, and as we incline to the belief that the ferrule rods as now made cast a lighter line than splice rods (which is the most important consideration), we give them the preference.

For our own use in salmon-fishing we prefer the Castleconnell rods, and for the stated reason we have for many years used them. Our stock now consists of three, and, although they have seen the roughest of work, they are as sound as the day they were made; they each have two top joints, and all twelve joints are now as they were made. Many times have we seen the tops of ferrule-jointed rods break when the fly has caught by accident in a tree or bank, and although we have been often guilty of the same indiscretion, we have never yet paid the penalty. Therefore we shall remain true to our old friends, and may they continue to behave to us as heretofore! then we shall have no cause to alter our opinion of Enright and his works.

*Rod-fittings.*—These should be as simple as possible. Two brass circular bands, one fixed and the other movable, answer all purposes.

The rings should be large, so as to allow the line to



run through with little friction, and there should be plenty of them, so as to distribute the weight evenly over the entire length of the rod when casting or playing a fish.

The size of the rings should decrease towards the top of the rod, so as to prevent the line falling back through them by its own weight; but, as a rule, the size of the rings is too much reduced towards the top, causing unnecessary friction when paying out line, whereas the line should take itself out as soon as released from the reel without assistance from the rod.

Ferrules should be bell-mouthed at the ends towards the middle of the joint they enclose, so as not to cut the skin of the wood.

N.B.—All rods should be kept well varnished, copal varnish being the best for this purpose, so that they may not become sodden by the water and lose their spring; the varnish also materially stiffens the rod. The difference in the pliability of a rod before and after being revarnished is remarkable, as the angler can easily prove for himself.

Rod-makers generally whip the rings on to the rod with fine silk, probably on account of neatness, which soon gets frayed and comes undone. This is a mistake; very thick silk should be used.

*The Reel.*—The reel should be selected of such a weight as will nicely balance the rod, and should be tried with the rod for which it is intended before purchase, the tendency being towards the selection of too

light a reel. A reel looks very much larger in a shop than it does at the waterside. A salmon-reel should be capable of holding from 100 to 120 yards of line; a trout-reel 30 yards of line. The drum of the reel should be of large circumference, so that the line when required can be quickly wound up, and being large enables the reel to contain a given quantity of line without necessitating a wide barrel. This makes the reel of narrow width and large diameter, which is far preferable to the reverse, as it winds the line up more regularly and does not allow it to choke.

A reel of perfect workmanship is made by Moscrop, 25 Market Place, Manchester. It contains no screws, can be taken to pieces in a moment, and the check regulated at will.

For salmon-fishing a good strong check should be provided; the usual ones are far too weak.

A reel such as this will answer all requirements of fly-fishing, is simple in construction, and, if kept free from grit and occasionally well lubricated with mutton-fat, will last for ages.

On most rivers there exist spots where fish rest, but are so fenced in that it is impossible to get a fly out. To overcome this difficulty we use a minnow, with a Nottingham reel, from which about 50 yards can be cast from a position where there is only room to swing a short rod.

These reels work admirably, and with half an hour's practice anyone can become an adept in their use.

They are supplied by Slater of Newark-on-Trent, the patentee, and by most tackle-makers. They cast best with a small lead.

*The Reel Line.*—It is of the first importance that the line be selected of the correct weight to suit the rod, as upon this point the ability to cast a long straight line mainly depends. Nothing is more unsatisfactory than being obliged to cast with a line too heavy or too light for the rod; it is difficult to say which is the greater evil. If the line be too heavy, a long cast, which is occasionally necessary, is out of the question, if any regard be held for the rod, as nothing strains it sooner; and if it be too light the cast cannot be made without flicking or jerking, and then the line seldom falls straight.

By a straight line we mean a cast that is made so that the fly strikes the water at the desired spot with a length of line as little as possible in excess of the distance to be covered, of course taking into calculation the angle made by the rod and the surface of the water.

*For Trout-fishing* a silk and hair line plaited is perhaps as good as anything, and if tapered for a distance of about 15 yards to each end, so much the better. Twisted lines kink.

For very fine fishing a plaited hair-line is best, but in rough water a dressed silk line may be preferred.

*For Sea-trout-fishing* an undressed or dressed silk line is the best. Most anglers will probably prefer the



latter, as they can be cast to a greater distance and better against a wind. It should be about 40 to 50 yards in length.

*For Salmon-fishing* the line should be from 100 to 120 yards in length, in accordance with the size of the water. These lines are made of plaited hair, hair and silk plaited together, and plaited silk dressed in various ways. The former are very pretty to use, as line can be paid out so smoothly from the rod; they also fall lightly on the water, which is not an objection; but the dressed silk line is in most general use.

These, although expensive, are probably the cheapest in the long run, as, if well dried after use, they are very serviceable, and they are easier to cast with than undressed lines, especially in the teeth of a wind.

There are many patent lines dressed in various ways, the main object of all being to preserve the line from becoming rotten by the action of the water; and no doubt the various recipes perform their duties with a certain amount of success, but unfortunately many of the dressings have a tendency to crack at any point where the line has been doubled, and many of them peel off. For instance, it often happens that the angler trails his rod behind him while passing through a wood, and now and again some branch or twig will catch and hold the line, or the line while cast in the air may be doubled back in a knot by a gust of wind,

so in either of these cases care must be taken in putting it straight not to crack the highly varnished dressing.

We cannot stand this gingerbread class of tackle, which requires more care (and therefore time) in looking after it than the actual casting and working of the fly.

We have complained of these faults to the tackle-maker who supplied the lines, and the answer has invariably been—"They were so first of all, but lately the manufacturers have discovered a process which eradicates those faults."

We sincerely hope they have, but at the same time take no further interest in the subject, as after considerable use are of opinion that, as a thorough dressing for a line, there is nothing to beat plain boiled linseed-oil.

We prefer those of a red-brown colour and semi-transparent, the dressing they carry not being too thick. They are a very good colour in the water, and do not show so white after much use as most others, and, if ordinary care be taken to dry them, will last a long time.

Lines tapering at both ends are also sold, and if an angler prefer them, by all means let him use them, but there are some objections to them. It may be taken for granted that in the tapered line the end to which the gut cast is attached is no thicker than the weight of the fish requires; it follows, then, that the remainder of the line is needlessly thick for the purpose of killing

fish. Thus an unnecessary weight is put upon the top of the rod, and as casts of many different lengths are made during a day's fishing, it often happens that a thick portion of the line is just out of the top ring, whose weight makes it touch the water straight under the rod's point; whereas if the line were of the ordinary size it would be carried out much straighter by the action of the stream upon its extremity, which is greatly to be preferred, as then the angler is in much closer touch with his fly. The extra weight also imposes more strain upon the rod top and the angler's wrist in working the fly.

A line of the same size from end to end can be reversed on the reel when one extremity is worn; and when both ends have been used in this way it can be cut in the centre and the two worn ends spliced, thus affording to all intents two new lines.

This latter device cannot be resorted to in the case of the taper line, but being only a matter of economy perhaps would not appeal to all.

The most economical angler will wind on his reel about 70 yards of strong twine (made for the purpose), and whip to that 30 yards of the usual dressed silk, which he will reverse when worn, thus obtaining virtually six lines out of 100 yards of dressed line, but we prefer the plan described above, by which four are obtained.

Should a few yards of the untapered line become too much worn to be safe, they can be cut off without

prejudice to the weight of the line in casting, but not so with the tapered line.

*Gut Casts.*—In selecting gut it is as well to see that it be round in form; this point is of the greatest importance as regards strength, and no flat-sided strands should be used as single gut. The form of gut is apparent to the eye; it can also be tested by rolling the strands between fore finger and thumb, when, if it be round, some difficulty will be found in making it spin, whereas should it be at all flat it will quickly do so.

New gut is preferable, but by keeping in wash-leather in a tin box it will little deteriorate; but whether new or old season's crop, gut should always be well soaked before use.

For salmon-fishing a cast of two yards of treble twisted or plaited gut, gradually tapered and terminating with one yard of single gut, is in general use, except when the water is very fine, when a cast composed entirely of single gut may be preferred. For salmon-fishing the cast should end with a loop at either extremity.

For sea-trout and trout, single gut is sufficiently strong. Gut should be stained, and perhaps the blue shade in general use is as good as any other; but this may be left to the individual taste of the angler.

A tumbler full of ink with a piece of copperas of about the size of a pea makes a very good stain; the cast should be washed in water as soon as it has attained the desired shade. Stain only for present use.

It should be remembered that, to judge of the colour of all tackle used under water in the capture of fish, it is necessary to regard them from the fishes' and not the anglers' point of view, for in one case light is the background and in the other darkness relieved by reflected light.

The cast may be attached directly to the fly, but when (as is usually the case with salmon-flies) the hook is only furnished with a loop at the head, the better plan is to have a single strand of gut attached by a knot to the fly, the other end terminating with a loop by which it is fastened to the gut cast. By this method time is saved in changing flies, and it protects the neck of the fly and end of the cast from wear and tear.

We have now arrived at the hook, the pattern of which may be left to the taste of the angler, those in most general use perhaps being the Limerick and the Sprout Bend ; but whatever pattern of hook be used, it is most important that the gut loop be securely whipped to it, and with this object the whipping should extend from the shoulder to the point where the bend commences, just above the space to be occupied by the butt and tinsel ; and in order that the body may not appear clumsy when dressed, should treble gut be used, the strands may be cut off at different lengths to form a taper.

Landing-nets and gaffs are made in various patterns ; those with telescopic handles are most convenient, and



the nets should be well coated with varnish so that the hook may not become hanked.

For wading in rough places, should the gaff or net be affixed to a good stout stick it will afford great assistance.

Our favourite outfit for salmon-fishing is:—An 18 ft. 6 in. Castleconnell rod; a good large reel with handle attached to plate, weight 22 oz.; 100 yds. of silk line dressed with boiled linseed-oil; and a cast composed of 2 yds. of treble twisted and 1 yd. of single gut, the stoutest and roundest obtainable.

With this tackle an excellent cast can be made of a length to satisfy most people and a fish played with confidence, while the weight is not such as will cause the angler to feel distressed at the end of his day; although, should he be compelled to thread his way through woods or over rocky cliffs, he can afford to give his whole attention to the foothold, the tackle being tough enough to resist any raps it may receive by contact with the surrounding obstacles.

Of course it must not be inferred that rod and tackle are advocated of such strength as will enable the angler to march headlong through rough country without any chance of breakage; but we heartily detest to have drawing-room articles put into our hands for use over rough country, the safety of which is an incessant anxiety, and, sooner or later, with the use of such the angler is certain to be done out of half a day's fishing.

We have three such rods as described above, and although they have had nothing beyond ordinary consideration shown them, are as sound as on the day

they were made, while we should be sorry to say how many rods of other patterns we have seen part company while casting a line or playing a fish.

These rods have upon many occasions been pressed to uproot a turnip growing in the field behind, or a tree or bush by the waterside, but have merely expressed their inability to perform such feats by a polite refusal, whereas they might have resented the imposition of such tasks in a much more unpleasant manner; for this we respect them.

*Hair Casts* are used in some parts of the country, but the use of them is dying out, and good hair is difficult to get. The great advantage claimed for them is that they do not show so much in the water as gut, and fall lightly.

They are very elastic and cast remarkably straight, but the great objection we have to them is that they are so inclined to float on the surface.



KNOT ATTACHING CAST TO FLY.

There are several ways of knotting the cast to the fly, but we prefer that given in the drawing, as by no possibility can the gut draw out, consequently the angler has only breakage to fear.

When we have been *obliged* to use a reel too light for the rod, a few ounces of sheet lead wound round the butt below the reel have been of great assistance.

## CHAPTER VII.

*WADING.*

THE angler should only wade when he cannot command the catch by casting from the bank, as his presence in the water tends to scare the fish lying towards his bank ; but when, by so doing, the catch is better commanded and the fly presented more perfectly to the fish, he should not hesitate to take the water. .

The requirements are a pair of waterproof stockings or trousers, whichever the depth of the water may require, a pair of coarse woollen socks over them for protection against grit, and lastly a pair of boots, or brogues as they are commonly called, of stout make, with soles well studded with large flat nails to enable him to keep a firm footing upon rocks, &c.

It is convenient to have wading-trousers sufficiently wide at the top to take in the coat without packing, as should the angler by accident lose his footing and get carried out of his depth they will soon fill and enable him to use his legs, whereas should they fit tightly, under the same circumstances the air they contain



cannot readily escape, and consequently his legs float to the surface.

It frequently happens that a catch can be reached by casting from the bank, yet the intervening current sweeps the line away and the fish has a short period in which to notice the fly, then wading is a great assistance; also the gain of a few yards may enable the angler to reach, although imperfectly, a rising fish, and so give him a chance of attracting the fish during the initial stages of the fly's semi-circuit, when he may follow it round and eventually take it.

We must confess to having no great faith in casting an extraordinary length of line, as, even should the fish take, the strike is so late that the majority merely get pricked; yet fish are occasionally lured in this manner, as may be readily observed from such points of vantage as Galway Bridge.

There is one golden maxim to be observed in wading, i. e. *never cross your legs*; and if it be studiously adhered to, many a ducking will be avoided.

Wading down stream as it were on the top of your fish is strictly to be avoided, as the disturbance made by the legs in the stream and the "foil" (gravel or any other matter) displaced by the feet scare fish so much that they will not look at the bait.

We know pools where in order to fish from a particular side the natural surroundings necessitate wading, the stream so running that it travels from one's feet to where the fish lie, and although we have

fished them many a time, we could never get a rise; whereas, when wading from the other bank, within a short space of time success has resulted, and we could only attribute the difference to aforesaid reasons.

From our own observation an unnatural disturbance of the water tends greatly to scare fish; and as an example—at a certain “caul” or weir, at which we spend many a Sunday afternoon, the fish lie close in shore, resting in a small back wash of boiling water, and will remain there heedless of man’s presence; but if he dip his hands into the eddy, away they go down the fall which they have had much labour to surmount.

When the angler possesses thorough knowledge of the water, he can don his waders and flop into the water at one point and then another; but should he not have this knowledge, or when the water is very high, he had better previously take a few casts from the bank, in order to give a chance to any fish that may lie close in shore—they occasionally lie in curious places.

An angler’s success depends in a great measure upon his knowledge of the conformation of the river’s bed, and if it be possible he had better study it at summer level; then when the pool is in fishing trim it will be to him as an open page, although its peculiarities are invisible. Should the bed of a pool be composed of gravel the lie of the fish is apparent to a stranger; but where resting-places are formed by large rocks or

edges of rocks over which the stream smoothly glides, it is another matter.

In the neck of a pool, should there be large stones at the bottom, fish will lie behind them right in the centre of the stream; but when the bottom is of gravel they will generally lie a little to either side of the centre, usually showing a partiality for one side; and the fly when practicable should be cast over a fish from the bank nearer him, as then, if made to fall into the centre of the current, the rod at the completion of the cast being maintained at right angles across the stream, it completes its course over the lie of the fish, apparently escaping from the rough water.

It is high useless to attempt a presentation of the fly to fish lying beyond the centre of the stream, as immediately the fly falls it is swept away before any fish can see it.

It may be argued that by this method of casting the off chance is gained of attracting a fish from beyond the current, while the ultimate presentation to those lying on the angler's side is not prejudiced; but it must be borne in mind that in this manner a longer line is required to produce the same result, which is a decided objection.

In considering the correct method to present the fly, the direction from which floating matters approach fish should be remarked, so that the hook may be made to approach in a regular orthodox manner the fish, who by habit is on the watch for

articles coming down and sees nothing extraordinary in its progress, whereas he is apt to regard any variation with suspicion, if he should notice it at all. Therefore when fish lie on either side of a current and the angler can fish from both banks, by all means let him do so ; but if he have not this advantage, he may as well be content to fish the side of the stream nearer his own bank and save much time.

Lower down the pool where the current is more widely distributed it is another matter ; there no harm is done by covering as much water as a fair cast permits ; but perhaps the better plan is to make two beats of it—the first with a fairly short line, and the second with an extra long cast. This method takes time, and by some anglers may be considered tedious, but he who adopts it only uses a long line when absolutely necessary.

When the wading only extends a few yards from the bank one is apt to shirk it, thinking, “ What is the use of wading when one can make the cast as well from the bank, and if necessary drop the fly to a considerable distance beyond ? ” But this frequently is not the point, as, may be, a ledge of rock or some other harbour secretes fish over whose heads the fly, when cast from the bank, too quickly passes out of sight, whereas if cast from a point farther out would hang over them towards the completion of its course.

When lately fishing with a friend an instance of this occurred : we had taken particular pains in

giving a hint here and there, the main point being the advisability of fishing the pool in twice, as above described. He adopted this method without result, and a quarter of an hour later we went in. Naturally it was useless to cast inside the line where he had waded, so we started with the out fishing.

“Why don’t you fish close in first of all?” he shouted, with just a suspicion in his tone of “practice what you preach.” The reason was explained, and the incident passed off.

Curiously enough the very next day we were fishing a pool and commenced casting with a very short line from the bank, and hooked a fish almost immediately which turned the scale at 17 lb. He had been lying in an eddy formed by an anchored tree-stump, and had we waded in to commence with we should have scared him away as sure as fate.

Later in the day we were standing back on the bank with the rod projecting scarcely six feet beyond, and hooked a large fish on a very short line, which after three-quarters of an hour’s hard work broke the gut cast, or rather one of the knots drew out. The fish made several rushes, then sulked for some time, when by the continued heavy strain the knot of a badly mended cast drew out and we parted company.

When wading a strange stream or one in which the angler may have to retrace his steps so as to regain the bank, it is as well now and again to try the strength of the current in order to secure retreat, as it is far from

pleasant to suddenly discover that the depth bars further progress, while the force of the current prohibits a safe return.

When wading a sharp stream running over a fine gravel bottom, the angler should take care that his foothold be not swept away, and it is wise *not* to present a broadside to the stream.



## CHAPTER VIII.

*CASTING AND WORKING OF FLY.*

THE art of casting the line in fly-fishing is with a little practice soon attained, but the little turns of the wrist and forearm which, under various circumstances, are brought into requisition by the accomplished angler are only acquired after considerable experience in handling the rod.

The would-be fly-fisher to commence with had best carefully watch an adept, noting the course of the rod and line and the moments when the former is asked to exert itself to lift the line from the water and again return it. Then he may take up the rod and attempt to imitate what he has seen, asking his mentor now and again to put his hand over his own grasping the rod, and so make a cast or two which will convey to him the correct method.

There may be said to be three methods of casting—the ordinary or overhead cast, the underhand cast in which the rod is moved horizontally instead of as in the former perpendicularly, and the “Switch” or Spey cast.



The overhead cast is made by gently bringing the fly to the surface of the water, then drawing it and the line upwards and backwards with sufficient force to poise the entire length in air behind the back of the angler, as near as possible in a straight line, to whose hand the precise moment of this occurrence is notified by the increased weight on the top of the rod, which then should be impelled with increasing force until it has attained little if anything beyond the perpendicular, then its further progress should be checked.

One mistake generally made by beginners is to drag the line out of the water before previously having raised it to the surface with unbent rod, the consequence being that having severely taxed the capabilities of the rod in bringing the line to the surface, there is no power remaining to lift it from the water; thus the line never gets fairly extended behind, so that the angler in his anxiety to save it touching the ground, makes the forward cast on the slack line, which naturally is merely a jerk instead of a steady impulse, the result being that the line falls in coils, if nothing worse, a few feet beyond his nose.

When the knack of raising the line has been acquired, care should be taken to give it plenty of time behind; the angler can turn his head and view his line in air and then have leisure to make the forward cast.

The Spey cast is more difficult to learn and to describe; it is made by drawing the line smartly to

one, so that the fly comes scudding along the surface of the water to within a few yards of the body, the line forming a huge bag in the air, no portion being much behind; the rod should then be impelled forward with considerable force, causing the fly to shoot out to the desired spot.

This cast is difficult of attainment, but in reality requires little exertion, most of the work being done by the reaction of the rod; in positions where trees or rocks are immediately at the angler's back its use is indispensable, and its achievement gives great satisfaction.

The fly should naturally alight on the water in the accustomed manner of the insect it is intended to represent; so the small winged flies should fall lightly, while imitations of grubs or caterpillars, especially in chub-fishing, should make a good flop.

In salmon-fishing lightness of descent is of little moment; at the same time there is probably nothing to be gained by unnecessary splash.

What salmon mistake the artificial fly to be is open to argument. He cannot take it to be an inhabitant of the air or fresh water, as it resembles nothing therein contained save its artificial kindred, of which by-the-by in many rivers there is an abundance; and as whatever acquaintance he may have made with them would scarcely have been of such a nature as would have instilled confidence, he probably associates it with some objects which during his visits to the coasts and estuaries have left pleasant recollections.

The result of good casting is that the fly is placed at the required spot on the water with the least possible loose or slack line, so that it is actually *fishing* at the moment of immersion; and when this is effected it almost appears to the spectator as if the fly were laid down by the hand, with such nicety is the cast accomplished.

It is no uncommon thing to see an angler severely handicap himself by casting an unnecessarily long line; this is especially the delight of novices, who are perfectly happy if they see 25 yards or so of line fall in any fashion upon the surface, and expect to find a look of admiration on the countenance of any passer by; but should that passer by be aware that the catch is under the point of the angler's rod, his smile may be misconstrued.

To command a catch it is, however, often necessary to cast a long line, then well and good; or it may be that by casting a few extra yards of line the angler can fish obliquely, say at an angle of  $45^{\circ}$ , whereas with a shorter line he would be compelled to cast straighter across the stream. Then the ability to make a long cast is a distinct advantage, as if the line be cast straight across, its centre is bagged by the stream, and in reality the fly is towed down head first for the greater portion of its journey, whereas the line and fly should be both swept away from the angler, with little or no straightening.

Young anglers are frequently instructed to cast

“well across the stream,” but it is extremely doubtful, for above reasons, if there is anything to be gained by casting at a greater angle than  $45^{\circ}$ , unless it be to reach a catch which cannot otherwise be commanded.

When casting over a rising fish, the angler above all things should endeavour to effect a perfect cast at the first attempt, as should he commence with an indifferent one, he gets the worst of the deal, and has only himself to thank for having thrown away a likely winning card.

The adept, during a few casts in the air, will be able to release from the reel a sufficient length of line without touching the water, and, at the same time, accurately gauge the distance; but the angler who has not attained such proficiency had better make, as it were, a trial cast on the water beyond the notice of the fish, for although this, for obvious reasons, is not desirable in dry-fly fishing, yet it is preferable to making a bad initial cast. It is not much use to put in a real good cast after a couple of bad ones.

The angler in his eagerness frequently exhibits a tendency to present his fly to a rising fish too soon after the latter has captured a natural insect; but he should remember that after the capture of a mouthful, a fish requires time to swallow the morsel and settle himself down for the next, so it is well to give him time, and if possible to keep him waiting a while so that his appetite may be whetted; at the same time a watchful eye must be kept on the stream for some

distance above, so that the artificial fly may not be cut out by natural insects floating down.

Should a fish take the fly during the line's straightening process, it being practically slack, the angler is not at once apprised of the fact, so loses time in striking, and the fish cannot strike himself, but may possibly find out his error and have time to reject the fly.

How often may the remark be heard, "I touched one, but he did not get hold of it;" surely the bagged line has something to answer for!

Fish very quickly spit out any foreign substance, as may be ascertained by dropping a few gutless and barbless flies from a bridge into a stream below, and it is surprising to what a distance they can expel the object through the water.

The movement imparted to the fly in the water by the rise and fall of the rod's point must be left to taste, yet on any particular river a certain pace and extent of motion seem to be adopted by general consent; but at whatever pace the line may be drawn up, it should not be released at a greater one than that at which the water flows; the wings then shut up close and loosen again, while there being no slack line the fly maintains its even position in the water, so should a fish attempt to take it, he is not disappointed. The motion, however, may occasionally be varied.

The fly should be allowed to remain in the water until it arrives at least in a line straight down stream



with the point of the rod ; and, lastly, the angler should remember that the fly hooks more fish when it is in the water than when on the bank or in the air.

In heavy waters, or as a change to the fly, a minnow is worth trying. We prefer a plain white metal body with no slits at the sides and simply two triangles at the tail. They can be cast to a considerable distance with the fly-rod, if instead of being brought straight back over the shoulder they are swung round in a semi-circle, which keeps them on the go during their passage through air, and at the same time does not impose so severe a task upon the rod.

Casting in this manner is not particularly easy, but with practice a long line can be thrown without straining the rod. This method will be found to serve in open pools, but when 30 or 40 yards has to be covered, or when the casting is surrounded by trees, the best plan is to use a spinning rod with a Nottingham reel (*vide* page 35).

## CHAPTER IX.

*TROUT-FISHING IN THE "NORTH COUNTRY."*

NORTH COUNTRY fly-fishers have many more facilities for indulgence in their favourite sport than dwellers in the South, where salmon and trout rivers are comparatively few and far between, and in consequence command a price which places them beyond the means of many; whereas in the Northern Counties almost every river, streamlet, or burn may be said to contain some one or more of the *Salmo* species, which may be rented by individuals or, as is often the case, by clubs at a moderate figure.

For this reason the younger branch of sportsmen in the North, as a rule, are more familiar with the rod than their *confrères* of the South, as, even if resident in towns or cities, there usually is a river within easy distance on which fishing is obtainable either by rent, leave, or by putting up at an inn which provides visitors with a stretch of water.

Trout-fishing on the Borders commences about the 1st of March, but not until the end of that month do the fish get into fair condition, and they do not





MARCH BROWN.



DARK BLEA.



CREEPER (*just out of case*).



STONE FLY.





arrive at their best until the beginning or middle of May.

To fish the large rivers such as Eden, Tyne, and Esk, wading-trousers are necessary; for their tributaries and the smaller rivers stockings will suffice, as many of them are wide, although not running to any great depth.

A rod of 11 or 12 ft. will do all the work with a selection of the ordinary flies, such as—March brown (male and female), light and dark blea or bloa, stone-fly, partridge hackle, olive dun, iron-blue dun, ginger hackle, Greenwell's glory, and yellow dun.

We have found the female March brown a better killer than the male, and prefer hen pheasant to woodcock for the wings.

The Eden is a very fine river, probably far and away the best in the North of England for trout-fishing, both as regards quantity and size of fish, whose colouring is very rich, varying with the nature of the river's bed; speaking generally, the Eden trout is a very handsome example of his species.

The Eden is a well wooded river, with bed alternately of rock and gravel, forming deep pools, capable of holding trout even in the lowest summer water, so excepting in the very highest reaches a flood is the only condition which will interfere with sport.

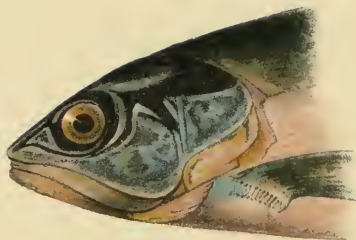
The flats grow abundance of weeds, which, with the vegetation growing along the banks, afford capital nurseries for the feed.

As upon every river, so the angler may have a bad day upon Eden, but it is seldom that he should return to his quarters with less than three or four brace, while on an average to a good day he may expect to basket from eight to twelve brace, and often more. The average weight about ten miles from Carlisle would be about  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. a piece, perhaps rather more; while on a fair day the creel should contain fish of  $\frac{3}{4}$  lb. to 1 lb., and over, possibly up to 3 lb.

Upon the rise of fly, as on most rivers, mainly depends the size of the bag, but it seldom fails to put in an appearance during some hour of the day; before and after this occurs the angler must be content to fish "blind" the streams and eddies, and will probably pick up a fish here and there; but in the spring, between the hours of eleven and two, the feed will generally appear, and then the real fun takes place. At about the time the rise may be expected, the angler had best arrange to be handy at some good long stream, so that he may commence operations so soon as the fly appears, and make hay while the sun shines, as there is no knowing how soon it may cease.

When the feed comes sailing down the necks of the streams, the fish appear to draw up from the flats or deep pools below, and make the water fairly boil where a few minutes before not a fish was to be seen; now, if the angler is up to his work he will grass several brace of fish in a very short space of time and water, until, as suddenly as it commenced, the rise ceases, the fish, so





HEAD OF SMOLT.



soon as they have cleared the decks, retiring whence they came.

Smolts are a great nuisance, causing waste of precious time when the rise is on, as when hooked they must be released tenderly; but as they generally lie well off the edge of the stream, they may be avoided to a great extent by lifting the line before the flies reach the stiller water.

Fishing with the bustard or artificial moth is indulged in from twilight until midnight during the summer months, but chiefly by those to whom the bag is of pecuniary importance.

The Tynes and their tributaries run down very quickly after a flood, and in this respect compare unfavourably with the Eden; indeed in the upper reaches, unless the angler arrives in the nick of time, he can expect to land but small fish, so the telegraph wire comes in handy.

The bed of the Tynes consists in most parts chiefly of large cobbles, and at low water in the highland districts there are few deep tracts where large trout can exist in privacy; it is also very doubtful if there is an overabundance of feed, so it is possible that these conditions may account for the fact that the fish run rather small: we cannot from experience put the average weight at above from four to three to the pound, although we may have been unfortunate.

Some of the rocky burns running into the North Tyne have yielded a much better average weight of

fish than the river itself, but they were in much worse condition and very dark in colour, abstracted from the peaty water they inhabited.

Nevertheless, a few days' fishing in these burns and streams, running several hundred feet above the sea-level through wild moorland scenery, are most enjoyable, affording a thorough change to him who has been angling on a lowland river, the surrounding vegetation and bird-life being so entirely different.

The robins, chaffinches, wrens, and bullfinches have all disappeared, and in place of them the angler has as his companions the blackcock, curlew, and grouse, whose "ker-back-ker-back-back-bacque-back," as he folds his wings whilst alighting on the heather-clad fell, falls refreshingly upon the ear.

The solitary angler can best enjoy the moorland, as then no human voice detracts from the awful impression conveyed to the mind by the solemn silence of nature's handiwork, which seems proper to be broken only by the utterances of the creatures she ordains to exist thereon.

The effusive screech with which the peewit endeavours to lure the intruder from the vicinity of his nest, the warning note of the cock grouse to the hen, the peculiar spring whistle of the golden plover while high aloft in air, and the weird pipe of the curlew, all seem in perfect harmony with the light and shade of the moorland hills; but with the voice of man the spell is broken.

One little bird seems never to forsake the angler, whether in high or lowland district; the matter of altitude makes little difference to him, who deservedly has earned the title of "the fisherman's companion." So long as there be water and stones upon which he may rest at intervals between his diving operations in quest of food, the little water-ouzel is satisfied.

Dropping south over the fells which give the Eden its rise, the burns which form the Ribble-head come into view, pursuing their course over rocky boulders and gravel-beds until they afford attractions for the king of fish. This river is noted as a trout-stream, and, like the Tynes, quickly rises and falls, the average size of the fish being about the same or perhaps, if anything, less.

The country is charming, and although these rivers, which are thick in the morning and bright at midday, are somewhat trying, yet he must be difficult to please who cannot enjoy a few days while casting his fly, wandering along as it were through the centre of the moors, although perhaps the uppermost reaches afford better sport to the gunner than to the angler.

The riparian proprietors of the upper Ribble should be grateful to the members of the angling club at Horton, who, with the facilities afforded them by gentlemen living there, hatch and turn out many thousands of trout annually into the river.

As a rule, in the North Country trout-streams there is no limit as to the size of the fish which may be

retained, and, in consequence, thousands of little things scarce four inches long are taken. So long as there is no rule, many anglers will take all they catch, which is a great mistake and should be stopped, to increase the average size of the fish, although rivers which are up one day and down the next will probably never contain very large fish, especially when, as is frequently the case, the supply of feed is not over-abundant.

It is often worth while to try a cast or two where the surface is covered by shifting patches of foam or froth, circling in eddies beside the main stream, for occasionally trout may be found feeding on drowned flies mixed up in it, while the cover conceals their actions.



THE FISHERMAN'S COMPANION.

## CHAPTER X.

*KEEP YOUR FLY ON THE WATER.*

THIS is an old piece of advice, but for all that none the less good, as all anglers will admit.

“I have not sufficient patience for fishing,” is a statement frequently made; but for the life of us we cannot see that more patience is required in angling than in any other sport.

The word “patience” does not exist in the dictionary of the sportsman; he knows it not; and the intervals during which his efforts are not crowned with success are not tedious, nor do they discourage him or make him a bit the less keen—on the contrary, they stimulate him to the exercise of greater care and attention.

At one time or another every angler will have experienced a really big day when it has been as easy to basket fish as to take sardines out of a tin, but he will with far more satisfaction recall the day when he has against adverse circumstances landed a few fish by sheer dint of perseverance and skill.

Trout- and salmon-fishing in large rivers differ much in one respect, inasmuch as the salmon-fisher, who knows



anything about the river, can put his hand, as it were, upon the exact spot where the fish lie, although they may not be showing, so, after having cast over all the catches, even should there be no result, he may be pretty sure that every fish has had a chance; but in trout-fishing, except when feeding on the surface, the fish are scattered over the river, so the angler has to be content with fishing "blind," which is unsatisfactory work at the best.

A resident of the waterside, who has daily opportunities, can afford to pick out the best hours during the day, and otherwise occupy himself during the intervals, and very probably will do as much execution as if he had been fishing all day; but this method will not suit the keen angler who only has a day or two now and again at his disposal, so he had better fish the streams until the fly makes its appearance.

In clear chalk streams it is rather a different matter, as the fish can often be seen, and the angler can try his hand over each individual fish, which, to our thinking, is far more interesting than fishing "blind"; but rivers must be taken as they are, and the angler has to make the most of them. For this reason it is absurd to generally condemn the practice of fishing with worm for trout, as during the summer months on many rivers, especially in the north, it is the only method by which fish can be obtained. It is also a mistake to imagine that worm-fishing for trout in fine waters is easy work: such is far from being the case,



as it requires a very light hand to cast the bait up stream and a quick wrist to strike.

The bait is allowed to float down towards the feet of the angler wading in midstream; but at the same time there must be no slack line, or little will result beyond the loss of the worm.

This style of angling is quite as difficult as fly-fishing, perhaps more so, and men who are adepts at it have no mean reputation around the country-side, even when time has long since obliged them to relinquish the rod and creel.

To return to the maxim at the head of these notes—salmon-fishers should always persevere, as there is no knowing when a fish may take; so the half-hearted angler who hangs about the banks, blaming the river, the day, and everything but himself, does not get half a chance.

When the extent of the water has been fished over without result, some will give it up and wait until, as they express it, "they begin to move." Now, as long as the fly is in the water, there is always a chance of hooking a fish, therefore it is as well to stick to it and continue casting the pools down in their order, as it is impossible to tell when salmon may commence to take, or a change of fly may do the trick.

Some anglers are wont to gauge the probabilities of sport by the number of fish showing themselves, but we are of opinion that the taking fish as often as not does not show himself; at the back end of the season

especially, the fish which are continually jumping are generally those who have been some weeks in the river. It has several times been our lot to kill a fish in the evening which we have seen rise only once in the early morning, after which he has never moved; and for this reason the angler should be early astir, as although he may not hook a fish during the first few hours, he may have opportunities for marking down some, which will come in very useful during the day.

Fish generally stir soon after daybreak, and even if they have not since moved all day, will generally drift about again an hour or so before evening, so it is as well to give them a chance during these periods, especially in late spring and early in autumn when the days are warm; but we cannot own to having had much success in very early fishing in cold weather during early spring, and to fish before the mist has rolled off the water is simply useless.

An angler can wish for no better compliment to be paid him than to be called a "regular sticker," and anyone who acts upon this principle is certain to kill fish when perhaps he least expects to do so: an instance occurred once which we shall never forget.

During the day a fish had risen once or twice in slowly running water, and had ignored the various flies which we had cast over his head. It was getting dark, and we were just about to give over for the day, having in mind a long walk home through a thick plantation and felled trees strewn across the path, partly hidden

by long white grass, when we decided to give the pool one last cast down from the boat as usual, putting on a bright fly, with which we had been casting most of the day, it being a favourite pattern.

Our attendant on the thwart, who was a never-say-die sort as a rule, did not much encourage us with the remark, "We're defeated to-day"; nevertheless we both rowed and fished the pool more carefully down than ever, until we had only a few yards remaining, and were drawing the line up for the last time and saying, "Yes, we're defeated," when the welcome tug told us that we had spoken perhaps too soon; and such proved to be the case, as, after about half an hour's hard and quick work, 26 lb. weight of fresh-run salmon was on the bank.

By this time it was quite dark and the walk home was no treat, but still we congratulated ourselves upon not having "chucked it," sooner.

The really keen angler will persevere in spite of non-success, but he who is not an enthusiast cannot understand the pleasure of good casting *per se*; he has no interest in the proceedings until he finds a fish on his hook, when very probably he then is, so to say, all over the shop; whereas the sportsman sits tight, keeps his head, and scarcely takes his eye off the fish.

It is a great nuisance to have a friend angling with one who when fish are not taking is continually saying, "Come on, let's chuck it, it's not a bit of good to-day." Nothing is more trying, especially when one is doing

one's very best and hoping against hope ; and the best plan is to send him home, as, apart from the annoyance occasioned by his, or it may even be her, company, one's attention is continually being distracted, and a fish may be missed, a disappointment we have before now experienced. Again, some anglers will waste a deal of their time in walking backwards and forwards between pools, being apparently of opinion that the one they are fishing at any particular moment affords less chance of sport than some other, the result being that none are properly fished ; and we have known valuable hours wasted in walking to a pool miles away, when the probability of sport was quite as great in others close at hand : these vagaries are sound enough from a tourist point of view, but they will not commend themselves to the angler who likes to keep his fly in the water.

When after a flood the water is still very big, but yet of such a colour that it be possible for fish to see the fly, the angler may prefer to go out on the off-chance ; but he should remember that when the water is big enough for fish to run in, they will not frequent the usual spots, but lie in towards the banks out of the stream, which is as yet too strong for them ; so even if the height of the water would allow, he had much better give up all idea of wading and cast from the bank.

Under such conditions he should drop his fly on the edge of the stream, and allow it to work round as near

as possible to his own bank; by so doing he will accomplish three objects, viz.: be casting over the probable lie of any resting fish; making it cross the track of running fish, who invariably run up the slack water close in shore; and, lastly, he will be casting, generally speaking, in the thinner water, where his fly is more easily seen. As the water falls in, fish gradually cease running, and abandon their temporary resting-places in thinnish water, until at length they settle down in the recognized catches of the various pools.

## CHAPTER XI.

*PLAYING A FISH.*

THIS is no unimportant branch of the angler's art, and a deal of practice is requisite before he learns to play his fish with confidence and absence of bustle and flurry, knowing the exact moments when to give way to a fish or hold him hard.

Nothing but experience can prompt the forethought which avoids the occurrence of awkward or fatal situations, and these *will* happen sometimes, even when the greatest care is exercised; however, the accomplished angler will generally avoid them, or at all events find the ready means of extrication.

An observer can get a fair insight to a man's temperament while watching him playing a good-sized salmon, and pretty accurately gauge his capabilities as a fisherman; for independently of the occasion calling for considerable activity, strength, and at times endurance, he should command self-possession, decision, and resource, be quick to follow the movements of the fish, and have a good memory for the peculiarities of the natural surroundings of the waterside.



Youthful anglers, or they of excitable temperament, upon hooking a fish are apt to lose their heads from anxiety to see him safe on the bank, and by this feverish excitement frequently jeopardize their chance of ultimate success.

The man who has to use the gaff for this description of angler has often a roughish time of it, and will probably be told that he has lost several opportunities of gaffing, and that the angler himself could have administered the stroke over and over again; while after these expressions, should perchance the fish get off, woe betide the attendant, as the entire blame is sure to lie with him.

Taking it altogether, gaffing a fish for any other than a good fisherman, who can keep cool, is a task to be avoided; yet has frequently to be accepted, as no sportsman would refuse such assistance to a brother angler.

In contrast to the excitable angler is he who thinks he can safely hold conversation with others during the hottest part of the fight; but he will soon learn a lesson which will break him of the habit, and teach him for the future to watch his fish all he knows.

It is a very pretty sight to watch a fish nicely handled for twenty minutes or more, and the young angler cannot do better than avail himself of any such opportunities, and so learn how to manage a fish with confidence and self-command.

Elsewhere than on the river-bank, the remark may

frequently be heard, "I never take longer than (so many) minutes to kill a fish"; but our experience is that in practice these gentlemen take a good deal longer than most people; but there can be no object in pulling fish out by the roots, and with single gut it is simply absurd. On the other hand there is nothing to be gained, on the contrary there may be a good deal to lose, by allowing a fish to take liberties, as he is never safe until on the bank, even then not always so.

Nine cases out of ten the angler has to give line, or rather allow the fish to take it, during the early stages of the fight; but he should always be made to work to take it off the reel, then as the fish gets weaker the angler can put on increased pressure and so hasten the end.

The main thing is to hold the point of the rod well up, so that the weight of the fish and any sudden jerks he may give shall fall on it and not on the line.

Instances occur now and again when it is impossible, with any regard to safety, to give line, and on the other hand it is at times imperative to give it; of course then the angler can only make the best of a bad job.

After a few minutes' play the experienced angler can form a shrewd guess how the fish is hooked, and will shape his tactics accordingly; but in the absence of any such indication, in fact as a general rule, our experience is that the best plan to adopt after having hooked a fish, is to hold him only fairly hard and allow *him* to take the initiative.

There is generally not much wait about it, as the fish probably makes a rush so soon as he feels himself under control; if so, so much the better, as the more he runs the quicker he will tire, and as increased pressure is brought to bear he soon gives way to the inevitable.

After hooking a fish, unless obstacles such as trees exist, it is advisable to gain the bank as quickly as possible, the fish being better commanded therefrom; and during this manœuvre the hold on the fish should be light, so as not to incite him to immediate exertion; when the bank is once gained the angler can proceed with usual discretion.

Fish after their first run will often return to the holding from which they were first lured—may be, thinking there is no place like home, or perhaps the line which is naturally slack at the end of the run gives them the idea that they are free once more; so if, as is often the case, their chosen resting-place be at the back of some large stone or ledge of rock it is advisable to thwart them in their designs if possible, to avoid a cut line.

Should a fish persevere in a long run where he cannot be followed there are two courses open—either to make it a case of pull-devil-pull-baker and chance to luck, or while there is still a fair amount of line on the reel to pull it off as fast as possible with the hand, thereby creating a slack line, and giving the fish the impression that he is free, when he is as likely as not to head up stream again, then the bagging line pulls

him from behind and influences him to still make up, meanwhile the angler follows him, winding up the slack, and the fight continues. We recall an instance of a large fish having by this *ruse* been twice enticed up stream, but it was of no avail, as he refused to be deceived by a third application, and broke away with cast, reel-line, and fly; but, on the other hand, this method has several times given us a fish.

We once witnessed an instance in which a suddenly slacked line induced a fish to head up stream, although in this case it was the result of an accident, and happened as follows:—

A little lad was fishing for salmon near by, with a rotten old rod and tackle baited with a large worm, which he had dropped into the head of a pool, which he, with the occupants of the farm, had permission to fish.

We happened to turn round while casting below him and perceived he had a fish on, apparently of good size, so hastened to his assistance and with a hint now and again he managed to play the fish fairly well for about half an hour, the state of the tackle requiring much care.

Without any warning the fish then made a rush down stream, the rusty old reel screeched again as it spun round, the line ran out its entire length, then broke off at the reel and fell out through the rings on the grassy bank, on which the lad was fortunately standing at some distance from the edge.

While the lad was standing still, struck all of a heap by his misfortune, we ran down the bank and managed to put a foot on the end of the line just before it disappeared over the edge, and upon seizing it found that the fish had got off or had stopped his run, as there was no weight upon it. We fully expected to find that the fish had escaped; however, on the off chance, we threaded the line through the rings, attached it to the reel, and wound it up, or rather the lad did.

As the reel began to fill there was a perceptible draw on the line from a point a little up stream, and we soon found to the boy's delight that the fish was still on and lying in his old resting-place. After some little time the fish went down again, and we had great difficulty in passing the rod from one to another behind several tall trees which grew at the water-edge, the depth being too great to admit of wading by them; however, we together eventually managed to land him, a fresh-run fish of 24 lb.

The lad afterwards told us that he had sold the fish for 36s., with which he had purchased new tackle, and we added a cast or two and a few flies upon the understanding that he would in future eschew the lowly worm.

When a fish persists in jaggng at the line, a method he often adopts when but lightly hooked, the jar on the line and rod can be materially reduced by holding the rod in both hands, keeping it clear of the body; this is also a good plan when the fish jumps or is likely to do so.



After gaffing a fish, especially when the angler has to do it for himself, line should be at once pulled off the reel by the rod hand (the rod being supported over the wrist) so as to allow the top joint to straighten. The observance of this will save a top now and again, as the angler while walking with his fish on the gaff is apt to forget that the rod-top has not been released from strain.

The line should, while playing a fish, be controlled in such a manner that at any moment it can be allowed to run free, and consequently should not be passed round or in and out of fingers, as anyone will find out to his cost should a fish run when the line is thus impeded; and no slack line should be allowed between the lowest ring and the reel, or it is certain to get caught in something.

At the finish of a run, immediately reel the line up and follow the fish until opposite him, keeping him, if possible, in good running water, thus making him work to maintain his position against the stream and the rod; whereas, should the angler take up his position much in advance of the fish, he will supply the requisite power to keep the latter in position against the stream.

When a fish persistently remains motionless at the bottom, or, as it is called, "sulks," the best plan is to reel up close right over him, and if that does not shift him, throw in a few stones *behind* the line, which probably will have the desired effect.

Should the fish stay some distance out from the



bank, the angler can get behind him and pull him down stream, as he will not so very long be able to withstand the combined efforts of the rod and stream.

It is not uncommon to hear the remarks, "I rose" so many fish, and "I always drown my fish"; but we must confess to being very bad at rising fish, as nineteen out of every twenty salmon we have ever caught have annexed the fly under water, making no break upon the surface; and as far as drowning fish is concerned, they have been perhaps nearer drowning us than we them upon many occasions. Of course, when a fish is dead-beat he can easily be pulled down stream, but virtually he has to be killed first; at all events, we have as yet failed to come across the fish who has quietly submitted to the drowning process; but we have not perhaps given it sufficient trial, preferring to keep the hook if we can in one position in the fish's jaw.

We look with a certain amount of suspicion upon the habitual "riser" and "drowner," and if obliged to find them should draw no further than smoking-rooms.

## CHAPTER XII.

*FLIES : NATURAL AND ARTIFICIAL.*

THIS item of tackle is generally considered of primary importance, and perhaps rightly so, inasmuch as the angler's first object is to lure his fish; and as each individual's ideas as to the best killing fancy flies or dressings of imitations have probably been formed by success, he has a certain amount of method in his madness.

The majority of the patterns of artificial flies used in trout-fishing being imitations of the natural insect, the dresser's task is clearly defined, so beyond the mechanical process he is, as compared to the designer of a pattern of salmon-fly, what the engraver is to the painter of a picture, and in both instances the close copy of the original is the gauge of merit. But in reproducing the natural fly in artificial form there is much room for discretion and ingenuity in the selection of materials, and it is in this respect, rather than in the actual fixing, that excellence is desirable.

To describe as a work of art a well-dressed trout-fly is no exaggeration, and a vast amount of practice is

requisite—more than any one person could hope to obtain by dressing flies for his individual use alone, unless he were possessed of an inordinate rapacity for annexing hedge-rows and such like; so it has come about that most of us purchase our trout-flies, and are extremely fortunate in being able to obtain such excellent imitations at comparatively small cost.

The south-country trout-streams are, as a rule, smoother than those in the north and the fish more wary; consequently the flies dressed for use therewith are more delicately tied, especially those designed for dry-fly-fishing, which is seldom if ever practised in the north, though there is no reason why it should not be, as we have personally proved it to be equally effective.

Flies of course can be, and for special purposes are, dressed fine in the north; but it will probably be argued that no better results are obtained, nor does dry-fly show any advantages over wet-fly-fishing, while the difference in cost is greatly in favour of the angler.

In dressing artificial patterns of the larger trout-flies, such as the Green and Grey Drake, the occasional dresser will experience less difficulty in the actual tying, but the imitation of body and wings will try his ingenuity.

All kinds of materials are brought into requisition to imitate the wings of the May-fly; and if they are all even fairly good imitations of the reality, it must be admitted that the varieties of the Drake are not few.

The bodies are made of various materials selected for

their floating qualities, and more or less answer their purpose ; but the wings are frequently represented by the feathers of the Mallard and Egyptian Goose, dyed to such a depth of yellow or green that not even the most jaundiced pseudo-imago or imago could detect in them the slightest resemblance to his own gauzy structures.

The Egyptian Goose feather is a bad imitation, as, in the first place, the tint is wrong, and, secondly, it is too heavy and stiff in the fibre.

The portion of feather used should be left intact, and not, as is often the case, have its edges cut or trimmed with scissors, as by such treatment it is deprived of its natural fringe, which if allowed to remain assists the fly in sitting lightly on the water.

The feathers of the ducks are best adapted for use in imitation of the May-fly's wing, and as long as those of the Summer Duck, also called Canadian Wood-Duck, are procurable, there is no necessity to resort to dyes, as the unbarred feathers of this bird are as nearly as possible of the correct shade, and are also of the right size and strength of fibre.

A pattern of this fly is described elsewhere, and from experience we can confidently recommend it. The pattern is a very good floater, and as we have many a time seen a fish select it while the real article was just as handy, that is quite good enough for us.

To dress a salmon-fly is easy work when once the correct method has been acquired, and, irrespective of

the matter of expense, we should certainly recommend anglers to tie their own, as it is interesting work, very useful in out-of-the-way places, and gives additional zest in catching fish.

If a man have the opportunity of collecting skins at home or abroad, or even should he, in the absence of such facility, have to purchase feathers at home, he can save much expense by dressing his own hooks; but, apart from this consideration, it is rather pretty work, and affords the ready means for working out individual ideas.

It is a mistake to dress many flies at a time for one's own use, as they soon get dull and lose the freshness they have when first turned out; a box is better than a book to keep them in, as the latter flattens them.

It is well worth any angler's while to dress flies, especially for salmon-fishing, as one frequently may require a size or particular pattern other than those in stock, or may lose the last of a pattern in a fish and have no means of supplying the deficiency other than one's own hands; but it was the following incident which determined us to learn to dress a hook:—

At quite the commencement of our experiences of salmon-fishing, a friend with whom we were staying kindly offered the use of his book, but knowing how jealous anglers are of their patterns, many of which have killed fish and have histories attached to them, we preferred to purchase a few at a stationer's shop in the town, said to have been dressed by a small tackle-maker



who had a den of his own close by ; and very nice they looked stuck in rows on a thick sheet of cartridge paper, all good local killers.

Well, we soon got to work, and after a few casts were fortunate in getting hold of a good fish, which, however, after about ten minutes' play, to our intense disgust parted company with us, the line coming back in that flowing wave that leaves no room for doubt.

Upon reeling-up we discovered that the gut-loop at the head of the fly had drawn clean out and was still attached to the gut-line. That tackle-maker deserved never to be forgiven, as the loop instead of being long enough to extend to the bend of the hook, was little more than  $\frac{3}{8}$  of an inch in length.

After this piece of bad luck we did not touch a fish for a week, and fully determined to dress our own hooks for the future, and have ever since done so, taking lessons in the first instance and practice during the remainder ; so we derived some benefit from the loss of what would have been our first salmon.

Anglers have, and we hope will continue to have, their own ideas as to the superiority of certain patterns in killing fish, and although perhaps, as the old saying goes, "Anglers are less easy to please than the fish," yet it cannot be denied that in certain rivers or lochs, or at particular times of the year, some patterns are to be preferred ; such being the case, we, in common with all anglers, have *our* particular views on the subject, and, without wishing to thrust them down anyone's throat,



will endeavour to explain them, or rather narrate the experiences which formed them.

It happened that having attained a certain proficiency in fly-dressing, we determined to make a large number of flies of both standard and fancy patterns, so after a winter's work had amassed such a quantity that we had to make an enormous book to hold them; and very enticing its pages looked adorned with various combinations of feather, silk, and tinsel, soon, alas! to become tarnished by the dressing in the felt with which the pages were foolishly faced.

This precious book contained over three hundred flies, arranged so that the wings of each specimen were undisturbed, and we can even now scarcely repress a smile as we record the work we put ourselves to in dragging it about from pool to pool throughout many a long day with the greatest perseverance.

In the course of time all the patterns were granted opportunities of "distinguished service," with the result that of the entire number only about a dozen have been perpetuated, which we find when dressed in three sizes meet all requirements upon various rivers, and it will require a good deal of persuasion to induce us to increase the number. The older the angler the fewer patterns does he require.

Anyone who has fished many rivers will have found that each has its favourite patterns and favourite dressings of patterns, and no doubt the flies locally adopted at the present time are the outcome of the

experience of generations of anglers, and as such are worthy of much respect; but inasmuch as most rivers adopt patterns embracing more or less the same combinations of materials, we are inclined to think that the size of the hook is of more importance than the colour of the fly, and that the smooth or rough dressing of the body is a matter of as much consideration as either.

A washy coloured or pale tinted fly we have never done any good with, so we presume they do not show up sufficiently in the water.

The rich coloured flies do the most execution; but in dressing fancy patterns the main point is to blend the colours of wings, hackles, and body so that the result may be one harmonious whole. Upon visiting a strange river with our usual patterns, we have generally been told that they were nice hooks, but of no particular value for that water, and have been advised to obtain local patterns; however, having ascertained the correct size of fly to use, we have generally done as well as, perhaps better than, other rods, so we are inclined to think that the importance of the pattern of fly in salmon-fishing may be exaggerated.

When fishing a strange river an angler of experience will soon select a fly of the right size and correct degree of brightness, in accordance with the state of the water and character of the natural surroundings.

He may, of course, not hit upon the correct thing, and can then try a change; but it is well to remember that a fly with which one can do nothing in the early

part of the day, may by alteration of sky and weather be later on converted into a real good killer.

A fish may be in a mood to take in the afternoon, whereas nothing would tempt him earlier; but at the same time it has frequently been our lot to hook a fish at some time of the day with a certain fly which previously had no charm for him, so it is possible that the change of light may have assisted in the result; at all events, if we had happened to have put on another fly we should in all probability have given the change credit for the catch, to the disadvantage of the original pattern.

The theory upon which our system of dressing hooks is based is simple in the extreme, viz.:—To make a harmonious blend of colours to attract the attention of fish, and when the colour of the water itself or its surroundings above and below the surface tend to obscure the fly, then colours must be introduced and the size of the hook increased to counteract this effect; and, as a rule, we strive to introduce some one bright and attractive feature in each fly, forming as it were the high light of the picture. This result may be achieved either by colour or contrast in accordance with the character of the fly. The willow boxes lined with cork, as used by entomologists, will be found excellent receptacles for flies, which can be stuck into the cork without waste of space and kept unruffled and unflattened.

We will next proceed with the method of dressing a hook, with a few practical hints which may be of use.

## CHAPTER XIII.

*HOW TO DRESS A SALMON-FLY.*

THE following implements will be found of assistance in dressing hooks :—

A table-vice, to be procured at any tool-makers for about 4s. Messrs. Hotzapfel, of Cockspur Street, Charing Cross, London, sell a more elaborate pattern, but they are costly.

Two pairs of strong tweezers, made for the purpose, viz. to hold the whipping-silk secure during the process of dressing.

A fine pointed pair of scissors.

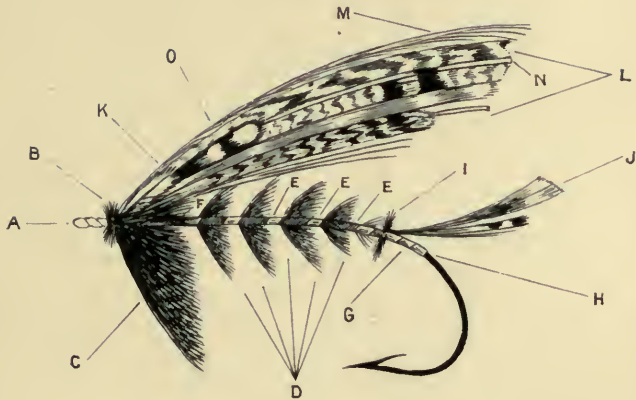
A few darning-needles.

A cabinet with plenty of drawers is handy to keep the fly-dressing materials, the feathers previously being packed in separate papers or boxes with plenty of camphor.

Strong card pill-boxes are good to keep tinsels from air and light.

Silk for whipping is best kept in wash-leather, and can be procured at the tackle-makers on long reels

## SALMON FLY.



A. Loop.  
 B. Head.  
 C. Shoulder Hackle.  
 D. Body Hackle.  
 E. Tinsel.

F. Body.  
 G. Silk Tag.  
 H. Tinsel.  
 I. Butt.  
 J. Tail.

K. Cheeks.  
 L. Wings.  
 M. Topping.  
 N. Horns.  
 O. Shoulder.





in its natural colour and state, to be doubled or trebled as occasion may require.

A piece of ordinary cobbler's-wax, which had better be melted down with a little bees'-wax to make it more workable.

A good wax can be made for use in dressing with delicate colours by melting together 2 oz. yellow resin,  $\frac{1}{4}$  oz. bleached beeswax,  $\frac{1}{4}$  oz. spermaceti.

Proportions of the two latter are added to make the resin workable, and after being melted and stirred the mixture should be poured while hot into a basin of clean cold water, and then as soon as possible be worked with the hands in the same manner as dough, which treatment clarifies it.

Should the result be too stiff it can be melted up again with more wax and spermaceti.

Brown hard varnish is best for fixing the whipped silk, which can be bought, or made by dissolving shellac in methylated spirit.

Having selected a hook of the required size test its strength and pliability or spring by sticking the point into a bit of soft deal, putting sufficient strain on the shank to achieve your purpose, then take a piece of double or treble twisted gut (we prefer the latter) of about the required length, and lastly a double thickness of the fine whipping-silk well waxed.

Holding the hook either in the hand or vice three or four turns of the waxed silk should be wound up the naked hook from the bend to shoulder, thus making it

impossible for the gut to draw out when whipped on; then the gut should be doubled and placed in position against the hook, so that the loop or eye shall project about an eighth of an inch beyond it, but the length of the loop should vary in proportion to the size of hook. The whipping-silk, which is hanging with tweezers attached to keep it in position, can now be wound round the hook and gut, commencing from a point about an eighth of an inch from the head end of the hook, and terminating at the bend just above where the tinsel and silk tag will afterwards be fixed.

By cutting off the several strands of the treble gut at different distances the whipping can be made to taper, which is desirable. The whipping is commenced below the head of the hook, so as to render that part as little bulky as possible by the time the wings shall be fixed.

Next give the whipping a thin coat of varnish and let it dry, leaving the whipping-silk hanging fixed by a half-hitch.

Select your tinsel for tag and body, silk for ditto, tail-feathers, harl for butt, body and shoulder hackles, and, lastly, wing-feathers and topping, placing them on a sheet of white paper.

To form the tag take the tinsel and give it three or four turns round the hook, crossing it over itself to secure the lower end; then do the same with the tag silk, which secures the top end of the tinsel; next take



HACKLES AND TINSELS.





DOUBLED HACKLE.



HACKLE.

HALF STRIPPED HACKLE.



a turn with the waxed silk and secure with a half-hitch, cutting off the ends of tinsel and silk tags, thus complete.

Now take your tail-feathers and fix them on the top of the hook by a few turns and half-hitch of waxed silk, covering the joint by the butt of ostrich or peacock harl, which should be secured in same manner.

To get the harl to lie nicely requires some practice ; to this end it is advisable, while winding on, to slightly roll it between the fingers so as to give the fibres the least set backwards.

Having selected a hackle of the required colour and length of fibre, draw the fingers up it from point to butt, so as to separate the fibres and make them stand out ; then should a single hackle be required one side must be stripped off.

Where the hackle is required double, *i. e.* in its entirety, the fibres should be separated as above and then squeezed flat together with the fingers as in the drawing.

Next take the body-hackle and tinsel, and whip them on with a turn or two of the waxed silk (which is still hanging), the hackle being above the tinsel, and the long ends of both pointing towards the tail of the fly, and, for convenience, pass the waxed silk up the body of hook and secure it for the time being between the gut-loop and head of the iron. Take your body-silk, give it a turn over itself, at the same time concealing the whipping of tinsel, &c., then wind it smoothly up

to the shoulder of the fly, to a point below the space to be later on occupied by the shoulder-hackle, and fix it with a turn of the waxed silk, which is now released.

To get the silk evenly on, it can be flattened out over a needle as it is wound up the hook.

Now take the tinsel and incline it over towards the head of hook, flattening the bend with the thumb-nail, and wind on over the silk body in good bold coils an equal distance apart, securing the end with a turn of waxed silk, then do likewise with the hackle, laying it close behind the tinsel for effect and protection.

There is a knack in laying on a hackle which is not to be acquired in a moment, but if it be rolled in the fingers during its progress up the hook, in the same manner as the harl of the butt, it will be found to acquire the correct set.

The next item is the shoulder-hackle, which having been prepared in the same manner as that for the body, should be wound on itself, as it were, at a point on the hook so as to cover the whipping of body-silk, tinsel, and hackle, and then secured with a turn or two and half-hitch of the waxed silk, the only portion of the hook now bare being that left for the wings. At this point we generally give the work a touch of varnish.

All that now remains is to attach the wings, so having selected the required feathers, and made up the two wings separately (in the case of a mixed wing-fly), they should be put together, placed in position on the hook, and then secured with two or three turns of silk.



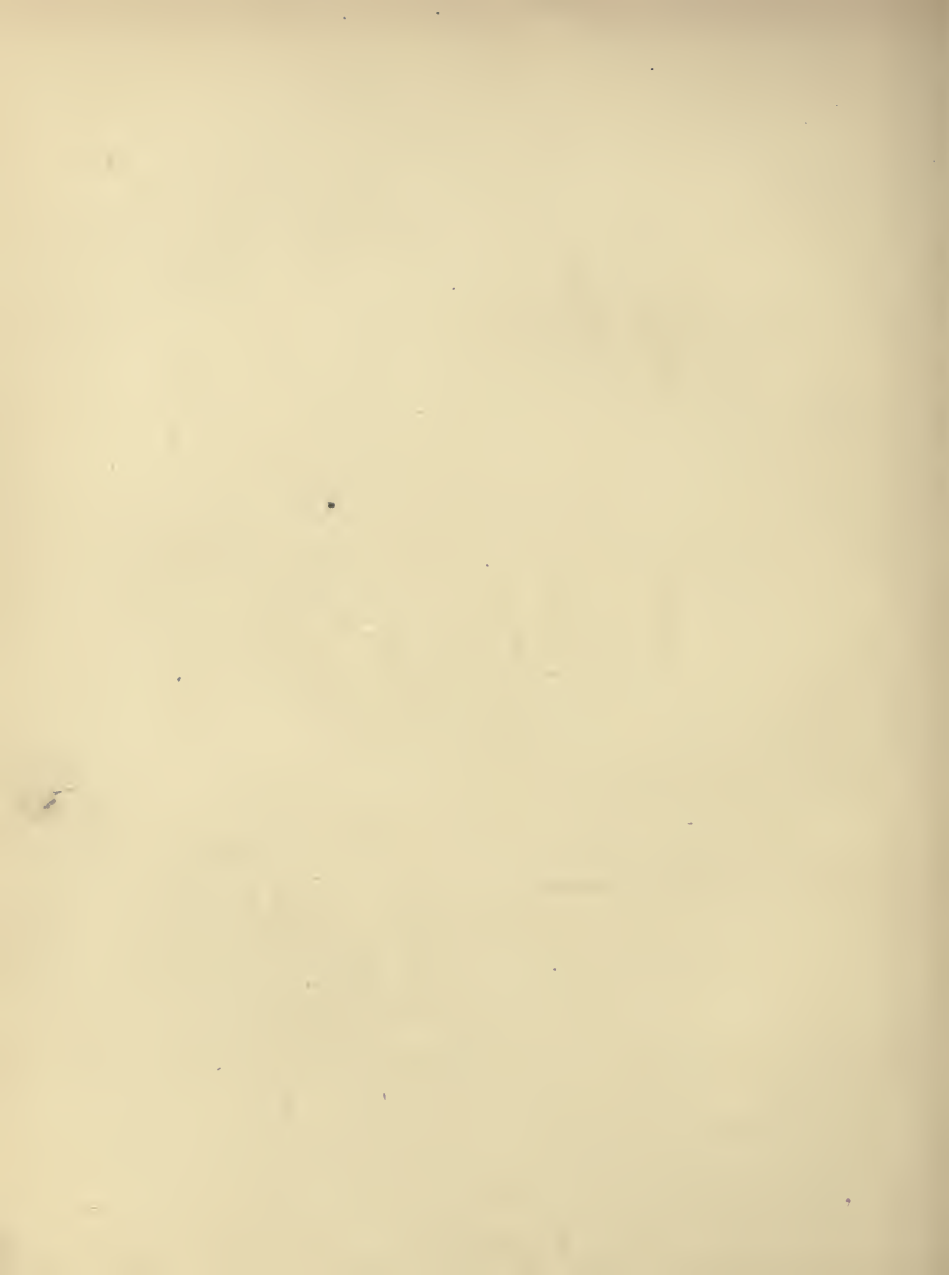
PLAIN HACKLE.



JOINTED HACKLE.



INDIAN CROW-JOINTED HACKLE.



It will possibly now be found requisite to coax the fibres a bit, until they are all upon good terms with each other, and do not stare, then they may be finally secured with a few turns and a couple of half-hitches of the waxed silk.

Some prefer a turn or two of ostrich harl over the whipping as a finish, which it certainly is ; but we object to it for two reasons, as it increases the size of the head, which is undesirable, being apt to make a set-off in the water, and, secondly, after much use the harl is certain to become loose and frayed.

It only remains now to give the head two coats of varnish, and allow it to thoroughly dry and set hard before use.

Should a topping be required it must be fixed before the wings are finally fastened, and whipped in with them.

The materials used in fly-dressing, especially silks and tinsels, should be fingered as little as possible, and such work as waxing silk and whipping gut to hooks had better be done with gloves on if immediately afterwards it be intended to dress hooks.

The body of the fly should be gradually tapered from head to tail.

#### *Pig's Wool or Seal-Fur Body.*

A considerable amount of practice is requisite to enable the dresser to obtain a satisfactory result with these materials, the latter being by far the easier of the

two to work, for which reason perhaps it is in more general use than pig's wool, which we much prefer, except for small flies, as it is far more brilliant in the water and the fibres well assert themselves.

To prepare pig's wool, which can be purchased dyed in all shades, it is necessary to first clear it of the very coarse hairs and then break the remainder up in the fingers until the fragments are of required length, say in a medium size fly about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch, or longer for use towards the shoulder of the fly.

To dress the body—having whipped on the tinsel and hackle, well wax the whipping-silk, roll the pig's wool out into thin lengths for use near the tail and thicker for above, then spin them on to the silk, and wind it up the body of the hook until it be covered, fixing with a half-hitch.

Wind on the tinsel and hackle in usual manner and make fast, then with a needle pick out the hairs of the wool between the coils of tinsel, so that the whole tapers gradually from shoulder to tail. Seal's fur will not require much breaking up.

#### *To fix a Single Wing.*

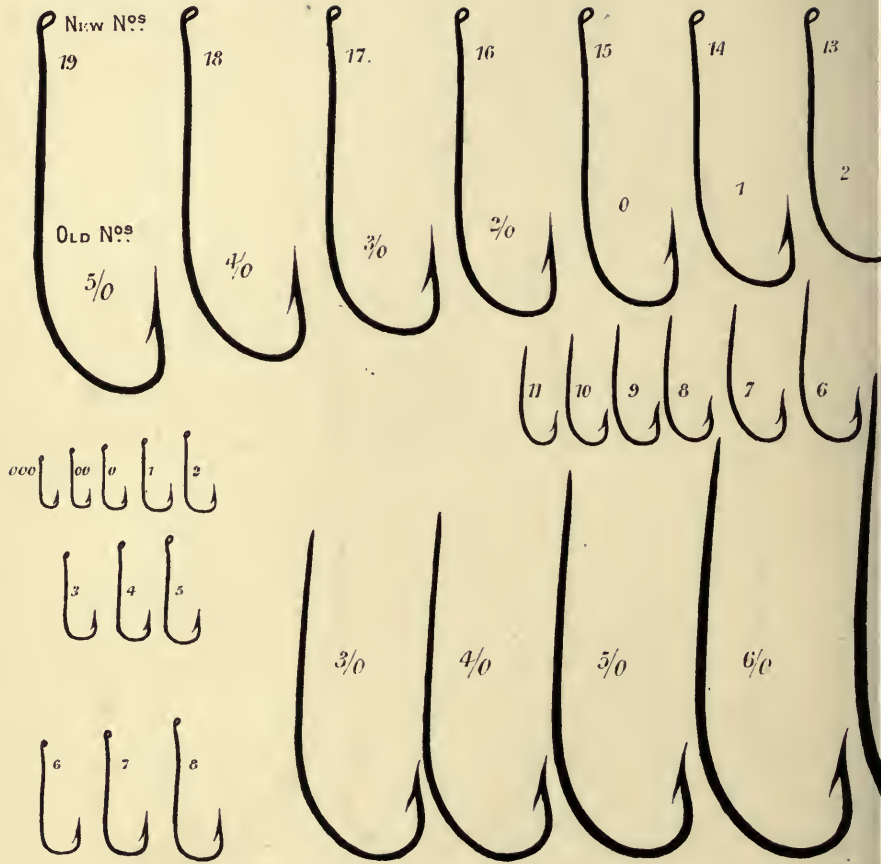
It is much more difficult to fix a single-wing fly than a mixed wing, as the single strip of feather which forms each wing is very liable to split.

Unless the slips are taken from the centre tail-feather, they should be cut from feathers on different sides of the tail, or, in the case of wing-feathers, from



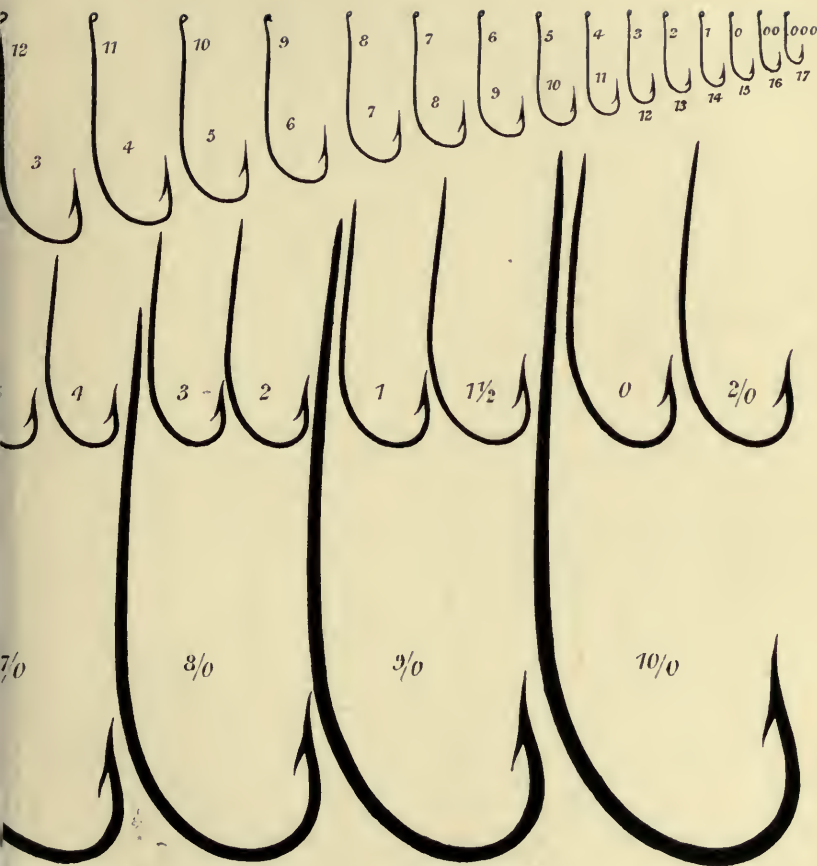


PENNELL-LIMERICK.



PENNELL-SNECK.

S.



IMERICK.

LITH.



different wings, otherwise a good set will not be obtained.

Having cut off the slips, put them together in the fingers in the position they will be required to lie on the hook, then compress the ends of the fibres, and place them on the top of the shank, secure them slightly with a couple of turns of silk, humour them into the required set, and finally secure with a few turns and a couple of half-hitches, then well varnish.

#### *To Fix a Topping.*

The wings having been fairly well fixed, take the topping which has been stripped of the fluffy white fibres at the quill, and cut off the latter to the required length, then nip the quill with the thumb-nail just above the point which the whipping will cover, otherwise the topping will sit too flat on the wing. Next, having taken a couple of turns with the whipping, finally arrange the set of the topping to your satisfaction and secure in usual manner, trimming the head with a pair of scissors, and varnish. Cheeks and horns are fixed in a similar manner.

#### *Jointed Body-Hackle.*

The hackle, whether entire or half stripped, should be prepared in usual manner, whipped on and wound over itself in the same manner as the shoulder-hackle.

## CHAPTER XIV.

*ORIGINAL PATTERNS OF SALMON-FLIES.*

THE following 12 patterns of salmon-flies have been alluded to in a previous chapter. They were dressed, as before explained, without reference to standard or existing patterns, and have all killed many fish. We dress each pattern in three sizes.

- No. 1. Tag. Gold wire or thread, purple silk.  
 Tail. Golden Pheasant topping.  
 Butt. Black Ostrich harl.  
 Body. Jointed in three divisions of equal length of yellow, orange, and red floss silk (in order from tail). Gold tinsel from butt to head.  
 Hackle. In three joints, yellow, orange, and red.  
 Shoulder-hackle. Black hackle red at points.  
 Wings. Mottled brown Turkey, grey Turkey, Golden Pheasant tail, dark Mallard, 4 narrow slips of blue-dyed Swan, 2 broad slips of dun Turkey, 4 fibres Peacock harl.



Nº 1 & VARIETY.







Nº 3.



Nº 4.

Cheeks. Two bold slips of barred feather of Summer Duck extending well up the fly.

This pattern has been most successful in all states of water, so much so that amongst friends it has gained the name of "the Undefeated."

No. 2. Tag. Gold tinsel thread and yellow silk.

Tail. Golden Pheasant topping.

Butt. Black Ostrich harl.

Body. 1/3rd orange floss silk, 2/3rds dark blue silk and gold tinsel.

Hackle. Blue Cock's (dyed).

Shoulder-hackle. Blue Cock's (dyed).

Wings (Mixed). Of light Mallard, brown mottled Turkey, Golden Pheasant tail, Gallina, yellow dyed Swan.

Topping. Golden Pheasant.

This is a very good pattern.

No. 3. Tag. Silver tinsel.

Tail. Yellow floss silk.

Body. Pale blue silk ; silver tinsel.

Body-hackle. Pale blue.

Shoulder-hackle. Reddy brown.

Wings (Mixed). Light Mallard, Golden Pheasant tail, a few fibres of yellow dyed Swan, a couple of sprigs of Golden Pheasant rump.

This is especially good for thin water.

- No. 4. Tag. Gold tinsel thread, yellow floss silk.  
Tail. Sprig of Golden Pheasant rump.  
Butt. Black Ostrich harl.  
Body. Yellow floss silk, black hackle, gold tinsel.  
Shoulder-hackle. Black.  
Wings. Golden Pheasant tail, broad slip of dun Turkey, two wide slips of barred Summer Duck.  
Topping. Golden Pheasant.  
Cheeks. Kingfisher.  
Head. Black Ostrich harl.
- No. 5. Tag. Gold tinsel thread, yellow floss silk.  
Tail. Golden Pheasant topping.  
Butt. Black Ostrich harl.  
Body. Dark blue floss silk, brown hackle light in colour towards the points, silver tinsel and silver thread together.  
Shoulder-hackle. Same as body.  
Wings (Mixed). Grey Turkey, Bustard (Indian), Golden Pheasant tail and rump, unbarred Summer Duck, and red dyed Swan.  
Horns. Blue and red Macaw.  
Topping. Golden Pheasant.  
Head. Black worsted.



Nº 5.



Nº 6.



- No. 6. Tag. Gold tinsel thread.  
 Tail. Golden Pheasant tippet, and one small slip  
 each of red and blue dyed Swan.  
 Butt. Black Ostrich harl.  
 Body. Four turns of yellow floss silk, the re-  
 mainder in three equal divisions of  
 pale blue, scarlet and black pig's  
 wool. Gold or silver tinsel.  
 Hackle. Fiery brown.  
 Shoulder-hackle. Dark grey. Flat oval gold  
 tinsel braid.  
 Wings (Mixed). Golden Pheasant tippet,  
 Mallard, Golden Pheasant tail, 2 slips  
 Dun Turkey or, better still, of Glead  
 Hawk, Gallina, 2 slips grey Turkey,  
 2 slips each yellow and blue dyed  
 Swan.  
 Head. Black worsted.

- No. 7. Tag. Gold tinsel.  
 Tail. Full whisp of orange pig's wool.  
 Body. Lower half orange pig's wool, upper  
 half brown pig's wool. Gold tinsel.  
 Hackle and Shoulder-hackle. Brown.  
 Wings : Under. Dark green Mallard.  
 Upper. Brown or dun Turkey, whitish  
 at tips.

No. 8. Tag. Gold tinsel thread.  
 Tail. Unbarred Summer Duck, Golden Pheasant tippet and topping.  
 Body : Lower half. Orange pig's wool.  
           Upper half. Bright red do. Gold tinsel.  
 Body-hackle. From middle to shoulder dark red. Broad gold tinsel.  
 Shoulder-hackle. Fiery brown.  
 Wings (Mixed). Dark brown Turkey, mottled on lower half.

No. 9. Tag. Gold tinsel thread.  
 Tail. Golden Pheasant topping.  
 Body : Lowest third. Orange pig's wool.  
           Upper two thirds. Brown do. Gold tinsel.  
 Hackle. Light red.  
 Shoulder-hackle. Ditto.  
 Wings. Glead Hawk.

No. 10. Tag. Silver tinsel.  
 Tail. Golden Pheasant tippet.  
 Body. 2 turns yellow pig's wool.  
       2 do. red do.  
       Remainder green do.  
 Hackle. Green.  
 Tinsel. Broad silver.  
 Shoulder-hackle. Light brown.



Nº 12.





Wings : Under. Teal.  
Upper. Boldly mottled grey Turkey.  
2 small slips red dyed Swan.

No. 11. Tag. Gold tinsel.  
Tail. Yellow floss silk.  
Body. Three turns orange pig's wool.  
Remainder black do. Gold tinsel.  
Hackle and Shoulder-hackle. Light reddy  
brown.  
Wings (Mixed). Golden Pheasant tail, Bus-  
tard, grey Turkey, white and red  
Swan, 2 wide slips of Glead Hawk.

No. 12. Bull Dog (old pattern revived).  
Tag. Gold tinsel thread, and red floss silk.  
Tail. Golden Pheasant topping and one King-  
fisher feather.  
Butt. Black Ostrich harl.  
Body.  $\frac{2}{3}$ rds up from tail medium-sized silver  
tinsel braid, then a butt of black  
Ostrich harl, remainder blue floss  
silk and silver tinsel; two Golden  
Pheasant toppings introduced behind  
the 2nd harl butt, blue dyed Cock's  
hackle over the blue silk portion of  
the body.  
Shoulder-hackle. Blue dyed Cock's hackle,  
and over it a Teal feather wound as  
a hackle.

- Under Wings. Two bold sprigs of Golden Pheasant tippet.
- Wings. Four strips of black dyed Swan and yellow dyed Swan put together so as to form stripes, *i.e.* alternately, next a bold sprig of Mallard on each side.
- Cheek. A Jungle-cock feather, and over it a Kingfisher.
- Head. Black Ostrich harl.
- No. 13. Tag. Gold tinsel.
- Tail. Teal and Golden Pheasant rump.
- Body. Bright red pig's wool and gold tinsel, red hackle.
- Wings. Brown mottled Turkey.
- Shoulder-hackle. Teal, dressed *over* the wings.
- No. 14. Tag. Gold tinsel blue silk.
- Tail. G. Ph. tippet and Summer Duck.
- Butt. Peacock harl.
- Body. Half of round silver braid, then purple silk and orange silk, gold tinsel.
- Hackle. Blue, and then brown.
- Shoulder-hackle. Gallina.
- Wings. 2 broad strips red Macaw.  
4 do. do. Glead Hawk.  
2 stripes (3 fibres each) of blue and yellow Macaw.  
2 broad strips Argus Pheasant.
- N.B. In these patterns the heads may be omitted.  
In default of Glead Hawk, use Dun Turkey.

Nº 13.



Nº 14.



CHAPTER XV.

*FEATHERS CHIEFLY REQUIRED IN DRESSING HOOKS.*

*Hackles (for) :*

Cock's hackles dyed in various colours.

Game Cock.

Grey Domestic Hen, black, and black tipped with red.

Teal, Mallard, and Pintail (side feathers).

Heron, Jay, Gallina, Bittern, Bustard.

*Wing and Tail (for) :*

Pheasant, Golden, Silver, tail, rump, tippet and toppings, Common Pheasant, Argus, Himalayan, and Amherst.

Swan, Turkey, Mallard, Sheldrake, Teal, Pintail, and Wood or Summer Duck, Shoveller.

Gallina, Partridge, Grouse, Snipe, Woodcock, Golden Plover, Bittern, Bustard, Glead Hawk, Owl, Kingfisher, Indian Crow, yellow and red, Jungle-Cock, Macaws, Ostrich, Peacock.

Small Birds: Wren, Thrush, Fieldfare, Water-Heu, Rail, Starling, Dotterel, Coot, Ouzel, &c.

## CHAPTER XVI.

*THE INGLORIOUS DEATH OF A THAMES TROUT.*

WHILE carelessly strolling with a friend one lovely summer's morning in July along the towing-path of Old Father Thames, somewhere about midway between Oxford and London, our attention was suddenly attracted by the sight of five fish lying motionless in shallow water within a few feet of the bank, as yet totally unconscious of our approach.

Upon drawing cautiously nearer to them, needless to say from below stream, we were somewhat astonished to find that they were trout, as although in the less frequented reaches of the upper Thames, during the early spring months, trout of various sizes may frequently be observed feeding in close proximity to the banks, it is by no means a common occurrence to find them in a similar position so late as July, as by this time of year they have generally discarded such open spots, and have drawn up to the deeper waters near the weirs, where they can enjoy greater privacy and a more aerated stream, from which it is not their custom to

wander, except during the evening, until early morn in quest of food.

The bank upon which we stood was about five feet high, and by crawling along, keeping ourselves the while concealed in the long coarse grasses growing on its edge, we contrived to get almost immediately over them, and peering through the cover could almost count the brightly coloured spots on their backs and sides, over which scarce six inches of water flowed, clear as the proverbial crystal, lighted up by the midday July sun.

The two larger fish of the party were apparently of about 4 lb. weight apiece, the other three considerably less ; but they were all beautifully spotted with a depth of colour which makes the Thames trout perhaps the handsomest of his species, and at the same time instils the angler with an insatiable curiosity to view their beauties under the altered conditions afforded by a side position with a background of green herbage. We observed them thus for half an hour or more, and except when a foot passenger, boat, or launch passed by, they scarcely stirred, but when so disturbed they would content themselves with leisurely dropping back and out into the deeper water, to return immediately the disturbance had passed away.

The reason of their selection of this particuar spot was not immediately apparent, in fact under existing conditions it appeared a most unlikely resort ; but as several bleak were swimming about close by, heed-



less of danger, seemingly as indifferent to the trouts' proximity as the trout were to theirs, it evidently was not for feeding purposes.

However, it doubtless was a favourite resort, for when scared away from time to time, as soon as the coast was again clear they invariably returned, assuming the same relative positions.

Alongside of the towing-path grew a hedge, at the foot of which ran a deep ditch, and during an excursion of the fish into the deep water, we put our heads over the bank and discovered that an earthenware drain-pipe discharged into the river the overflow from the ditch, the pipe being laid under the towing-path.

The flow of water was so small that its course was not evident in the main stream, and hitherto the overhanging bank had concealed the projecting pipe from view; however, we soon ascertained that the temperature of the water it discharged was much lower than that of the main stream, on account of the ditch being deep and shaded from the sun, which evidently was what gave the spot a peculiar charm from a trouty point of view.

Now the observation of trout within easy reach may possibly suggest the idea of making a more intimate acquaintance, and this was exactly what occurred to us; but as we had with us no tackle of any description, we had to be content with simply marking them down for future use, so left them with the firm resolve that they must come out of that upon the earliest opportunity.

For some few days previous to this occurrence we had been trying for trout further up the river with fly, bleak, minnow, and loach, but our efforts were too clumsy or the fish too alert, as the result was *nil*; although a trout of about 10 lb., at Pangbourne, did on one occasion actually condescend to charge from the middle of the river at the loach, only to return, alas! when he got his nose within a few inches of the bait; so this was a particularly unfortunate time for any trout to fall in with us, as revenge is sweet, even to anglers, and more especially so when smarting under the effect of disappointment and defeat.

Upon the following day, which was as hot as the previous, and it can be real hot at times in the Thames Valley, we sallied forth upon our errand of destruction armed with two fly-rods and a spinning-rod, also the finest gut in our possession, and the firmest intention to do our utmost to get 6 to 4 the best of our scaly friends.

We arrived at the place and were pleased to find the fish all there in their old familiar positions, as if we had left them but an hour ago; the only difference being that they were a trifle further out in the stream, so as to get the full benefit of the water which was running rather more freely from the pipe.

While crouching on the bank a white cabbage butterfly settled on the grass in front of us, which we managed to secure, and having given him or her (we are not well versed in the sex of butterflies) a

friendly nip, as an experiment flicked him towards the fish, and luckily he fell on to the water about a foot ahead of the largest trout, whose privilege it appeared was to occupy the foremost position.

The insect made a slight flutter with his wings, to which the trout responded by a movement of the head, then quietly sailed up and sucked him in. That insect was no more. He had hitherto probably had no experience of the flavour of cabbage butterflies, but, judging by the manner in which he subsequently kept his eye on the surface, the taste for such a delicacy was soon acquired.

There is, as the sequel proved, a great difference between an artificial fly attached to a line and the natural insect that can flutter his wings with discretion, or, as in this instance, with the reverse, for cast as best we might up stream they would have nought with us. So we then, after giving them a rest, tried spinning with natural and artificial bait, both from the bank and punt in the middle of the river, but with no good result, for as soon as the instrument of torture came too near in accordance with their ideas of the fitness of things, they merely protested in the most effectual way by dropping out into deeper water.

Matters were not now looking so rosy, and 10 to 1 on the trout would have been offered in vain, when suddenly our companion looked at us, and we at him, and it was evident the same fell design had occurred to both, but neither dared speak the word in

his mind. That word, to our shame be it told, was "Wum!" But given two novices at worm-hunting on a baking hot day and a clay bank as hard as a brickbat, it is far easier to put one's tongue on the word than one's hand on the "Wum"; and so it turned out with us, for hunt as we might, not a vestige of worm could we find; indeed, we were on the point of giving it up, when an acquaintance who was in the habit of fishing for barbel came in sight with his punt from below stream.

He sympathized with us in our difficulties, and came to our relief in a practical manner, saying, "Try one of these, just got 'em from Nottingham this morning;" so, without wishing to cast the blame of this deed of darkness upon shoulders other than our own, his offer decided the question of right or wrong.

By these remarks be it not understood that we have any wish to cast a slight upon worm-fishing proper—on the contrary, as the worm is the right bait with which to take certain fish just as the fly or live-bait is for others; but we certainly are of opinion that to take any of the *Salmo* species with the fly is a far more sporting proceeding than with any other bait.

We are quite prepared to hear it argued that worm-fishing for trout in thin clear water is as difficult, or more so, than casting the artificial fly; and we are ready to grant that it is, but at the same time cannot alter our views on the subject.

To continue,—we next put up one of the fly-rods,

and baited the hook with as enticing a worm as ever hailed from the town of pretty lace and ladies; then there only remained to place it before the fish, which was no easy matter, as although we ourselves were out of sight, they would not stand the rod, but retired into mid-stream whenever it appeared.

A happy thought struck us, so when the next passing object caused their retirement to the depths, we, in their absence, projected the other rod without line over the bank; and although a bit suspicious at first, we were delighted to find that they soon became accustomed to it, resuming their usual positions.

Things now remained for a bit *in statu quo*, and we could not advance matters, until a passing boat scared the trout away for a while, giving us the opportunity to substitute the rod with baited line in place of the bare rod. This we did, making the bait to fall about a foot in front of the spot to which they were soon to return, and as it fell the disturbance caused in the water washed the sand up so as to conceal the worm.

We next pulled a few yards of line off the reel and took up our positions well behind the fishes' haunt, and had not long to wait before they returned.

After a while we put the slightest tension on the line, which had the desired effect of discovering the worm, which at the most opportune moment gave a wag of his head or tail, whichever it may have been (to the uninitiated there is a considerable resemblance in



the beginning and end of a worm), and attracted the attention of the foremost and largest trout.

Without a moment's hesitation he made a dash, gave it with his head two or three savage shakes, then worm and hook disappeared.

He was on the point of turning round to regain his position, when his progress was arrested by a gentle strike of the rod, which by this time was in hand, and he learnt, too late, alas ! that he had been deceived.

Giving up the game as lost just then, however, was far from his intention, so he rushed straight out into mid-stream, and when there commenced to jump and lash out on the surface with both head and tail to such an extent that we were in fear for our tackle; but he was obliged to give in eventually, and by the aid of a landing-net a very pretty fish of about 4 lb. weight adorned the bank.

The fish was taken up stream as soon as hooked, so as not to disturb the others more than could be helped, who remained in their positions, but were very shy; and as we could do nothing with them, we eventually turned it up for the day.

Although, perhaps, it may be open to argument that the circumstances warranted the means, yet we must confess that the satisfaction of grassing this trout was not one tenth part as great as if we had caught him with the legitimate and sportsmanlike fly, and we felt we had played him rather a shabby trick.

Considering the numbers of trout which have been

turned down in the Thames, it is rather surprising that more are not taken ; although, of course, many under-sized fish are captured and returned during a season. From our experience, we would say that the Thames has not sufficient fast-running streams of medium depth and gravel bottom to constitute it a favourable river for the habitation of medium-sized trout, while the large number of jack and pike must play sad havoc in their ranks.

There is one little bit of water on the Thames which always takes our fancy for trout-fishing, viz. the private water cut off from the main stream by weir sluices and running parallel with the cutting above Cookham Lock ; but we hear the fish are very shy and have every disinclination for the fly.

Most reaches of the upper Thames contain a trout or two, which can be observed feeding about dusk or early in the morning, but they are bad to get ; yet when one does land a fish, great is the reward.

The increase in the number of pleasure-boats during the last five-and-twenty years, and the continual churning up of the water and washing away of the banks by the angler's curse, the steam or electric launch's propeller, has made a wonderful difference in Thames angling ; so much so, that in our days it is almost useless to attempt it in the summer season between Friday and Tuesday.

In the days gone by, when Skindle used to place your soup on the table with his own hands, the man who went down to Taplow on a Sunday by the ten



o'clock train was considered at least energetic; then the two o'clock train came into fashion, and now we get down in time for dinner. *Tempora mutantur.*

The Thames gives amusement and sport to a vast number of anglers who for various reasons have no better field; and as most of them have duties to perform during the week, Sunday is generally regarded as a fishing-day on the suburban rivers in the south, in contrast to the custom in the north of England and Scotland, where if such practices were indulged in they probably would soon be relinquished.

The Thames angler, as a rule, gets little sympathy shown him by the occupants of pleasure craft, and he who fishes from the bank has a poorish time of it, being perpetually obliged to lift his line from the water to avoid oars, sculls, towing-lines, or punt-poles, which continually pass in dangerous proximity to his tackle.

As pleasure-seekers on the Thames will contain few anglers in their ranks, no doubt this inconvenience to bank-fishers is caused more from thoughtless ignorance than any wilful desire to annoy; so if their attention were drawn to the matter, we cannot but think that the result would be beneficial to anglers.

When men are really *rowing* up under the towing-path, a divergence into the stream to avoid an angler's tackle upsets the boat, or rather the rowing, for a few minutes; and when such courtesy is shown, it should be acknowledged, which is not always the case—perhaps the angler has not recovered from astonishment before the boat has passed by.

## CHAPTER XVII.

*THE END OF THE SEASON.*

“COME along, old chap, there are only five days more this year, so let’s make the most of them.” Such were our words to a brother fisher a few days before the close of the salmon-season.

Now the last few days of the angling season are to the fisher very much the same as the Manchester November Handicap is to the racing man, although the latter has a distinct advantage, in that he, after the fashion of the busy bee, lays up, or at least is credited with laying up, his winter’s keep (so at least say the Journals that weave the word Sport into their titles); whereas the poor angler can only hope to store up in his memory a few reminiscences to be recalled at the fireside during the winter evenings.

To continue: No, it could not be managed, business and a hundred other obstacles came in the way—it is really marvellous the amount of application a man may have for business when there is a job on hand he is not over keen about. However, in this instance, after a deal of persuasion, play, wonderful to relate,

took precedence of work, and within a couple of hours we both were in the train on a fifty-mile ride terminating with a seven miles' drive in place of a *hors d'œuvre* at the commencement of dinner.

Our quarters were ready and likewise a good square meal, which was not amiss; and by a slice of luck our arrangements, which were all made by wire, came off to the letter.

We had telegraphed to London for new waders and brogues, to the Inn for rooms and dinner, to a friend in a neighbouring town for licences and tickets, to a tackle-maker for casts, to the station-master to order a trap, and, strange to say, everything went right without hitch of any sort, which we felt bound to accept as an omen of good luck.

The water, we had previously ascertained, was in pretty good order; and although information on this subject is sometimes rather misleading, especially when it happens to be supplied by interested parties, we found in this instance it was pretty correct, as although decidedly on the big side, the colour in all probability would be good the next day; so after our meal we set to work in getting our rods and tackle in order, and as the new waders were not to arrive until the morrow we took the precaution of testing the old pair by the aid of the pump, which was fortunate, as they "leaked" terribly, so the remainder of the evening was passed in the manipulation of them, liquid india-rubber and pieces of an old sponge bag, the disagreeable odour

thus generated being neutralized by a drop or two of old Scotch.

The small punctures which "let in" had doubtless been made by thorns picked up while walking through woods, &c., the thorns themselves, in some instances, even remaining fixed in the texture. Moral: "'Ware Thorns."

Casts were next soaked and tested equal to landing anything under the weight of a full-sized sturgeon; it is surprising what little weight is in reality put upon a line by an object floating in the water, as can be proved by attaching a steelyard to a log and then attaching the cast to the former while getting a second person to read the indicator.

The Castleconnells were taken from the cases and the two bottom joints spliced up, so as to save time in the morning; then, "Yes, thanks, just a wee drop more!" and so off to the blankets by 10.30.

"Six o'clock, gentlemen!" "Right!" and out we turned, firmly of opinion that getting out of a warm bed at an early hour was not all joy on a cold November morning; but once on one's feet that is a thing of the past, and by the time we had shaken into our kits (no shaving-time allowed) the day was fairly breaking; then, having stowed away as much ham and eggs as we conveniently could at one sitting, we set off on our walk of a mile to the river. There is nothing like a brisk walk before a day's fishing, especially when it entails wading, as the circulation is raised for the day;

so the angler should not allow himself to accept a lift, unless the distance be beyond a walk, then he had better do the last mile or so on foot if he wish to wade in comfort.

The best plan is to carry the waders and put them on when the pool is reached, as by so doing the walk is made easier and the waders kept dry ; whereas, should the waders be walked in, heat and perspiration are generated, to be condensed upon entry of the cold water ; wear and tear of the waders is also avoided.

No time is lost by this method, and if the cast be placed to soak while the waders are being put on, it will be fit to hold a fish should the angler chance to hook one early on.

Waders on, we set to work with a cast of three yards, the last being of single gut, and a rather large size fly, a variation of our pattern No. 12, but to all intents and purposes the same.

This, it will be admitted, is not a showy fly, although doubtless the gold tinsel lights it up a bit ; but we have killed fish with it after it has been dressed a couple of years and the tinsel has become discoloured, so it may be that the shoulder-hackle, being dressed over the wings, makes it show well.

Thus we started casting at the head of the pool in strong rough water, the other rod commencing lower down towards the tail, where the stream ran slower and deeper, holding as a rule large fish, especially at this time of year.



The upper rod had fished down about 20 yds., and now was casting over some large sunken rocks indicated by a slight swirl on the surface of the water; the fly had worked about three quarters round, when it was held at a point, the rod instantly raised, and something struck which gave two tugs in return, revealing the fact that it was no fixture. He replied to the pressure with a real good leap into the air, showing himself to be a fresh-run fish of apparently about 16 lb. weight, then fell back with a smack into the water, happily well clear of the line, and immediately made a grand rush straight across the stream, running out about 40 yards of line, and there remained for some little time until the pressure of the rod began to tell somewhat upon him, then by gradually reeling-up we got him, comparatively speaking, under control within about 20 yds. of the bank.

Up to this point we had been standing up to our middle in water, so we took advantage of this, the first opportunity, to get out on to the bank, which, as it happened, was no very easy job, as at this spot it was rocky and high above the water-level.

The fish was on his best behaviour during this manœuvre, which, by-the-bye, should always be effected deliberately (as a sudden jerk caused by a slip may be costly), and remained quiet for ten minutes or so, until getting tired of inaction we applied extra pressure, to which he responded by gently shifting up stream, a move we by no means appreciated, as just above



some very high willow bushes grew on the bank, and in keeping pace with the fish it was a matter of considerable difficulty to pass the line over them.

It was a bit of a struggle, but the line kept clear as higher and higher he ploughed his way right into the rough broken water, until its force and the pressure of the rod combined obliged him to drop back past the willows again and seek rest in his favourite haunt.

When a fish is out in strange water one can mind him pretty well, but when he returns to his own run it is time to look out for squalls, as he is pretty sure to be bent on some mischief.

In this instance we could tell by the movement of the line that he was rubbing his jaws against a rock, in the endeavour to get quit of the hook, so we took hard hold of him, with the result that he again sought the rough water, which we did not so much mind, as by now we were getting quite accustomed to the willows.

Three times he passed and repassed those bushes and we were getting pretty sick of the job, when a new device occurred to him, and off he rushed about 30 yds., having in all not less than 50 yds. of line out, then rose to the surface showing the entire length of his body and lashed out with head and tail so continuously that we fully expected something must part.

It was a case of "Hold hard, good tackle!" and fortunately hold hard it did, in spite of his having fallen right across the cast more than once; and here we may remark that when a fish shakes and jags in this manner

at the line, it is a good plan to take the rod in both hands, one high up and the other below the reel, the rod being held quite clear of the body, by this means the jar on the line is not so great as if the butt of the rod were held against the groin.

Finding these tactics of no avail, and being no doubt somewhat exhausted by his efforts, he once more returned to the middle of the stream and endeavoured to settle down for further resistance; but here he was out in his calculations, as he had taken too much out of himself to be able to resist the power of the rod, and began to roll in a way that foretold the end was not far off; however, he gallantly pulled himself together for one more effort, but the now gradually shortening line was more than he could combat as it steadily hauled him to bank.

Our friend incautiously showed himself while approaching to use the gaff, and even then the fish made a short run, his last, as soon he was towed to the bank and the gaff did its work—although so exhausted was he, that, had the nature of the bank permitted, he might easily have been tailed.

We weighed her, a clean-run hen fish of 18 lb., as bright as the proverbial new shilling; and although not a large fish, and killed as late as November, we cannot recollect having fought a gamer one during the 40 minutes' sport she gave us.

After a short rest and a pipe we continued to fish down, and were casting in a bit of a swirl, when a big

fish came up and seized the fly clean off the surface, more after the manner in which a duck takes a piece of bread.

He had probably seen the fly the previous cast and was ready waiting for the next. When he felt the hook he turned up, showing himself to be rather discoloured, having likely enough been in the water a few weeks—although there is no certainty about this, as we have frequently observed discoloured fish right in the estuary at the back end of the season. He made good use of his weight and spun the line out several times, but not with the same grand rushes of the first fish, nor did he show the same resource in his attempts to get away. He gave us a good half-hour's sport, and eventually turned the scale at 25 lb.

After this we walked up to another pool, and in a few casts hooked our third fish, another clean-run one; but we were not so fortunate with him, as after showing himself a few times he would do nothing but shake his head and jag at the line, giving us the idea that he was lightly hooked; and such was probably the case, as although we handled him tenderly for a quarter of an hour, in giving a half-turn over the hook came away, not very much to our surprise, and the line came back to us in that elegant curve so well known to most anglers, telling us that our acquaintance was severed, at all events for the present. The fly was on and the point of the hook as keen as when new.

By this time it was half-past four and getting dark,

so we gave it up for the day, warmed ourselves up with "a wee drop of the mon," and walked home, to discuss the incidents of the day over a good feed and a warm fire.

The above sport was gained by one rod: curiously enough the other never had a touch all day, though regular turns were taken in fishing the pools; indeed, the twenty-five pounder was caught while fishing after the other rod, whose fly in all probability originally woke him up.

After killing the first fish, rod No. 1 gave the successful fly to rod No. 2, who, as stated above, likely enough attracted with it the second fish, which eventually fell a victim to rod No. 1 with a somewhat similar fly. Such is luck!

## CHAPTER XVIII.

*A FINE BAG ON THE TEST.*

A REALLY big day's sport now and again is a pleasant variety to most anglers, but we must confess to being not one of those who measure the pleasure of angling in exact proportion to the quantity or weight of fish killed, and for this reason have not much sympathy for angling competitions and such like.

In these days of competitions in sports and pastimes we may be considered a bit old-fashioned in our ideas, but we shall have to remain so, as in our opinion the great charm of angling ceases to exist when the sport has to be conducted at break-neck speed, allowing little or no time for observation and reflection.

We admit that in a given space of time a good fisherman will probably gain more result than a bad one; that being so, the time-test may serve its purpose; but we take leave to doubt if the art of angling derives any benefit therefrom, or if anglers improve themselves by its use; but each to his taste.

Our experience teaches that a really big day is more the result of climatic influences than particularly good

angling, and when an extraordinary take has fallen to our share we cannot recollect that we have been able to congratulate ourselves upon any particular smartness ; but we have many a time arrived home pleased with having landed a few fish under somewhat unfavourable circumstances, and are inclined to think that, comparatively speaking, poor fishing makes a good fisherman in the same manner that poor land makes a good farmer. It may be that the grapes are sour.

Without further excuse we will proceed to narrate the circumstances which gave rise to the foregoing remarks :—" Can you get me a day's trout-fishing anywhere near London ?" said a friend to us one day—a question which in our times takes, as a rule, a good deal of answering ; but on this occasion, thanks to the kindness of a friend, who at the time rented about a couple of miles of good water on the Test, we were in a few hours able to reply in the affirmative.

The necessary preparations were made, and down we went one broiling hot evening in July by train to a Junction on the South-Western Railway, and thence drove about eight miles to the house, which had been kindly placed at our disposal. We arrived in nice time for an hour's fishing before supper, which at the time of year is worth about as much as the previous hours of the day all put together, especially when the weather is really hot and sultry.

The river here has few trees or tall bushes growing on its banks, so is easy to cast over, but it is a *sine*



*quá non* to cast up stream, and from as far back from the bank as possible, these maxims holding good even in the evening.

We killed between us  $2\frac{1}{2}$  brace with a yellow dun dressed with double wings as a floating fly, just sufficient to make us keen for the morrow; the fish were each over  $\frac{3}{4}$  lb., two brace under that weight being returned whence they came—such was the rule of fishing, and a very good rule, too, for anglers who prefer decent sized fish to those of the length of one's thumb.

Our friend had done most of his fishing on the Devonshire streams, and, as far as we could make out, his experience had been chiefly with fish weighing from three or four to the pound; consequently, he was well pleased with the Test, and appeared to be surprised that the reports he had read in the sporting papers were pretty near the mark.

If one believes all one hears, anglers are not famous for veracity, and it is curious that if one inquires the average weight of fish on any particular river, the information is pretty certain to be on the big side of one's own after experience: perhaps it may be that the large fish having been taken out only the smaller remain, or how is it?

There are few streams superior to the Test for dry fly or any other sort of trout-fishing; the river is cut out for it, and almost makes one wish one were a trout.

The river runs at this station about three or four feet deep as a rule, but in the flats and near the mills

to a much greater depth, as clear as crystal, over a beautifully clean bed composed chiefly of chalk and small gravel, out of which grow here and there bunches of long slender weed, swaying to and fro with ever-changing form, affording excellent cover for the fish and nurseries for the different kinds of larvæ, either in their initial or final forms, on which the trout feed.

The sun streaming through the open window awoke us early next morning, proclaiming just such another as the previous day; and as upon reaching the river not a rise could be seen, we decided to have breakfast at once.

On previous occasions, under average circumstances, without fishing particularly hard, we had generally managed to annex four to five brace of sizeable fish, but now, with this scorching sun and clear blue sky, chances of sport seemed doubtful; however, as will be seen, it was decreed otherwise, and we were doomed to agreeable disappointment.

After breakfast we again sallied forth with the intention of making the best of a bad job; and such, indeed, it appeared likely to be, the sun beating down on the glass-like surface of the stream, unruffled even by a breath of air, and we considered ourselves fairly fortunate when by two o'clock we had managed to kill a brace and a half between us—no great work it must be admitted; then, feeling rather done up by the intense heat, we followed the example set by the cattle in seeking the welcome shade offered by a chestnut-tree, at the same time disposing of our frugal lunch.

We had passed an hour or two smoking and chatting, when we noticed a few puffy clouds coming up from the west, which gradually increased in size until the glare of the sun was partially obscured, and the light air which wafted them grew into a nice breeze.

To see if anything was on the move we walked about half a mile up stream, until we arrived at a bend where the water was deep and about 20 yds. wide—as a rule dead as ditch water, the leeward bank being bordered by high flag rushes extending several feet thick, where generally it was impossible to rise a fish, but to-day matters were different.

By this time the light airs had increased to a stiffish breeze and a fine rain commenced to fall, so we at least could count upon getting a wet skin of some sort.

The feed, chiefly duns and sedge-flies, was being blown in hundreds straight from our feet to the opposite bank, until they came in contact with the rushes aforesaid, and sooner or later dropped into the water, when as each fly fell there seemed to be a trout awaiting to claim him.

We put on a yellow dun with a thick stuffy body, such as no trout would condescend to look at upon any ordinary occasion—at all events these specimens had been the oldest tenants of our fly-book up to then; but now the fish were fairly on the feed and apparently off their heads.

We commenced casting scarcely ten yards apart, the strong wind at our backs lending us material assistance in making the long cast so as to reach the rushes.

It was real butcher-boy work, as the *sine quâ non* was to hit the rushes hard, so that the fly rebounded and fell quickly into the water—which was precisely what was happening to the real insects, for as soon as they struck the rushes the force of the wind kept them there, rendering wing-motion impossible, with the result that they gradually but surely fell.

This was indeed fly-fishing made easy and an instance when the ability to cast a long line came in useful; but still, as the saying goes, "there is no rose without a thorn," only in our case the *thorn* was represented by a high shaggy *thorn* hedge, which, as is the way with such obstacles, elected to grow exactly where it could afford much annoyance to anglers, namely within a few yards of their backs, and not being content with the nuisance it itself provided, graciously condescended to form a species of hat-peg for all kinds of vegetable growth, whose sole aim and ambition in life were concentrated in attempts to reach the sky.

Here was a natural web, formidable as any made by spider for fly, and although the wild roses and convolvuli may, with bowing heads and dulcet tones, have invited the duns to come into their parlour, the hospitality was not accepted, although, perhaps, it might have been had they not been lifted quickly and perpendicularly from the water and returned without delay.

As before mentioned, there was little or no stream at this part of the river, and the fish as soon as hooked sought safety and assistance from the weed growing on the bottom, so we had to supply a stream of our own

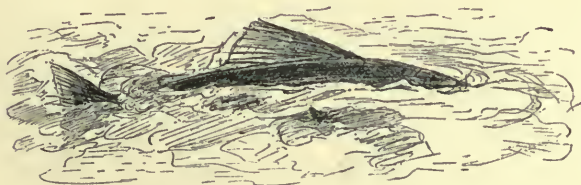
by running up bank as soon as a fish was hooked, thus keeping them out of the weeds.

In a short space of time we had both creels full of splendid fish all over  $\frac{3}{4}$  lb., many of 1 lb.,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  lb., and some 2 lb. apiece.

It soon became too dark to see, when a gentle drizzle and a decided feeling of emptiness decided us to give up for the day; so we took our spoils home and counted out  $18\frac{1}{2}$  brace, weighing 42 lb., besides which we had returned  $5\frac{1}{2}$  brace of undersized fish.

Our friend the hedge bagged two duns and a sedge fly.

The bag was made within a distance of 40 yards, and in little over a couple of hours: it seemed as if nothing would put the fish off, not even the dying struggles of their pals; they had made up their minds for a good feed, and they would have it; although generally discriminating, on this occasion they threw all caution to the winds and paid the penalty in consequence. No great skill was requisite to defeat them, and no doubt the elements were greatly to blame.



GRAYLING.



## CHAPTER XIX.

### *A LUCKY EVENING.*

“NEVER mind about me, Mac! I haven't touched a thing all day, and can easily carry home my traps myself.”

Such were our words to the keeper who had been kindly sent to meet us at the close of the day's work, to assist in landing home our traps and fish, if any there might be.

The notice to quit was not very gracious, especially as, being a sportsman himself, he seemed to enjoy an hour's wait at the water-side of a fine October evening, watching, with a critical eye, the imperfection in each cast, the wreaths of blue smoke from the short pipe alone indicating his presence under that ivy-covered ledge of rock.

The presence of a clever angler makes one fish very carefully and in the most orthodox style, but we think in many cases it leads to what may be termed gallery casting to the detriment of the purely practical; at all events, we must confess that the presence of a second party somewhat distracts our attention, and it is easier



to bear defeat when there is no witness of our failure. Solitude is the angler's delight, and the expression on the face of the stream derived from swirls and eddies is as familiar to him as that of his best friend, banishing all feeling of loneliness.

The idea that someone is killing time on the bank is irksome and detracts from one's freedom, so after a second refusal of our friend's services we heard the clink of a clay pipe against the rock and saw him no more, but at the finish the laugh was rather on his side.

To return to the subject :—

It was about 4 o'clock on this October evening, and the sun, after giving a parting glance, had just disappeared behind the trees which topped the opposite bank, placing the stream in that still cool shade so favourable to the angler.

The air had been sharp through the day, and having fished without success we had moved up with the idea of giving the last hour of light to this pool, thinking that, as the atmosphere had become softer, there might still be a chance of sport.

The pool started about fifty yards below a high stone bridge, and extended to a length of a hundred yards or so, then turned a sharp corner and subsided into a long uninteresting flat.

The water at the top of the pool was broken by large boulders at the bottom, and then finished in swirls and eddies until, as it were, exhausted.

The high rocky bank, faced with trees and shrubs,

ran right down to the water's edge, obliging the angler to take the water and make the best of a very nasty piece of wading, until he could get out into a narrow footway at the base of the rock by which the stream ran to a depth of 6 feet or so.

The catch, which lay about 20 yards out, could only be commanded by the Spey cast, so, taking all things into consideration, it would not be called a good pool for a novice.

The water was big, but of a nice "Ale" colour, as they there term it, so we put on a large showy fly and began wading down from the head of the pool.

We had cast down about 15 yards when, just as the fly had swung round to the middle of the stream, a big swirl marked the surface, immediately followed by a tug at the line.

For a moment we thought our luck had turned and we were at last in for a bit of sport; but not so, as a few seconds after the line came back loose, telling its own tale. Our luck seemed, indeed, run out, but after wasting a few moments in an address to the surroundings generally, in terms more or less uncomplimentary to the fish, we decided to continue casting down, and give him another chance after a few minutes' rest, as he might possibly not have been pricked; this was our impression. We then cast down to the point where it became obligatory to take the bank, and at the third cast the fly was again taken, but this time had fairly got hold, so we stuck into the fish pretty hard.

He took a few short runs and then confined operations to the deep water in the centre of the pool, fighting a good stand-up battle without shifting his ground.

This game continued for some minutes, when, for a change, he suddenly made off down stream to the tail of the pool, where we had to hold him hard, as it was impossible to pass the trees which grew right down to the water's edge.

He tugged and tugged again until we fully expected to see the line part ; however, he gave it up and headed straight up stream, where, after about 20 minutes' further resistance, we were able to haul him alongside the bank.

By this time it had become quite dusk, and with difficulty could we see to gaff him, the perpendicular bank making it no easy matter at any time ; however, we at last got him safely to grass, a nice well-grown fresh fish of 19 lb.

Darkness was by this time fast setting in, and a drizzling rain falling, calculated to soak one through in about half an hour ; but we determined not to give it up without affording our first friend another chance, so with some difficulty, on account of the darkness, we waded again to the head of the stream and commenced casting with the same fly, which had come scathless through the previous ordeal.

We thought we had passed the fish, and, on account of the darkness, were rather pleased than otherwise

that he had refused again to be tempted, and were swinging the fly round for the last time when up he rushed from his stronghold, dashed at it like a bull-dog, and was fast as a clothes-line.

Without a moment's hesitation he seemed to dart off to the far side of the river, at least so it appeared to us, but it was impossible to tell in the pitch darkness which had set in; at all events we knew he had run off about fifty yards of line.

Standing in darkness upon the bottom of a swift river, at the same time playing a big fish, is no fool's play, and we are not at all sure that we have any desire to repeat the experiment, as, besides the difficulty of threading one's way over the rocks, except from whatever information may be derived from the fish, the angler cannot be certain if he is wading towards the bank or the centre of the river.

We managed, with considerable difficulty, to gain the bank, the fish all the time running about and fighting as if to take every advantage of our predicament; then matters were a bit easier; yet it is no light task to play a fish, when his position is uncertain and one cannot accurately judge how much line is out.

We could feel and hear that he several times jumped clear out of the water, then inflicted upon us a very tedious and uncertain half-hour, during which we hung on, not caring much if the line parted or not, and at length got him, as far as we could judge, close

into the bank and could tell that he was rolling from distress.

We reeled him up tight, but, although no doubt he was close in, we could neither see fish nor line, so we got out the gaff, which fortunately was over our shoulder, and by reaching out managed to get the crook round the line, and passed it down in the direction of the fish until they met. We then cleared the line and struck at where we guessed the fish should have been, but only scraped him, so were obliged to repeat the performance a second time, fortunately with success, as we gaffed him just under his neck and hauled him to bank without further mishap. He scaled 24 lb., and was a fine cock fish.

Taking off one's waders &c. is not the sweetest of jobs at any time, and the pleasure is no greater when the operation has to be conducted in pelting rain and pitch darkness.

In time, however, we got the kit and rod packed up, and having tied each fish together by head and tail, slung them across our back and set off for the two-mile trudge home—all up-hill, by the way.

And a nice tramp it was, running into a hedge one moment and into a ditch the next, the fish swinging from side to side all the time, and the bit of old line which carried them nearly cutting our shoulders in two.

We were congratulating ourselves on having accomplished about half of the journey when, while sliding

over the top of a hedge (having missed the gate), the string of one of the fish snapped and, flop, flap, squash! fell the brute in the muddy ditch. Well, we rescued him, made good the breakage, and eventually arrived home, as wet from heat and rain as if hauled through a stream.

Many a time during that trudge home did we regret having dismissed the keeper, who had a good laugh on our return; however, a tub and change of clothes soon relegated our discomforts to the past.

The experiences of our friend, who had been fishing lower down, were somewhat similar to our own, as he did nothing all day, until the evening, when he landed an 18-pounder, just about the time we killed the first fish. He then wisely gave up for the day, but we don't think *he* would have done so had he previously raised another fish.



## CHAPTER XX.

*CHUB-FISHING ON THE THAMES. (FLY.)*

THE angler who at the present day seeks this class of sport is, on account of the increased traffic, driven to the highest reaches of the Thames. The advent of the noisy steam-launch has well nigh precluded all possibility of such sport on the lower and mid river, excepting, perhaps, in a few quiet backwaters and weir-tails, as, even during the middle days of the week, there is an unceasing procession of these nuisances churning up the stream and washing down the banks as they pursue their own sweet way.

In times gone by, many a long summer day have we spent gliding silently down stream in a skiff held up by noiseless sculls, while the red or black palmer was made to drop at the very edge of the willows overhanging the banks or would now and again penetrate the shady crevices they created.

Even in those days the week ends were busy times for the various Inns, but the fashion of going down on Sunday for dinner was a thing of the future, and at any rate the angler could count upon enjoying peace

and quietness during the middle of the week in the reaches of the mid and upper Thames.

Now all this is changed, so that if the angler wishes for any chance of sport he should at least go straight away to above Reading, where he can still get a fair number of decent-sized fish.

We always recall those days of chub-fishing with pleasure, as it was in this pursuit that we first learnt to cast a fly-line and acquired a taste for the sport of angling, for had not such opportunities been given we might never have handled the rod, and so have been deprived of a vast amount of enjoyment. Fly-fishing for chub, in our opinion, is the best sport the Thames affords, as a good angler can make pretty certain of landing a few during the day, while it is first-rate practice for any other class of fly-fishing; indeed, one who is a really good caster of a chub-fly can, with half an hour's practice, be converted into an excellent trout- or salmon-fisher.

In the expression of these opinions we shall probably run counter to the ideas of those who prefer casting or spinning bait for trout, who may argue that spinning for trout is better sport than fly-fishing for chub—so in our opinion it is, if a fair number of fish be landed; but spinning from boat or weir, for weeks together, without getting fish, we hardly think can be called sport.

The chub is a wary timid fish, and must be approached silently and with caution; the angler should cast a longish line and make the fly drop as close as

possible to the bank or bushes under which the fish rest, waiting until some insect shall fall within reach.

To accomplish this, a difficult underhand cast has frequently to be made, and it is wonderful what, with practice, a fly can be made to do; but the angler must bear in mind that no false casts must be made, as such a one is usually sufficient to scare any chub.

The fly should be made to hit the water smartly, as do the insects which it is intended to imitate.

For this class of fishing we prefer a stiff 12-foot rod, line and reel of the size used for sea-trout, and three yards of stout single gut; lighter tackle than this we consider inadvisable, as, with such, it is next to impossible to cast a big palmer with precision, as, in the first place, the fly is heavy, and then picks up a deal of water.

The heavier line naturally causes more disturbance upon striking the water; but this effect is covered by that made by the heavy fly, especially when, as is proper, it falls with a good flop.

Chub can be nicely approached in a Canadian canoe, as, when skilfully managed, almost perfect silence can be observed. The paddler had best turn the nose up stream and allow her to drift gently down at about half the pace of the main stream while the angler faces and fishes down.

With a skiff the same tactics may be adopted, only, of course, in this case the angler sits or stands in the stern.

To manage either craft requires a deal of practice, so as to keep the nose straight while following the curves of the bank, at the same time keeping a uniform distance from it all the way down, thereby sparing the angler the necessity of continually lengthening and shortening line.

It is next to impossible for the angler himself to work his craft in a stream, but should he be obliged to do so, the best plan is to drop a weight through a ring over the bows attached to a long line, which he can let out while he casts that length, then haul up and drop down a further distance; but it is not easy or very satisfactory work.

A spot where the stream runs fast under overhanging boughs is the favourite haunt of chub during daytime; there he paddles about, for ever on the alert for any dainty morsels in the shape of larvæ which may happen to fall within his grasp. At early morn or upon Sundays (when the mills are stopped) he may be seen sailing leisurely about or basking in still shallow waters, but these he quits as soon as the turmoil of the day begins.

Under the shade of camsheathing or boat-house he may be often found, and the roots of an old tree may be his home; but he is far easier lured from under the willows, where he appears to be more off his guard and less suspicious.

Previous to approaching the chub lying in an exposed position, it is well to get out the required length of line

and poise it in air while nearing him, then cast the fly over him once or twice without actually allowing it or the line to touch the water; thus his attention is attracted, and when at the next cast it does fall, he is on it like a knife, and should there be a few fish lying together there probably will be keen competition.

This makes rather pretty fishing and many a chub may fall a victim to it before breakfast on a hot misty summer's morning, after which those remaining will retire to safer strongholds.

Many anglers put a few gentles on the tail of the hook; but this is dirty work, and detracts from the pleasure of fly-fishing pure and simple; but no doubt they afford an additional attraction. Another plan is to whip at the tail of the hook a piece of white kid; this has much the same effect and has the advantage of being cleaner. Gentles are not pleasant companions, especially on a hot summer day, and the odour they impart to the hands and rod can easily be dispensed with.

The addition of the white kid or gentles is said to make the bait represent the real larva in a transitory stage, but as neither bee nor caterpillar has much to do with white eggs or empty cases at those periods of their existence, it may be that the conspicuous white lump gives the additional attraction.

Green, black, and red palmers are considered the correct flies for chub; we prefer the latter dressed with gold tinsel rib and butt; sea-trout flies are also



good killers ; but we prefer a bee to all of them, dressed with ordinary drake wings, and the body in four joints, the uppermost of peacock harl, and the three lower ones in equal divisions of red, orange, and white fluffy wool, the latter taking the place of the white kid.

The chub has an expanding leathery mouth, which seldom parts with the hook when once it has taken hold ; but for cooking purposes he is well nigh useless, his flesh being of about the same consistency as cotton-wool.

We recollect, while staying at a quiet spot near Pangbourne, hooking a big chub lying in a deep hole surrounded by bushes, through which with the greatest difficulty we managed to insert the top of the rod. We danced the fly on the surface of the pool and the chub took it, then with the slightest possible strike we hooked him. What to do next was a puzzle, as the little pool, scarce the size of a wash-hand basin, was lined with snags which barred the one outlet to the main stream, through which he would evidently attempt to pass so soon as he should find himself under restraint.

We remained concealed amongst the bushes and called for a friend with the landing-net, keeping the line quite slack ; meanwhile the fish remained quiet, apparently unaware that he was tethered, and appeared to take no notice of the body of the fly protruding from his jaws.

The landing-net was threaded through the bushes to



the edge of the pool, then we hauled hard on the fish, who was into the net and out on the bank before he knew it.

The chub fights hard at first, but soon gives in, coming to hand like a log ; yet fly-fishing for him is not entirely to be despised.

For the first two or three weeks of the season, chub may be found feeding among the weeds upon shallows in mid-stream, but he soon deserts such feeding-grounds for less disturbed quarters.

While fishing under such conditions with a red palmer we have frequently hooked and landed good-sized perch.

## CHAPTER XXI.

*MAY-FLY FISHING.*

WITH a few days' leisure at our disposal at about the end of May, we persuaded a friend to join in a fishing-excursion to Derbyshire, intending to try our luck on the Wye and Derwent, and see how those rivers compared with others of our acquaintance, likewise the style of fishing in vogue there.

We arrived at Rowsley about 6 P.M., and by the time we got settled down it was nearly 7; so, as fishing is prohibited after 8, we agreed to content ourselves with a saunter along the banks of the Wye, which flows within a few yards of the Peacock Inn, well known to tourists and anglers alike.

The stretch of the Wye we intended to fish was upstream from Rowsley to Bakewell, a distance of over three miles—very nearly four by road, and quite half as long again by the waterside.

The river meanders through grass meadows for this distance, passing in its serpentine course at the foot of Haddon Hall, which may have been constructed by a previous generation to afford amusement to anglers

should the water be out of order. From all accounts the old place is well worth a visit; but as we have hitherto been lucky with the water, we cannot speak from experience.

To judge by the picture so familiar to us all, sport in the olden times must have been fine in the vicinity of Haddon—finer than at the present day; at all events as far as fishing is concerned, for in the picture the fish appear to be of salmon-size. Perhaps they have deteriorated in this respect, or, may be, painters, like poets and occasionally anglers, require (a) licence.

The portion of the Wye which runs through Rowsley itself is known as Rowsley Meadows, and is preserved by His Grace the Duke of Rutland as private water; the remainder can be fished, free of charge, by anglers staying at the "Peacock," Rowsley, or the "Rutland Arms," Bakewell; others can fish by ticket at the rate of 2*s.* 6*d.* per day: so anglers will agree that they have much for which to thank His Grace.

The Wye is fishable in this manner from both banks, and runs into the Derwent about a quarter of a mile below Rowsley Bridge.

The Wye contains trout and grayling, the former running to the weight of 4 lb. apiece, so we have heard tell; but our experience was not so good, as the sequel will show.

The grayling we chanced to land while trout-fishing were good-sized fish—say, on an average of 8 or 9 oz.; but as they, during our various visits, were either just

in or out of season, no great reliance should be placed upon this experience.

The conditions upon which the tickets are granted only admit of the use of the artificial fly, and no wading is allowed. This is as it should be, as with a single-handed rod of 12 feet the angler can command the stream, and even if he could command only half of the water from either bank the admission of wading would certainly ruin the fishing.

The Wye runs through a limestone country, and is seldom out of order, as the milky colour it obtains after rain soon fines down; whereas the Derwent comes down very red, and takes a day or two to get into order.

The watersheds of the two rivers, although adjacent to each other, must be very different from a geologist's point of view.

The Derwent in this district runs through the property of His Grace the Duke of Devonshire, to whom the thanks of anglers are due for permission to fish by ticket granted to visitors at the Edensor Hotel, Chatsworth, about two miles from Rowsley Station, or to those staying at the Peacock at Baslow, a couple of miles further on—both most comfortable hostelries.

Minnow- and bait-fishing are both recognized on the Derwent. Waders are allowed and necessary, as the river is wide; but leggings suffice.

The local flies, which differ from the ordinary species generally known to anglers, are called "bumbles." They are hackle-flies of various colours, and can be

purchased of keepers on the estates: they must be good killers, or else they would not be persevered with; but personally we have had more success with floating flies.

We have visited the district in various seasons of the year, and delight in it, as no doubt do our American cousins, who never miss putting in a day at the "Peacock" or the "Edensor," so as to *do* Haddon Hall and Chatsworth House, in order to complete their education as regards the Midlands. They do the lot in a morning—see, and can say they have seen; but they know nothing of the beautiful country.

To wander along the Wye in June is like viewing a rose-garden through a magnifying-glass, the hawthorn-blossom creating a fairy scene which could hardly be excelled by Titania herself, so daintily do the pink bouquets contrast with the white.

It seems strange, and yet we are asked to believe by certain agitators that the House should be abolished which claims among its members men who lay open such lands as these for the benefit of us all!

We had set off to this country without advice, so were all the more pleased to find, during our evening stroll, that the water was in order and the drake already out, although the trout, as is always the case during the first few days of the rise, were not duly recognizing them as an article of food. So the swallows were making hay while the sun shone.

What a delicacy must be the green drake, with his

succulent juicy body! One would think that the delights of the previous season's feast would leave such reminiscences as to ensure the trout's immediate recognition of him upon his appearance each successive season. But it is not so; why, a guess will be hazarded later on.

The swallows, on the other hand, give the flies no law; and the angler is apt to begrudge the birds their meal, as they rob the fish of the food hatched out of their own special element; but Nature no doubt provides sufficient for both. It is a pretty sight to watch the swallows dart along in swooping course, picking up the flies so neatly as they go; and when now and again they make for the angler's artificial bait, they, except upon the rarest occasions, discover their error almost as soon as it is committed.

The birds appear to grasp the drake across the body, whereas the trout would appear to take them head foremost, so it seems to us; and to this habit may perhaps be assigned the cause of the artificial fly so frequently missing the trout's jaws, the shank of the hook being so very long.

We have seen a trout take the artificial drake two or three times in as many successive casts, and on striking have felt the fish each time, but the hook has come away, evidently without having pricked him.

So long as the angler keeps out of sight it is remarkable how voracious trout are during the drake season, as, even after having been disappointed in a







GREEN DRAKE



GREY DRAKE.



EMPTY CASE

case such as above mentioned, a few minutes' rest is sufficient to restore confidence.

On these rivers the drake makes its appearance towards the end of the first week in June, but the date varies a few days in accordance with the character of the season. The rise may be said to last about ten days, what is called the great rise taking place after the middle of this period; so it will be seen that the angler cannot afford to be many days late.

Even at this season, on the rivers under discussion, the angler must not expect under ordinary circumstances a very large bag; but by fishing carefully and well, keeping low down on the bank nigh out of the fishes' line of sight, a nice bag should be obtained of really good-size trout, and at all events he will be satisfied that his success has been well deserved. We should call seven or eight brace of fish a good bag; and at this season they should average  $\frac{3}{4}$  lb., perhaps rather more.

The drake forms food for trout during at least three stages of its latter existence—firstly, as he ascends with closed wings from the bed of the river to the water's surface; secondly, when as the "pseudo-*imago*" he shakes out his wings and flutters along, resting now and again upon the surface; and, lastly, when as the "*imago*," or perfect insect, he has cast off his overcoat, assumes a stronger flight, and is able to propagate his species.

Artificial flies are dressed to imitate the insect in

these stages, the former of which should naturally be fished "sunk," while the two latter must be cast "dry."

Allusion has been made at the commencement of these notes to the small attention paid by trout to the drake during the first day or two of his appearance on the surface. This may be accounted for by the fact of the fly being so much larger than those preceding it, which they are accustomed to regard as food; but may it not be that, while apparently apathetic, they are in reality busy feeding on the yet imperfect insects under water, which now and again draw their pursuers to the surface and unfold the secret of their mysterious change of dress?

A bird in the hand is generally said to be worth two in the bush; but we are inclined to think that a trout, especially if he chanced to be a *gourmet*, would prefer a drake in the air to two grubs below water.

The sunken fly, no doubt, is a very killing bait at the commencement of the rise; and in this district many will even continue with it all through. But when the rise is general we have always done more execution with the floating pattern, and it certainly can claim to be a prettier and more interesting style of fishing.

The angler had better provide himself before leaving home with patterns of the sunken fly, green drake, and grey drake (which imitates the imago or spent fly); also with a few red spinners of largish size, dressed with rib of fine gold tinsel, which will be found a capital

change fly when the drake is on, especially towards evening. He should also be provided with stout shooting-boots and leggings, as the long grass holds gallons of water.

We remained a week at the Peacock, and managed to get nice bags each day, which were disposed of at breakfast and dinner. The Wye trout, being of a deep pink, are as good to eat as to catch.

The best morning's work we had opened with a thick atmosphere and drizzling rain; but the sun shortly cleared it off. Then the fun began, and we killed  $5\frac{1}{2}$  brace to one rod in the course of an hour and a half, the fish being all over  $\frac{3}{4}$  lb., some 1 lb., and two of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  lb. each.

Some years ago we produced an artificial drake of our own design, which has proved an excellent killer, and for the benefit of our readers we will now describe it:—

*Hook.*—May-fly hook, size to fancy; we like about  $\frac{5}{8}$ ths of an inch in length. File the shank as thin as possible without leaving it too weak, and whip on a strand of stout trout-gut.

*Tail.*—Two fibres of cock-pheasant tail tied on so as to separate out from each other.

*Body.*—A piece of india-rubber tubing, of the size used to make the stems of artificial flowers for ladies' hats. It can be obtained in several shades, the pale yellowy green being perhaps the best for this purpose.

To dress the body : Cut off about 2 inches of the tubing, thread it on the gut down to the hook, whip it securely to the hook over the joint of the tail-feathers, and varnish, leaving the long end of silk for future use. Next insert the nozzle of a pair of small bellows into the open end of the india-rubber tube, stretch the tube slightly, and inject sufficient air to swell it; then whip securely at shoulder with waxed silk (leaving space at head of hook for shoulder-hackle and wings), and varnish. Next take the end of silk left hanging at the tail, and with it make three or four half-hitches at equal distances along the body, keeping the silk connecting the hitches along the *back* of the fly. This will fairly imitate the sections in the natural fly. With the end of the silk secure the

*Shoulder-hackle*, of blue Andalusian cock's hackle, whipped on in the ordinary way.

*Wings*.—Two unbarred feathers of the Canadian Wood-Duck, whipped on back to back; then varnish. This completes the pattern.

The wings must not be cut or trimmed, but only stripped of down.

Wood-Duck feathers are just about the right tint for the wings, and the matter of cost is the only excuse for the use of dyed feathers as substitutes, and we prefer feathers to any substance yet employed for this purpose.

Dyed Mallard feathers are always too yellow or too green, and the Egyptian Goose feather is too stiff in the



fibre and of a wrong tint ; the feathers also are generally too large, so they have to be trimmed with scissors, which is a serious objection, as by this process the edge of the feather, being deprived of its natural fine fringe, soon sinks in the water.

Dyed feathers should always be avoided in dressing floating flies, for chemicals are employed to extract the natural oil, in order to allow the dye to bite, and by this process the feather, which in its natural state repels water, is converted into a species of sponge ; secondly, dyes never produce such a good tint as is found in natural feathers.

The cost of a Canadian Wood-Duck is about 20*s.* dead or alive, which contains enough unbarred feathers to last a lifetime ; while the black and white barred feathers are in great demand for salmon-flies, selling in the tackle-shops at from 3*d.* to 6*d.* apiece.

It should be remembered that the feathers of water-fowl, when on the live bird, are dressed with an oily liquid ; so feathers from lately-killed birds are best for dressing drakes. When the feathers have been some time dead, or the fly has had much use, the natural oil will be lost, and the fly not float so well in consequence ; so the angler had better replace it artificially. For this purpose a small piece of flannel soaked with oil can be attached to the coat-button, upon which the angler may now and again pass his finger previous to preening the wings ; or should he by chance be in the habit of dressing his own locks with a lubricant, the flannel may be dis-

pensed with. The length of gut to which the fly is whipped should be looped at the other end, likewise the extremity of the cast, so that the fly may be changed without loss of time, as even with all precautions it will soon become saturated; so it is as well to keep a couple of changes stuck in the cap. The drake hatched out at mid-day is larger and fatter than the produce of early morn and afternoon.

N.B.—*As this is a tourist district, it is as well to secure rooms in advance; and care should be taken not to injure the hay-grass. Some mills have been erected since our visit, to the angler's disadvantage.*



LARVA OF MAY FLY.

## CHAPTER XXII.

*A LUCKY EASTER HOLIDAY.*

FINDING ourselves in the North of England at this season, we arranged with a brother angler to spend the holiday-time together in a salmon-fishing expedition on one of the Solway rivers ; so the kits were packed ready for the couple of hours' railway-journey on the morrow, and tackle generally overhauled.

The prospect was certainly not encouraging, as four inches of snow lay in the streets and the hills around were clothed in white. However, we determined to carry out our plans, hoping that, as the district to be visited was upon the opposite side of the country, matters meteorological might there be more favourable.

It is often no easy matter to ascertain at short notice the condition of a river some miles distant ; but should the angler be conversant with the geography of the course and watershed of a river, he may frequently gain some information from the weather reports of the training-grounds published in the daily sporting papers, and upon this occasion we were cheered up a bit while reading in 'The Sportsman' that the training-grounds

situated in the district which formed the watershed of our river were as yet unvisited by snow or rain.

As we sped due westward our spirits rose ; for gradually the snow decreased, until upon nearing our destination the country was quite open and bore no trace of it. In fact, upon our arrival we found rather the reverse state of affairs, the river being somewhat low, but of a good colour.

We learned that during the previous week fair sport had been obtained, but since then the water had become too fine and no fish had been landed. However, we had to make the most of our few days, so after dinner put the tackle in order and packed our bags ready for an early start next morning, firmly resolved that if sticking to it would be of any use we should be right in it.

By getting up and breakfasting by candle-light, we managed to arrive soon after daybreak at the pool which started the fishing, about a mile from our quarters, and were pleased to find the water at the right height and in good order. The river here was divided by an island into two streams of unequal width, our stream, although by far the narrower, affording the passage for running fish, while that beyond the island was wide and shallow, with much broken water and thin runs, forming happy hunting-grounds for the trout-fisher.

Our pool was about 100 yards long, but was unfishable from the mainland on account of the alder and ash trees which lined the bank ; so to fish it we waded across the foot of the stream on to the island, no very easy feat

at this height of water, and we wondered, in the event of landing a fish, how to get him across the stream.

The casting, even from the island, was far from easy, as, in most parts, the stream was too deep to wade, and where this was practicable the bottom was abominably rough and the high banks covered with overgrown whins, with an alder tree introduced here and there, just to break the monotony of casting.

The saving clause was the width of the stream, which could be commanded by a medium length of cast, and ran swiftly to a depth of from six to nine feet over a rocky bed studded here and there with rough boulders, affording shelters for the fish.

Such a combination as this was certain to be selected by salmon as a residence after having ascended the swift run below ; and such it was known to be as regards spring fish—yet, curiously enough, was not a favourite with anglers, probably on account of the natural difficulties it presented, or may be the impossibility of casting a long line, which appears to deprive many of a certain satisfaction.

A spin of the coin ordered us off to the island, whilst our friend commenced fishing the pool below, a light breeze having sprung up to clear off the morning mist, for the night had been sharpened by frost.

We waded in as best we could above the two big alder trees, and began casting down until opposite to them ; then were obliged to resort to switching, and the wading was so rough that at any moment one might have been

up to the neck in water, and had we not seen a fish rise within reach we should have got out on to the bank. However, as luck would have it, he came at the fly with a rush the first time over, and was evidently fairly hooked.

We were in a pretty fix, as we could not get out, the bank being too high; nor could we get back, by reason of the heavy stream, while the increased depth of the water barred further progress. But, fortunately, by the time the fish was played out our friend had crossed, and soon slipped the net under a fish of 22 lb., and a "fresh 'un."

During the process of playing the fish two or three others had popped up close by; so, as we seemed to have "struck oil," we begged our friend to take up our rod (he having left his on the opposite bank) while we smoked a pipe.

He, however, in a sportsmanlike spirit, preferred to continue with his own rod and pool; but hardly had he reached the middle of the river ere our shout arrested his progress, when he good-naturedly returned and landed for us a fish of 8 lb., which unfortunately turned out to be a kelt or "old 'un," as they are termed in these parts, which was duly returned to his native element.

In this river the term "old 'un" implies something other than a fresh-run fish, and includes the kelt or spawned fish, also what they term a "cock-fish," a class of salmon weighing just about 8 lb., which, they main-



tain, follows the spawning fish from the sea up the river in late autumn, to return the following spring *without* having spawned.

It may be that they are merely barren fish, but it seems odd the peculiarity should only exist amongst fish of about this weight.

They are not so lean-bellied nor have they the general appearance of a kelt, nor can any remains of milt be exuded from them by pressure of the fingers, as can generally be done with the kelt.

By the shape of the head they are he-fish, and are immediately recognized by both net- and rod-fishers on account of their bright tin-coloured appearance, which differs vastly from the silver of the fresh-run fish and the dirty colour of the kelt, which has not yet had time to become "well-mended" before the "cock-fish" quit the river by the end of March or, at latest, during the first week of April.

To continue. Having netted two fish, our friend was now persuaded to take up the rod and try his luck, while we should wade across for his; but this time it was our turn to do a bit of the net business, as at his second cast as soon as the fly fell on the surface he hooked a big 'un, which gave a real sporting show and eventually paid the penalty to the tune of 23 lb. It took about half an hour's play to kill, as he could not well indulge in long runs by reason of the narrowness of the pool.

Two fresh fish and a kelt in about ten casts was

warm work indeed, but it was not to be the total, for as we were pitching the line into the stream to set the fly straight after taking it from the fish's jaw, we hooked a fourth in the very spot where the others had been played.

From the glimpse we had of him he appeared to be of about 6 lb. weight, so we treated him in a summary manner, and, giving him no law, had him on the bank in double quick time, and were surprised to see him turn the steel-yard at 10 lb. This made the bag up to three fresh fish and one "old 'un" returned—not a bad morning's work, or day's work as it eventually proved to be, for although we stuck hard at it until 7 P.M., not another could we tempt.

During the night rain fell, which with the melted snow it brought down from the hills caused the river to rise some eight inches, and at the same time coloured it to such an extent that the following day fishing was out of the question : one day wasted.

The next day, being the third of our visit, the water was still coloured ; but, in spite of all native advice, we made up our minds to give it a trial in the afternoon, and with that object despatched a boat by cart to a pool about six miles lower down, which seemed on the face of it rather a foolish design, as naturally the lower water would take longer to clear, but, in consideration of the local prophecy, we really had little hope of sport, and the boat would at all events be ready for the morrow.

So we started off to walk down the river-side, timing ourselves to hit off the boat's arrival at the pool; and, sure enough, as we were stowing away sandwiches with a nip of the neat, she hove in sight (we believe this is the correct nautical term, but are not quite certain if it be applicable to a boat perched on the top of a farm-cart) over the brow of the hill, or, better still, on the "horizon," whence she soon found her way into the water, merely protesting against such informal treatment by giving us an insight into the peculiar properties of tar.

This stretch of water is the beau ideal of a salmon-pool, and is capable of being fished all the way down by standing on or wading from the bank; but to cast the middle and far side a boat is required, and when both these methods are employed it easily affords a whole day's fishing. The pool is over a hundred yards long, with a heavy stream at the head, gradually decreasing in force until it subsides into a good swift run to the foot, setting conveniently towards the side, which can be nicely waded.

From beyond this main current the water runs at a good pace to within a few yards of the opposite bank, where it gets thinner and affords capital fishing when other portions are too big.

The bottom of the pool is broken up here and there by large stones and boulders, forming resting-places for the fish, their positions being indicated by swirls on

the surface, except in low water, when a stranger would hardly notice their existence.

From the head to two thirds the distance down the pool the water runs to a depth of from six to nine feet ; but at the lower end it is much deeper, covering huge boulders of rock, which eventually raise their heads to within a few feet of the surface, forming a natural masonry towards the construction of the pool below.

There are two or three trees on the bank sufficient to give zest to the casting, but beyond these obstacles there is nothing but a few pollarded willows towards the end of the pool.

Now there is a correct and an incorrect method of fishing this, as there is most pools, and when we had it undisturbed to ourselves we liked to cast it well down from the bank to commence with, as frequently fish lay close in to the side ; then it could be waded down from the same bank, after which we would get into the boat and have it rowed across to the opposite bank, selecting a course which should as little as possible disturb the best catches.

Having attained the opposite bank we would first take a beat close in shore, then row up again and take another beat, and then a third, by which time the fly should have passed over the head of every fish in the pool, the system being very similar to that which a man should adopt in shooting a turnip-field over a brace of pointers, the chief difference being that,

whereas the angler would regard the stream, the gunner would the wind, and possibly his march.

As upon this occasion there were two of us, we started with the bank fishing, our friend with that from the boat; but although we both did all we knew, neither got a touch or saw any signs of a fish, and as the water was very thick we began to think that the local advice would turn out sound after all, so we could only console ourselves with the reflection that we should have done no better had we remained in quarters.

By this time it was about half-past four and not a fish showing, so we sat down behind a big whin-bush—for the wind was blowing cold—smoked the pipe of peace and drank the whisky of Scotland.

Getting tired of inactivity, just for a change our brother angler took a turn at the wading, while we jumped into the boat, and had fished carefully (giving the fly plenty of time to sink in the thick water) down to about halfway, when we at last were greeted with the only form of handshake a fish can give, and, upon responding with the rod, were pleased to find that there was every probability of the acquaintance being a lengthy one.

He evidently was a good fish lured from “you big stanes,” and was not long in forming the plan of campaign, as he at once took a long run straight down stream, then stopped, and as we could not haul him up we dropped the boat back to him, when off he went again,



repeating the same movement until at length he tired himself out, enabling us to get ashore and net him—a fresh-run fish of 15 lb., that never showed a fin until in the net, and game as a pebble to the last.

This fish did nothing but run. Our companion really seemed to be dead out of luck, as no doubt he must have cast very near to this fish, perhaps over him, but had failed to rise him.

He now again took to the boat and fished the pool down carefully, with again no result, returning to shore somewhat disheartened, and as there remained but a quarter of an hour before we should set off to catch the train home, he decided to take off his waders and give it up for the day.

More to fill up the time than with any idea of sport, we said to our boatman, "Jump into the boat, Mat, and we'll just cast it down for ten minutes and get a fish to wind the day up properly."

The said Mat was an excellent hand at working a boat; he didn't go too fast or too slow; and so well accustomed were the pair of us to fishing together that we could cast the whole pool without exchanging a word, while we drifted down casting over every lay of the fish.

At our suggestion he quickly took his seat in the boat, and with a few strokes of the oars had her over under the opposite bank just where the last fish had taken; a few more holding-up strokes, when, just as the fly was swinging round, bang came a fish at it, hooking himself without much assistance on our part.



Being short of time, we held him very hard and gave him no chance of running, so as an alternative he took to jumping. Up he went time after time clean out of the water, the line suspended in the air from the tip of his nose to the rod-top; as he fell we were obliged to give him a yard or so of line, but that was all he got—a real sporting fish and no mistake.

We fully expected something to go every instant, so hard were we with him; however, by degrees the jumps became less and less violent as he gradually gave in to superior force, and eventually ranged himself alongside his comrade in distress on the grassy bank, a fish of 14 lb. weight, the two making as nice a pair of fresh-run springers as is often seen.

Twenty minutes had elapsed from the time we left the bank, so it was a great bit of luck thus getting a good fish, although we had to pay for it in the pace at which we had to travel along the mile and a half to the railway-station, to avoid a six-mile walk home.

But all's well that ends well, and we were somewhat proud at having attained success in spite of the local prophets, who were much surprised at our bit of sport, yet offered unstinted congratulations.

Upon return to our quarters we found that another angler had turned up, who joined us at dinner and became terribly keen at the sight of the fish, and entered into the discussion of the day's sport with as much appreciation as if he had formed one of the party.

The reception accorded to an additional angler is

often not of the most cordial nature, as, in the first place, his appearance means an extra rod on the water; and when placed in this position, having to join a party of friends at meals one feels as if intruding upon them; but the natural sympathy existing among anglers soon overcomes such little considerations and makes all friends alike.

A few hundred yards above our quarters the river comes tumbling over a high caul or "bay," as they term it in these parts, then rests in a wide deep pool for a while ere it continues its course over rough rocks and boulders. In this pool may be counted scores of fish waiting until the water may be sufficiently high or low for them to journey up, for they cannot surmount it in either extreme.

In the spring-time salmon appear to be in no great haste to pass beyond this "bay," and even in March many of them are tinged with red, having perhaps been two or three months in fresh water; but they do not much trouble the angler, being very bad takers, and so long as they remain close up to the falls the law protects them against the greedy net, which, however, can well afford to bide its time, knowing full well that as they gradually but surely become enfeebled by their existence in fresh water, so they will one by one drop back into its cruel meshes.

The fishermen in this district declare that most of the fish which have not ascended this "bay" by the middle of May drop back again to the sea, a distance of nearly

fifteen miles ; and although we much doubt the correctness of their theory, we must admit that in the late spring months the upper waters are not as fully tenanted as one would expect judging from the numbers seen below earlier in the season.

Upon arrival an angler is pretty sure to stroll up to "the bay;" indeed, the wooded banks, lined with avenues of lofty trees from which an army of squirrels peer upon the intruder, taking good care to keep a solid trunk between them and him, are more than sufficient reward ; and when, upon arriving at the falls, he sees the fish jumping in all directions, it is seldom that he can resist fetching his rod, thinking that surely one among the crowd may be obliging to a stranger.

Such ideas, backed up by local yarns of the capture of enormous fish, had probably actuated our new friend, for he spent the greater part of the day there, with the usual amount of sport—*nil* ; however, he persevered at various other times, and at length succeeded in landing a fine fish of 18 lb., which he certainly deserved.

This pool is always highly recommended by the native attendants, who thoroughly appreciate its proximity to the inn and its accompanying "pints."

At an early hour next morning we started on a five-mile drive to the scene of our previous day's sport ; it was the first real spring day of the year, with a light breeze from the north-east, and it was not long before the waders were donned and the three of us started to

work, our new friend taking the pool next higher up, while we two reverted to our old tactics.

The water had fallen about three inches and was of real good colour, and when our companion took to the boat we thought it was good odds on him; however, we were wrong again, as he fished it down without a touch, so we took a turn at the boat, and it was almost with feelings of regret that we hooked a fish in the water he had just cast over. He was clearly well hooked, and after one or two short runs contented himself with jaggng a few feet beneath the surface until he exhausted himself, and registered 18 lb. on the scale.

We have seldom played a fish who so persistently jaggd at the line; but the rod held in both hands clear of the body defied his efforts to escape.

It was remarkable that each of the three fish killed in this pool had adopted a different method in his attempt to escape—the first having relied entirely upon running, the second on jumping, and the last on jaggng at the line.

This proved to be our bag for the day, as not another could we raise, although plenty of fish were showing; yet upon our return home we found we had done as well as the others who had been out, and that was not saying much.

Next day we retraced our steps and commenced fishing the same pool, with a north-east wind blowing a gale up stream; indeed the wind was raising a minia-

ture sea, and it was only in between the blasts that a fly could be made to drop on the surface. To give some idea of the force of the drifts which swept down the hill-sides, we, instead of holding the boat up to prevent a too rapid progress down stream, were obliged to face her down and pull against the gale in order to make way: it was as wild a day as is good for fishing.

Well, we fished the pool without reward, then went up and tried some others, thinking they might be more sheltered; but no, the gale visited all alike, and we were just upon the point of giving it up, thinking that the train was the only thing we were likely to catch, when some idea prompted us to go down and give the bottom pool just one final cast over, so as to give a certain fish, which had several times risen, a last chance.

Now hitherto we had approached this fish at an angle across the stream, so as not to row over others lying above him; but as this was the last drift of the day no such caution was necessary, and perhaps on this particularly wild day such considerations might have been dismissed; however, be that as it may, we had barely cast down to him, when the rod-top bent and we were fast into a fish of some sort.

He took one pull and then a semicircular run clean across the pool, showing himself on the surface a big, bright fish; indeed, the length and force of his run elicited from our boatman, "He's a fresh 'un"; and we thought so too; however, neither of us continued long of that opinion, as upon reaching the



opposite bank he ploughed his way up stream almost under the overhanging boughs, keeping to the slack water.

We did not care much about this game, so reeled up tight and gave it him hard, to which he replied by a straight run down stream of at least 60 yards, then suddenly stopped, rose to the surface and lashed out, absolutely refusing to budge a yard in any direction.

For the same reason as Mahomet, under certain circumstances, is said to have approached the mountain, we dropped down to the fish, reeling up as we went, and shortly netted a fine fish of 23 lb. weight—but, alas! a kelt! so back to the water he went.

Neither of us was much disappointed, as his selection of the slack water when a bit done had more than raised our suspicions, and it was only on the off chance that we continued operations in the orthodox manner. This was an exceptionally well-mended fish, and in the water appeared so bright that it was almost impossible to accurately tell his condition; the vent was small and fairly flush with the belly line, and many a fresh fish have we seen no better filled out; however, the girth round the body across the vent, with the general appearance of head and tail and absence of that blue-green shade down the back, left no room for doubt, so back he went into the pool, where he lay like a log until, at length recovered, he sought the depths.

Kelts, more especially in late spring, are sometimes



so well mended that it is difficult for anyone not well up in the subject to recognize them; but, although pretty well filled out, they never entirely lose that lank appearance which makes the depth of body across the vent seem out of proportion to the rest of the frame, the explanation of course being that the body round about the vent is composed of organs and muscles, which do not waste so much as the belly.

The expression "as bright as a new shilling" is frequently applied to a fresh-run fish, but we think inaptly, and would prefer to compare the flashy brightness and absence of colour in the coin to the appearance of a really well-mended kelt.

The appearance of freshwater maggots in the gills is no sure test, as they may be also observed in unspawned fish which have existed for some time in fresh water; but the disproportionate largeness of the head, which does not waste, will always betray the kelt.

Should a kelt be felled (by mistake) his sides will fall in shortly after death, making the lower portion of his belly appear as the keel of a boat.

This was the best kelt we ever landed, and, unfortunately, concluded a bad day's sport in a gale.

This pool had now received a pretty good doing, so the following morning we were up betimes to try the top end of the fishing, commencing at an open pool with a fast run in the centre; but as in an hour or so we only hooked a couple of kelts, which fortunately got off, we took a walk down stream and left it,

thinking perhaps its occupants were all of the same nature.

The next pool we came to was only accessible by the descent of a huge sandstone cliff literally covered with trees and undergrowth, which would evidently take a good deal of precious time to negotiate: we looked at it twice, and as there only appeared to be about twenty yards of casting, by reason of the trees, we made up our minds to miss it out, until it occurred to us that in all probability others were in the habit of doing the same; therefore the pool was very likely never fished, so we made a dive through the woods to the foot of the rock.

Awkward as this pool looked from above, it was ten times worse in reality—the water at the base of the rock flowed thigh deep, the bottom most uneven and apparently unfathomable in most places, while branches of the trees growing on the bank protruded over the fast-running stream.

It certainly was a dangerous pool, and as we meditated that even if we were to hook a fish it would be long odds against landing him, were very nearly giving it up, and probably would have done so had we not recalled the trouble experienced in reaching it, which decided us to give it a cast down.

Overhand casting was out of the question, so we switched it as well as the boughs and deep water would permit. When about halfway down a fish took the fly at the edge of the swirl and made straight away into the deep water, where he remained stationary for

a while, until a change seemed to him desirable, when he came in just under the rod point and took a dive straight down to the bottom, running out about twenty yards of line.

We could only conjecture as to his whereabouts, but, on account of the boulders which jutted out below, thought it best not to be too hard on him at first; but as he gave way we soon landed him, a fish of 9 lb. weight only, but better than nothing at all.

We foolishly had left the net with our man before descending the cliff, so lost time while he climbed along to a spot from which he could drop it down to us.

He was a fresh-run fish, and, although small, fought gamely; the surroundings also made his capture acceptable.

We then moved up to a pool which was netted regularly; but at the lower end the presence of a large flat reef of rock some depth below the surface prohibited such devices, flanked as it was on either side by similar projections from the banks. The narrow guts so formed on either side of the reef allowed the fish to exist without annoyance from drift-net or coracle, and when hooked by rod and line materially assisted their escape.

We were soon rewarded with a tug, and away he went with the bit in his teeth, fortunately clear of the rocks, and in the most obliging manner possible kept to the open water, where he was shortly killed—a fresh-run fish of 18 lb.; and, as it turned out, we were rather lucky to get him, as the hook had the most slender of holds

and fell out while the fish was in the net; but when one's in luck nothing *can* go wrong.

To finish up, we continued casting down towards the middle of the pool to a spot where we had seen a fresh fish repeatedly rise on the previous day (when walking home), standing on tip-toe, throwing a very long line in order to cover him. At the second cast he dashed at the fly, which unfortunately came away, in all probability on account of our being late in striking by reason of the long line. One taste of the steel was sufficient for him, so we gave up for the day—and a long hard day it was; but there's nothing like a tramp along the waterside if one wants to thoroughly enjoy that bit of hillside mutton and cock one's legs on the mantle-shelf after dinner while smoking the pipe of peace with "whisky"; it is preferable to "honour" on such occasions—what think ye, anglers?

The weather, which latterly had been rough and boisterous, had calmed down by this, our last day, the warm west wind and hot sun bringing out the March browns in quantities, as if they were determined to make a good show on this their first appearance, as far as we had observed.

While putting on waders at the foot of the first pool a fish rose, so we went for him and hooked him at the third or fourth cast, at the edge of the fast-running water.

We held him lightly while threading our way through the rough stones to the bank, then gave it to him pretty hard, which sent him off, tearing the line from the reel;

he next doubled quickly back, and before we could reel in the slack or run back, the fly came away and he was gone.

He showed rather yellow on the belly and had probably been up since early spring ; nevertheless, as he was undoubtedly a fresh fish, we were sorry the acquaintance was so short.

This apparently turned our luck, as we did not get another pull, so ended our day and Easter holiday, one of the most enjoyable that has fallen to our lot.

Now and again when fish would not take the fly we tried them with a boiled salted prawn, rigged up on regular prawn tackle, but beyond getting a gaunt trout of 2 lb. could make neither head nor tail of them, so gave it up as a failure, and made up our mind not to be bothered with them again.

One day, while casting in swift water flowing over a rocky bed, the fly was taken ; we made sure it was a fish at first, but soon perceived it was something smaller, for he soon lay on the surface without showing an ounce of fight ; he turned out to be a chub (or skelly as they are there called) of 2 lb. weight, of which many exist in the flat reaches bordered by clay banks ; he must have lost his way, for chub, as a rule, are not great explorers.

During the greater part of this outing we experienced very rough weather, what is locally termed the "helm wind" having been prevalent. This is an east wind which causes a bank of dark clouds to form in a direc-



tion due north and south, extending many miles. This cloud-bank remains for a period of either three, seven, or ten days stationary over head until the wind changes, when it instantly breaks up. In the valleys this wind is boisterous enough in all conscience, but on the fells it forms a whirlwind and frequently lifts ricks and sheep as if they were scraps of paper; in fact when the wind makes its appearance the flocks are generally driven down from the fells to escape its violence.

We like an east wind for salmon-fishing, for it has generally given us sport, especially in the spring-time; and the wilder and rougher the weather, the more we like it for catching fish.

In the autumn it is rather a different matter, as apart from the question of the fish taking, a wind is pretty certain to bring down the leaves in such numbers as to ruin any chance of sport, and frequently we have been obliged to desist from this cause alone; they are as great a nuisance to the angler in autumn as kelts are in spring fishing; it is difficult to decide which is the worse—perhaps the former, as it is impossible to avoid them.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

*A WILD GOOSE CHASE.*

HAPPENING to find ourselves in Limerick one spring-time we were persuaded by a friend to pass a couple of spare days at Lisdoon Varna, with the idea of killing time and possibly getting an odd bit of trouting, so accordingly we took train to Ennis and then a long drive, eventually reaching our destination with a keen desire for food and drink.

Lisdoon Varna is celebrated for its sulphur-waters and its corkscrew road ; the former attracts a large number of visitors, who are obliged to climb the latter in order to partake of this particular form of nastiness, which, at the time of our visit, was meted out to them by a most excellent medico, who in his spare moments dabbled a bit in science and had just fitted up in his house a magnetic telephone, constructed by himself.

The hotel is really good and the fare provided quite of the best, as also the whisky prescribed by our friend the doctor, who kindly asked us to his house to spend the latter portion of the evening, and instructed us upon many subjects—many thanks to him !

Now Lisdoon Varna, when planning itself out, had evidently decided that it must and should be only ap-

proached by a corkscrew road, and accordingly, to secure this individuality without being eccentric, had elected to exist on the summit of a hill o'erlooking a country-side which, at all events as far as the immediate neighbourhood is concerned, gave little promise to the tourist or water-drinker of angling propensities.

In fact the district looked anything but fishy, but after a lengthened consultation with our friend the doctor, we took a more cheerful view of our condition and came to the conclusion that we might possibly survive the next two days without *ennui*, for after having (in the manner of eminent counsel) repeatedly urged him to try to refresh his memory, he unearthed from the depths of his knowledge-box the credited existence of a small lake some few miles distant. The natives apparently had not visited the lake for some years, and were more than guarded in their statements as to its existence, hoping perhaps that such ignorance might cause it to change into sulphur-springs or a corkscrew road.

What the lake had done to incur the hatred of the inhabitants we could not tell, but no one, not even the doctor, would give us information concerning it, for, in reply to queries, he, in the most provoking manner, would revert to the sulphur-springs; indeed, all we could ascertain was that there *had been* a lake, likewise a boat upon it, and that they both *might be* about five miles off in a rather uncertain direction.

The following morning, in order to retain the goodwill of the natives, we duly paid homage to the two patron saints of Lisdoon Varna, and felt, we must

confess, neither better nor worse for the penance, then, as we were free to please ourselves, put rods and tackle into a car and made off in the supposed direction of the lake, trusting that, more by chance than the valuable information obtained, we might hit upon it before the day was over.

We drove and drove, but no semblance of a lake appeared, and after casting about in several directions we gave it up, having at least compassed seven or eight miles, and decided to drive ahead just to see the country, when suddenly about a quarter of a mile from the road-side, a huge bed of sword-rushes came in view with something in the midst of them like a small piece of glass. "There's the lake!" we all shouted while the jarvey pulled up the mare, and out we got with rods and tackle, telling the coachman to look after himself until we should return, probably about 6.30.

As we approached we found the lake was larger than we had at first thought, but when we got close could not see it at all for the thick belt of high rushes which surrounded it.

Having found the lake, the next consideration was how to find the boat, if it still existed, and inasmuch as by its aid appeared the only possible chance of reaching the water, we at once began the search.

We had read in books that explorers had discovered from elevations, lowlands which they must necessarily have previously traversed ; so, as not to be behindhand, we climbed the nearest eminence in order to spot the lay of the boat, and were duly rewarded with the sight of

as fine a field of sword-rushes as usually falls to any one man's lot, with not a break in them.

Foiled in this mean device, we retraced our steps and faced the rushes, which, in accordance with the disagreeable habit peculiar to their race, elected to keep their feet bathed in a foot or two of water and slush, this treatment rearing them to a height considerably above our own.

After toiling knee-deep for about an hour, we by the merest accident came across an old tub and hailed it with as much delight as did Xenophon's Greeks the sea; but our joy was rather premature, as inspection suggested the probability of its breaking up during removal to the water, some twenty yards distant.

With tender and loving hands we hauled her to her true element, and placed her on the bosom of the lake, a kindly action which she immediately resented by freely admitting water into her most secret compartments, necessitating a temporary return to her mud home.

With paper and pocket-handkerchiefs we managed to plug the holes and got her afloat, then succeeded in finding one oar or rather scull—the second defied all search, so we had to make shift with a piece of broken paling lashed to a branch; so fitted out we put to sea, or, rather, to lake, then of course stumbled over the missing scull.

The sky was clouding over and rain seemed close at hand, so we put up one rod and commenced casting under the lee-shore, thinking that any feed would find their way thither; but not a fish could we see rise, although there was a fair show of the natural insect.

Just at this time down came the rain in that gentle drizzle which soaks one through in an apologetic way, so we decided to seek the shelter of a little wooded island in the middle of the lake, and spreading our only waterproof above our heads, we consumed the humble mid-day meal, not forgetting "quantum sufficit" of the country's wine, just to keep out the wet, both of us fortunately being disciples of the system which has as its motto "Similia similibus, &c., &c."

Before our jarvey would fetch us there were four hours to kill, and to all appearances these seemed likely to be our only victims, but getting a bit stiff we faced the wet and commenced casting from the back of the island, when to our intense astonishment we rose a trout at the second cast and landed him, about  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. weight, then another and another, until we had five brace all of about the same size.

Seeing the state of affairs, our companion did not take long in getting his tackle put up and was soon into them, so in a short space of time we together creeled about 13 brace of nice trout of  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. to  $\frac{3}{4}$  lb. apiece; then they gave up rising, and our jarvey drove us home.

There was less feed at the back of the island than at any other portion of the lake, so they probably had drawn up for shelter, and naturally the scarcity made them the more keen to take our flies cast from under the gloom of the trees; however, be that as it may, we have never since missed the lee-shore of an island—and this was the lesson of Lisdoon Varna.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

*A QUEER CAPTURE.*

ON Thursday, the second day of Henley Regatta of 1887, the following strange coincidence occurred, and was duly recorded in 'The Field' at the time.

Our party was a large one, and during the day had occupied two skiffs until about 8 o'clock P.M., when, upon leaving the water to dine, we decided to moor one of the skiffs to a mass of boats lying off the Red Lion lawn, and leave it there while we all went ashore in the other.

The mass of boats extended from the lawn and reached across the stream to the first buttress, so we moored the skiff outside them a few yards below the bridge.

We were away for about an hour and a half and put out to gain the moored skiff, when, as we walked towards the bow to unloose her, we noticed a white object lying in it above the bow thwart, and were about to cast it overboard (thinking that it was a rotten fish of some sort that had been thrown over the wall of the bridge), when, to our astonishment, it commenced to



flap about in the liveliest fashion, and we soon made it out to be a fine Thames trout. *Vide* Frontispiece.

We weighed him to  $9\frac{1}{2}$  lb., and out of curiosity had him photographed next day, a well-grown fish, and, as none of our party were believers in stuffed fish, we eat him, and excellent he was.

The publication of this little incident drew down upon our heads the most severe censure from some of the reporters of Thames fishing, who chided us for not having returned the fish to the river, in the interest of those who were in the habit of spending much gold in their attempts to capture such fish.

As a matter of fact we do not attach the smallest value to fish as soon as we have caught them, and this fish might have gone back to his element for all we should have cared, but being in the habit of killing large fish, we perhaps did not attach sufficient importance to the loss of one trout to Father Thames.

When we came to consider that the anglers, for whom cudgels had been taken up, had probably spent as many years to catch him as he weighed pounds, the enormity of the offence did not grow upon us, especially as the ever-increasing age and experience of the fish was daily expanding the odds against his would-be captors.

Trout, as is of course well known, have their particular lays, and this one we had noticed feeding many a time, while smoking a pipe during the summer evenings in the "Lion" enclosure.

Similar occurrences have been before and since recorded, but we do not know a case where the principal part in the scene has been taken by one of such fine proportions.

How the accident happened is difficult to say; it may have been that the unusual number of boats excited the fish to jump, and in falling he came across the boat's thwart and toppled over into it.

Many an evening after dusk, while sitting by the waterside, we have seen and heard small fish, such as dace, raise their heads from the water and pick off flies resting on the boats, and as a boat's thwart is only a few inches above water-level it would be no difficult matter for a large fish to make a mistake. We are inclined to think that this accident happened from a chance jump.

## CHAPTER XXV.

*GALWAY BRIDGE.*

THE cockney sportsman from time to time has had to put up with a good deal of chaff from facetious writers, which no doubt he fully deserved, and we will hope has duly profited by; perhaps he may be considered to have done so, for the absence, at the present time, of skits such as "Mr. Briggs in the Highlands" and "Seymour's Sketches," lead one to infer that the sporting cockney has lost much of his individuality.

Most of us, especially those who chance to be anglers, will have sympathized with dear old Mr. Briggs in his struggles so amusingly described and illustrated in the pages of 'Punch,' and after visiting Galway we have always thought that subsequent to the enthusiastic old gentleman's troubles on the Tay (for there the sketches were taken) he should have been indulged with a few days' angling at the bridge of the old Irish town, for there he would have at once been in his element, and his cockney nature would have readily grasped the requirements of the situation.

Now Galway is Galway at the best of times, and the worst of times is a Sunday in Galway, and it so happened that upon the occasion when we met fate in Galway the peal were very late in putting in their annual appearance, which much exercised the minds of the natives interested in their arrival, as also our own, for had they been up to date we had meditated sneaking a day in pursuit of them as a change from honest toil.

Walking over the bridge in the afternoon there was not a fish to be seen, so we dismissed the subject, killed the day, and found ourselves later on in the evening again on the bridge. Why does one always wander in the direction of a river? there surely must be some attraction: however, as we were looking over the bridge, there certainly appeared to be something in the water which we had failed to notice earlier; yes, sure enough, they were fish—just a few stragglers, the advance guard of the main column.

This sudden apparition determined us to have a day with them on the morrow, and with that object sought Mr. Brown, the obliging factotum of the fishery, from whom we obtained the necessary ticket, a few flics, and the pleasing assurance that under such auspicious circumstances there were pretty sure to be a lot of fish up by the morning; then retraced our steps to the hotel, and turned in early, not thinking it necessary to publish the result of our observations.

Upon looking over the bridge at about 4.30 A.M. the following morning the sight was truly amazing, for the bottom of the river was literally covered with fish, packed together like sardines in a tin box, but with their heads on, and all turned in the same direction.

The water ran to the depth of a few feet only over the backs of the peal, and having put tackle together we commenced casting from the cinder-path which is provided for the benefit of those who elect to fish in dainty foot-gear.

We had the sole occupation of the path which ran along the length of the fishing, so could fish as we liked, and were well pleased at having landed four fish by the time we adjourned for breakfast at eight o'clock, the fish averaging about 6lb. apiece, a proportion of which had to be handed to the proprietor in accordance with the conditions of the ticket, unless the angler might wish to sell his share or purchase the proprietor's at a fixed daily quotation.

Breakfast did not come amiss that day, but upon our return what a change had come over the scene! the fish were still there, true enough, just as we had left them, but also, alas! a number of anglers intent upon their capture.

We had been told, when taking the ticket, that a certain number would be issued each day, if applied for, and in that case a certain space of ground would be

portioned off to each, and, indeed, such a rule was indispensable.

Well, all the tickets had been issued and the holders thereof told off to their stations, so we fell in to work our little beat of about 10 yards, imitating the polar-bear-like movements of our brothers in affliction, casting away until about 4 P.M., when we turned it up, having only increased our early morning's sport by one fish of 5 lb.

The rest of the anglers only got one fish among them all day; but this was scarcely to be wondered at, as the sun was streaming down the whole time, but this lack of sport was balanced by the excitement most of them experienced when now and again getting hitched up in the high grassy bank which mounted straight up at their backs.

The hooking of a fish was regarded as a species of offence, as the playing of him obliged two or three of one's immediate neighbours to withdraw for a time, and if the captor did not adopt the pulling-out-by-the-roots style of play he was regarded as a public nuisance.

Whether or no it was the custom of the place we did not enquire, but it so happened that on the occasion of our visit about half of the competitors affected white kid gloves, which lent a peculiar charm to the scene.

It was curious to observe the apathetic manner in which the fish allowed the fly to sweep over their



heads; perhaps a fly or flies had floated over a particular lot of fish times without number; then at last, without rhyme or reason, one of them would spot it coming round, give a preparatory quiver with his tail, then go for it as bold as a lion. The fact of having seen this performance always induces us to persevere in more open water.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

*BYE-DAY REMINISCENCES.*

ANGLING perhaps of all sports is up to the present time the least affected by innovations brought about by law, the requirements of fashion, and the exigencies of competition; and inasmuch as fish cannot be "walked up" or "driven," those in pursuit of them employ pretty much the same means to effect their capture as were used in days gone by. It is most fortunate that the angler cannot scare his game into the jaws of death by methods similar to those practised in these days by the shooter, or otherwise, as if that were possible we should no doubt read with complacency of slaughter parties being organized by persons as totally deficient in any sporting instinct as those whom they might invite to assist.

A man may be able to kill a fish now and again, or be able to hit birds, or be a good rider to hounds, but he may not be a "sportsman" for all that, as, in order to merit the title, he must be able, in the first instance, to find his game, which involves a thorough knowledge

of the habits of the quarry and is indispensable to sport.

The perfect knowledge of the area of sport is of course an enormous advantage, and we must admit that "a day" on a strange piece of water is, comparatively speaking, uninteresting, and our experience is that we do not do justice either to the water or ourselves, as, although experiences on other streams are brought into requisition, every pool has peculiarities which cannot be learnt in a day.

How severely one feels handicapped when, as a stranger, fishing a pool with another who knows the position of every rock and stone which cause the sets on the surface, or perhaps make no indication. Perhaps the geography of the pool is explained, and one takes it all for granted, being thankful for small mercies; but in reality each must see for himself the bottom of the river in clear water, and must have caught fish in it so as to know exactly where they take the fly as gauged by the sets and ripples.

A good fisherman was never yet seen to fish fast or hurriedly, for the very reason that he has so much to think about, and it should not be taken for granted that a man is idle while the blue wreaths of smoke curl upwards from his pipe as he quietly wades a pool.

We much prefer not to fish at all than to fish hurriedly, but to be forced to take part in an angling competition would be simple misery.

The very name of an angling competition is enough to make one's teeth jar, and what benefit is gained by fighting all day against time and one another, is simply incomprehensible. Many anglers have attained fame in their pursuit throughout the country-side without having assisted in these abominations, and it is an open question whether or no the size of the bag on any particular day conclusively proves superiority in skill.

When a river is fining down after a flood it often happens that one of the best days is a Sunday; but as in most localities it is observed as a non-fishing day, the angler must be content to kick his heels about and wait.

When one is fishing hard a rest upon every seventh day is by no means unwelcome, and gives an opportunity for putting tackle straight or making a fly or two; but when the river has previously been out of order, another day of enforced idleness is rather trying, and generally results in an extraordinary consumption of tobacco and other things, until, in desperation, the angler seeks his bed, thankful that the sun does not indulge in such an eccentricity as we read happened in the olden time.

When the water is in order, but for some reason the angler cannot fish, he is pretty sure to think that sport would be certain if there were no restriction; but on many occasions when the veto has been unexpectedly removed the result has been disappointing, so with this

reflection the angler can console himself in the loss of a Sunday's fishing.

Upon a "close" day, or when the water is dead low, and as yet contains no fish (speaking of salmon), a day's stroll along the waterside is never wasted, and to the angler is full of interest.

We will suppose he starts off down the bank from which he usually fishes, then, while strolling along, he can scarcely avoid learning something of the bottom of the river, and ideas may strike him how to better command some catch which hitherto was somewhat of a puzzle, while if fish be in the river he may often get a sight of them and mark them down for future use.

Having walked to his boundary he may then, if practicable, cross the river and retrace his steps up the opposite bank. The view thus gained may possibly afford information which could not have been obtained from his own side, and consequently may cause him to alter his tactics in the future.

When fishing from only one bank of a river, the angler is very apt to think that many pools could be much better fished from the opposite bank, and he would be certain to hook *that* rising fish which is out of reach from his own side. This is very frequently a delusion which a stroll down the bank quickly dispels, sending the angler home in love with his own bank.

During an early autumn some few years ago we put in a "week end," as they say in the North, at one of our favourite fishing resorts, not with any idea of sport,

for as yet there had been no flood since the spring fish had ascended to the upper waters, but simply with the intention to potter about the scenes of many encounters.

So we set out for a saunter along the banks of the river, which was foul indeed with deposit and mossy weed raised by the sunlight of departed summer, all to be swept away ere the pools should become wholesome abodes for the autumn fish.

By the help of a stout pole we managed to gain a large flat-surfaced rock, over which in a short time waves would tumble and eddies surge, our object being to ascertain the conformation of a pool beyond.

The surface of the rock at this time projected a few inches above the water, and was clad in dark green mossy weed, which bore the evidence of a severe encounter in the shape of masses of scales adhering to it by their own glutinous matter baked by the sun.

The scales by their size and colour had evidently once clothed a large salmon, but now curled up and dry chronicled the death of their late proprietor, the cause of whose untimely end stared us in the face, for there in a crevice of the rock, scarce a foot off, lay the skull and vertebræ of a large otter, suggesting that by some means or other the salmon had been revenged.

The indications naturally suggested that a severe conflict had taken place, ending in the death of both combatants, and it seemed probable that the otter had died by some accident to himself or through the instru-



mentality of a third party, but as the incident had not been observed by the inhabitants of the woodman's cottage hard by, the secret remains in Nature's keeping.

There are many otters in the river who make their homes under the roots of some large tree growing on the bank, at places where the water is sluggish, whence they seldom sally forth until nightfall makes them less visible to man and fish alike; yet we have occasionally surprised them in daylight, for upon hearing our approach they have dropped their prey in our path; eels we have several times found in this manner, with the soil quite wet around, bearing the footprints of their captors.

Taking into consideration the number of otters in the river, it is curious that one does not more often find débris from their meals; the evidence of half-consumed fish clearly proves that they do eat salmon when they can get them; but we are inclined to think that their general food chiefly consists of smaller fish, which are more easily caught, although, naturally, they take pains to leave no traces of depredations, which would lead to exposure of their dwelling-places.

Continuing our stroll we came sharp round a turn and surprised an old heron standing knee-deep, who was in the act of striking something in the water, which he let fall from his beak as he took wing, no doubt mentally resolving that it should be long before he again admitted anyone to such close quarters.

Upon approaching the small, almost streamless pool in which the bird had been standing, we found the fish he had dropped—a small lamprey (of which they are extremely fond), which was still alive and, upon approach of this second danger, affixed himself to the rock with his sucker-like mouth, as is their wont.

The herons no doubt destroy both trout and young salmon, but, after all, the natural enemies of the latter can do little execution as compared with the ravages of their own species in the kelt state; and surely the balance of nature may safely be trusted to maintain the supply of salmon as against all legal enemies, provided that man, in the application of artificial drainage to the watersheds, also provides the speedy and uninterrupted ascent and descent for the fish which his alterations necessitate.

Kelts no doubt are tempted to linger in the river as long as the smolts are descending, running into their jaws, as it were, upon their first journey seawards; at all events the entire disappearance of both is nearly simultaneous, and we have seen, in clear water, an old kelt eat a hearty meal, being so intent the while as to admit of our near approach.

As the smolts, if unmolested, would in a short space of time so much increase in value, it is not very clear why Nature should countenance, at this early stage, such wholesale destruction, as it would appear that the kelts could be more economically fed and made wholesome in the tideway; but it may be that kelts in their

impaired state of health require partial restoration to enable them to face descent to the sea, the salt water itself, and their enemies it contains.

Now this process of partial restoration is quickly performed, as everyone knows who is familiar with the well-mended kelt, who naturally selects what he can easiest get—viz., the smolt.

It is more than probable that after spawning operations a fish must be partially restored to health and strength to enable him to undertake the journey down and face the sea, and those affected by disease are so averse to encounter these dangers that they evince the greatest reluctance to quit the pools, but prefer to frequent the eddies and log-holes, in which they get weaker and weaker until overcome by death.

We have from day to day watched diseased fish lying close beside the bank, paying little or no attention to the passer-by, unless actually roused, and many we have taken out and buried.

There is no more gruesome spectacle than a badly diseased salmon. White as a leper from head to tail, he is repulsive to the eye and hand, producing an involuntary shudder; yet the fungus can easily be removed from the exterior with a piece of sacking, making the fish appear healthy; but if he be boiled, the flesh under the parts of the skin affected will be of a deep red colour. We have never eaten one, so cannot say how they taste.

Some fish get slightly touched with the disease,

of which they are cured upon contact with salt water, but upon their return to the river the scar is plainly visible on the parts unprotected by scales, being of a reddish colour and rather lower than the surface of the unaffected portion.

When fishing salmon in spring we have many a time in a crevice of rock come across a smolt lying in a listless manner, and upon catching him in the net have discovered a white fluffy growth around his jaw, which had grown upon an injured place caused by the hook of the trout-fisher. The growth appeared to be quite the same as the disease on salmon, and we have seen the heads of fish wounded by fighting affected in the same manner.

It is well worth the angler's while to spend a few days in winter by the waterside, as the spawning operations will afford plenty of instruction.

It is most curious to note the jealousy of the male fish, who fights to the death any intruder upon his preserves, charging repeatedly until the water may be tinged with blood. In these conflicts the huge gibs of the older and larger fish are powerful weapons of offence, and in great measure contribute to the defeat of the foe; thus, the old males on the spawning-redds take precedence of their younger and more vigorous rivals, whereas in artificial breeding the latter are selected for duty.

Salmon select for their spawning-ground or redds a gravelly bed, over which the water runs shallow and

fast ; there they dig out a trough, in which the female deposits her ova, and on that the male sheds his milt ; then the trough is covered up, and nature does the remainder.

The ova take about 90 days to hatch out, and the colder the water, the more time they will require, and the stronger will be their constitution.

The ova of trout take about 60 days to hatch, and are in the same manner influenced by the temperature of the water.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

*FISHING THE MINNOW FOR SALMON.*

It is somewhat the fashion with fly-fishers to consider this style of angling an inferior art and sporting procedure, but why such should be the case we fail to perceive, provided that it be adopted in its proper place, and in accordance with the unwritten laws which pertain to angling as to all other sports.

A man who pays £200 for a month's fishing on a stretch of water, which he fishes from a boat, killing with a minimum of exertion a large number of free rising fish with the fly, has no necessity to use the minnow; indeed its use might be prejudicial to the size of the bag, and we are in accord with him in excluding the use of both natural and artificial baits.

We confess to being much addicted to the sole use of the fly, but at the same time can scarcely blame the angler for the use of the minnow, when experience tells him that by it he can kill three or four fish to every one with the fly.



Apart from these considerations many catches are absolutely inaccessible to the fly on account of overhanging and surrounding trees &c., which even prohibit the switch or Spey cast, the result being that a prejudice against the use of the minnow will necessitate the catch remaining unfished.

We argue that it is the business of the angler to command every catch on his side of the water by some or other fair means, and if he cannot do so, he is no fisherman.

To accomplish this end he will find the spinning rod of invaluable assistance, and derive vast satisfaction from the skilful use thereof.

A stiff 12 ft. to 14 ft. rod fitted with steel snake-rings is best for the purpose, as while enabling any cast in reason to be made it is handy amongst foliage.

The line should be as fine as the weight of the game will allow, and may be of dressed or undressed silk, to which is attached a gut cast of four to six feet in length, furnished with the former number of swivels.

It is of primary importance in spinning to prevent any kinking of the line, so plenty of swivels should be employed, as although on principle one should be sufficient, in practice it is not so, as being cheap productions they are not perfect and may become clogged by dirt or rust.

There are many systems of feeding the rod with line, viz., by coiling on the bank or in a basket attached to the angler, winding across from thumb to little finger,

coiling up across the palm of the hand, or even folding it backwards and forwards across the palm.

These systems all possess the natural disadvantage of slack line off the reel, which is obviated by the use of a reel, which feeds the rod directly, such as Malloch's patent and the Nottingham reel.

The former before casting is thrown out of gear, which allows the line to fly off the drum without revolution of the same, thus permitting a lighter bait to be cast than would be the case had the bait itself to revolve the drum, in which respect it is valuable, but it must be noted that the line running off in this manner puts a kink upon itself, which must if possible be neutralized by the use of many swivels on the cast.

The drum of this reel is necessarily unguarded by bars, so when upon hooking a fish it is thrown into gear, care must be taken not to throw it out while bringing the fish to hand by winding up the line, as the slightest deviation of the drum from the perpendicular will result in the release of a few coils of line, which the rod takes up with a jerk—a contingency clearly to be avoided. If required, lead can be used on the line.

The use of the reel is soon acquired, and perhaps the best method is as follows. The cast and bait protrude from the rod point, and the reel is thrown out of gear, the lower hand grasps the rod below the reel, while the upper hand encircles the rod at a distance of a foot above the reel, the palm, second, third, and fourth

fingers being employed to swing and direct the rod, while the thumb and forefinger hold the line.

The rod is swung, and at the correct moment, which can only be learnt by practice, the line is released by the finger and thumb and taken under control by the bait, which by its fall upon the water signals the moment to return the drum into gear, the rod being pressed against the angler's body to admit of free use of the lower hand. The line is then wound up preparatory to the next cast.

In practice it will be found best to return the drum into gear just before the bait drops upon the surface, and the fingers of the upper hand should be kept close to the rod in order to be clear of the out-running line, which for a short distance maintains the spiral form derived from the reel, and upon this account a stiffly dressed line best suits the Malloch reel.

When natural minnow or other fish be used as bait, the angler had best suit his fancy as to the style of flight of hooks he employs. We prefer the following pattern of artificial minnow to any other—viz., a plain body of silver- or gold-coloured metal with a spinner on each side of the head, and no slits up the side, for we object to the use of hooks at the sides on account of the frequency in fouling the line.

The tackle used with this minnow is simply composed of two triangles, whipped one behind the other on to a piece of treble gut, the other end being whipped to a swivel, and the whole being of such a

length that the tail-end of the minnow, when threaded with it, will rest on the upper triangle about half an inch from the bend of the hooks, while only the eye of the swivel protrudes beyond the mouth of the minnow.

By this method the cast or tippet of gut is protected by the swivel from wear and tear by the minnow, while the latter protects the swivel from a cross strain, which results are not attained should the gut attached to the hooks be longer or shorter.

A piece of brass wire should be whipped to the gut throughout the entire length of the tackle, and the whole covered with a whipping of the finest brass wire; thus it will be impossible for the triangles to foul each other, and the tackle is defended against wear from the minnow.

When the minnow is placed firmly on this tackle the whole will revolve together in the water, and the minnow will fly up the line as soon as the fish be hooked, falling back into position as soon as unimpeded.

The angler should be provided with minnows of 2 in.,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  in., and 3 in. in length of body.

The gold minnows show best in clear water, while the silver show well in coloured.

We now come to casting with the Nottingham reel and line; the former should be provided with an optional check, for use in playing a fish or when not in active employment, while the line should be 100 yards or so of plaited silk. Care must be taken to keep the reel free from grit, &c., and a little oil now and again

assists the bearings. Friction between the line and rings, which naturally checks and wears the former, may be much reduced by an occasional dressing with the following lubricant, which also preserves the line in other respects—viz., stearine melted up with a little sperm-oil, or, in default, a sperm-candle melted.

The line should be wound on to the little finger and thumb and immersed in this mixture when nearly boiling, so that penetration may be perfect. The mixture will set when cold, and can be reheated when required.

When cold the line should be wound on the reel, and in its course be stripped of superfluous grease by the aid of a cloth.

The line must be thoroughly dried each day after use, and the extremity well tested as to strength.

Provided thus with rod and tackle the angler preparatory to casting should have only the gut cast and bait protruding from the rod point, unless a very long cast may be required, when the length of swinging line may be increased. The check is next removed from the reel, but so as to maintain line and bait in position; the outside revolving plate of the reel is controlled by finger or thumb of the lower hand.

The angler now turns his back to the river and gently passes the rod round in front of him, until the top is pointing very nearly down stream, employing just the slightest swing to supply the bait with objective force to facilitate the actual cast.

Now, commencing with a gentle but gradually in-



creasing force, he swings the rod, at the same time lifting his finger clear from the reel. The length and force of the swing, combined with the timing of release of the reel, *i. e.* the line, determine the spot at which the bait falls, so in these respects considerable accuracy is required.

The bait flies out, taking the line from the reel, and here the difficulties commence, for although some weight is required to start the drum of the reel in the first instance, it soon gains velocity, the result being that when the bait falls, and ceases to take up the line as released from the reel, the latter winds up the line the reverse way until it brings the bait up with a sharp jerk, and throws the line into extreme confusion.

To avoid this serious catastrophe, which may mean loss of tackle, the reel must be gradually checked by the finger or thumb when the bait is in mid-air, the friction being increased until it is brought to a standstill simultaneously with the bait's fall upon the surface.

This manœuvre will take a deal of practice to achieve, more especially when a long distance has to be covered by a light bait. Nottingham reels, like most other kinds, are generally much too weak in the check, so if not altered by the makers they must be assisted by the fingers on the drum when playing a fish.



THE ANGEL.



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

*A CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS.*

WE have previously remarked in these pages of what enormous advantage to the angler is the knowledge of a river, as, apart from other considerations, one possessed of such should, at the first glance at the water, be able to accurately gauge its height at the other pools, and so save time by making straight away to suitable waters, avoiding those which are too low, and leaving undisturbed for a future day those which as yet are too big.

A bit of generalship is required in angling as in most other pursuits.

It is not a morsel of use flogging a pool while it be too big, as the fish have not settled down, and the catches cannot be rightly commanded, and even if they can be, the water is probably too deep to enable fish to see the fly, so, with this combination, it is any odds against the angler, who only messes the water about for nothing.

If fish he must, he had better be content with casting from the bank on the off chance of attracting the attention of fish lying close in to the sides, anyhow by so doing he will not much disturb the pool.

The experiences which suggested the heading to these notes were gained during a visit to a northern river, during early spring, when the water chanced to be dead low ; indeed, rods were laid aside until the next flood, of which, by-the-by, a steady east wind gave no promise in the near future.

Not a fish had been taken for ten days or more, but we had come to fish, and fish we must ; so after due consideration we determined to make off to a very rough pool which was rarely fishable on account of its heavy boiling waters and extremely rough wading. For these reasons it was fished by few ; indeed, only one or two knew how to wade it, and upon this occasion it had not been fished since the last flood.

Arrived at the pool, a glance showed that it was in grand fettle, and we soon had ocular demonstration that it sheltered plenty of spring fish, some lying right up in the neck, others distributed over the entire length, a distance of fifty yards or thereabouts.

The day was exactly cut out for fishing, the sky being evenly covered with grey clouds pierced now and again by a streak of semi-sunshine. Would that such days could be made to order !

The edge of the pool ran right up to the base of a towering sandstone rock, and the bottom was entirely composed of huge boulders of all shapes and sizes, lying huddled up together, just as if the river-bed had been blasted and left for the express purpose of twisting the ankles of those who might venture upon it. The

monotony of this arrangement was broken now and again by a pleasing variety of boulder which elected to rock to and fro when fairly entrusted with the weight of the human body, the rocking motion usually getting into working order as soon as confidence in stability had been acquired, apparently so that ejection might the more easily be effected. Still, boulders will be boulders in their own sweet way.

About fifteen yards from the water's edge a few sunken rocks reared their moss-grown heads some inches above the surface, as if to ascertain what was going on in the world above, and suggesting that, if but gained, they would afford an easier path, and most certainly a perfect command of the catch.

Such proved to be the case, for after wading middle-deep out to them, the water became a foot or so shallower, but the bed was rough as ever; however, we were thankful for small mercies.

We put the hoop of the salmon-net over the crest of a boulder, thinking it would be handy if required, and prepared to cast with a minnow, as at this point (the neck of the pool) the water boiled too much for any fly; when after a cast or two we spied a curious-looking article floating down the pool a few yards below us, which turned out be our net on a voyage of discovery on its own account. We made a cast for it with the minnow and were fortunate in throwing clean over it, but, contrary to their usual habit, neither would have anything to do with the other: this was the exception

that proved the rule, for up to this time, when on land, both had shown a natural affinity for each other, and have continued to do so since.

There was clearly nothing for it but pursuit, so, with a few words of thanksgiving, we retraced our steps shorewards and made for the nearest shallow, to intercept our property, then wading out took a seat on a hospitable stone in the line of drift, and at length regained it.

We again sought the rocks, taking care this time to place the net in safer keeping, and started with the minnow.

Some fish were rising beyond the reach of the fly-rod, so we had put up a 14-foot bamboo casting-rod, fitted with upright rings, and attached to it a patent reel which effected a long cast, without the addition of lead to the line.

This tackle we had acquired to command catches which were otherwise inaccessible, by reason of trees, etc., and, as far as casting was concerned, the combination acted exceedingly well, but we had had no experience of it with fish.

At the first cast the minnow fell about ten yards from our feet straight across the stream ; at the second, the radius was increased a yard, and almost before the bait had settled down it was seized with such force that, being scarcely prepared for so sudden an onslaught, the rod was nearly wrenched from our grasp.

A couple of angry jerks followed, then up darted the

fish into the very neck of the pool, selecting the heaviest waters for his battle-field, as a proper springer should. Then away he sped through the breakers to the far side of the pool, with the evident intention of taking a rest, but, so as to keep him on the move, we gave him the butt and held him hard.

Here our troubles commenced, for in the act of winding up line, the drum of the reel (which had no cross-bars), instead of remaining rigid, as it was supposed to do until twisted round for casting, commenced to wobble, and each wobble released from the reel two or three coils of line, which the rod took up with a jerk—truly a cheerful situation !

In spite of these vagaries the fish remained on, thanks to the treble-gut cast, and was plainly getting a bit done, when suddenly, to our dismay, the reel itself fell from the rod-fittings into the water, fortunately resting on the rock barely three feet below the surface. Holding the line in the rod hand we made a dash at the reel and replaced it in the fittings, but with the handle the wrong way up for our style of fishing.

This would have made little difference with an ordinary reel, as it would have only been necessary to turn the rod over, but it was exceedingly awkward in this instance, as, having found that with a running fish the cheek of the reel was far too weak, we had been supplying the deficiency by pressure of the fingers on the drum, which these new conditions rendered difficult to achieve. Luckily the fish had no more run left in him, and we



wound him up to within net distance, hauling against the heavy stream.

We had three shots at him with the net, but in the most dexterous manner he managed to keep the major portion of his person outside the rim, until at last we made a final effort and stuffed him in with the hand, being mighty glad of it, as we were getting a bit done, having been a prisoner on the rock during the entire performance. We waded to land with him, which was no easy task through the heavy stream, and as he fell from the net the second of the two triangles broke away from the minnow, leaving him free but safely grassed; so, after all, it was a very near thing. The fish was fresh run and scaled 18 lb.

We were now glad of a rest while stowing away a few sandwiches, and then started with the same minnow, for, having no other, we were obliged to use it incomplete, and were soon into another fish, which took the bait just at the edge of the strong water.

He gave one jump, and we guessed him at about 13 lb., but had no means of testing the accuracy of our forecast, as the minnow fell from his jaws while in the air, which was rather hard lines, for had the bait been perfect he would have been safe as houses; but it served us right for not having been better provided. Fish were taking so well that, somehow or other, we felt pretty sure of a further chance, and as the tail of the pool subsided into slacker water, we determined to fish it with the fly.



We fished fairly well down, when a rising fish urged us to attempt a few more casts; but wading in deep water on rocking stones is no very pleasant job, especially when, as in this case, the surface is barely sufficient to accommodate one's feet, with deep water yawning on either side.

To tell the truth, at the last cast, we were just as pleased that no fish had caught on, and were about to lift the rod, when down went the top and we were fairly into a big 'un. He took a long run, then forced his way up again, and holding him lightly so as not to stir him to resistance, we, with difficulty and considerable danger of a ducking, threaded our way to the pool's edge and dropped down to opposite him.

A fairly easy task now remained such as the angler meets with on most days, and we were about to give him a fair taste, when, without apparent cause, the line came lightly back towards us, the single gut having parted where the fly-hank is attached to the cast, just below the loop.

It probably had been cracked in the strong wind, and so we lost our fish.

This pool, as may be imagined, had had a pretty good doing, yet, the water being so low, we could but have recourse to it the following day, and had no reason to regret the choice, for after a few casts with the minnow were soon into a big fish.

By hopping from one submerged rock to another, with the help of the landing-net handle, we contrived to

gain a boulder lying almost in mid-stream and presenting about as much surface as a chair-bottom, from which we had to play the fish.

He was a perfect demon, and ran in all directions, without rhyme, reason, or any system whatever, and time after time we got him up, simply to provoke another run into the heavy water.

If we could but have followed him it would have been all right, but this was out of the question, as the attempt to kill him fifty yards away would have been simply an act of imbecility, for we should never have got the dead weight up against the stream, so we hauled at him, until, in the endeavour to check a further run, bang went the gut and away he went with minnow and a couple of yards of the best treble twisted. Sickening work indeed, for he was a grand fish.

Our luck was indeed dead out at this pool, and, with no heart to court further disaster, we made up bank to the streams forming the head of the pool, and waded out to command a catch in which we had noticed fish rising.

To reach the catch it was necessary to wade out forty or fifty yards over the surface of the rock to gain access to a gullet in which lay the fish; indeed, a casual spectator of an angler thus casting would wonder how he managed to get there.

We cast carefully down, pitching the fly well into the breaks on the far side, so that it might swing round nicely into the channel which harboured the fish,

and just as the fly came round and was hanging plumb, the rod bent and fastened the hook securely into a good fish, which immediately leapt into the air, revealing himself as a thick one of about 15 lb. weight.

Straight away he dashed, then steadied a bit and gradually permitted of the reeling-up process, until we thought we might number him among the slain; however, as he once more headed down stream, out came the fly, probably never having been fixed, but simply lodging against a bone, if even so much as that. Another reverse!

All pools seemed alike as far as results were concerned; such luck was truly disheartening, especially after by no means easy work; still there was nothing left but to persevere, so we waded out to fish a little run just above, and at the second cast the fly was taken.

Away down the run he went at lightning speed, then faced up and endeavoured to place an ugly rock between himself and us, obliging us to make up after him; then gradually we got him to shore, somewhat surprised that he only weighed 8 lb., as by his play and strength we should have put him down at double that size, which shows that unless a fish comes to the surface it is difficult to guess his weight.

He was the freshest of fresh-run ones and of the most perfect shape we have ever seen.

The wind now dropped round to the S.W. and heavy rain fell during the night, which brought the river down

a foot or so, rendering it unfishable for a couple of days ; and not before it was wanted.

As soon as the water was in order, it was apparent that the fresh had brought up a great number of new fish, and the next day we were fortunate in killing one of 8 lb., but, as it was on treble gut, we made short work of him. We were casting the minnow, while standing three feet or so above water-level, and could plainly see the fish follow it round out of the deep water and ultimately seize it almost at our feet.

Under such circumstances one is apt to commit one of two errors, in either raising the rod too soon, or in slackening the pace of the bait—instead of which perhaps the best plan is to slightly accelerate its movements, and so make the fish anxious not to allow of its escape ; but in any case the body or arms must not be moved.

At this moment the sun came out very strong, so we took up the trout-rod, and in about two hours bagged  $1\frac{1}{2}$  dozen, weighing 8 lb., chiefly with the March brown and dark blea, and in addition lost fully half a dozen, by reason of the March brown's hook having lost its barb and we had none other to replace it.

Later on we reverted to the salmon-rod, but as, for some reason best known to themselves, the fish would pay no heed to the fly, we took up the minnow-rod and cast into a swirl caused by a bed of rock lying in mid-stream, which usually held a fish or two. In response to the very first cast, out sailed a big fish from the gloom, leisurely approached the minnow and quietly

annexed it, just as it was swinging round, and as he turned to regain his stronghold we struck him, driving the hooks well home. He remained stationary for a few seconds as if such experience were new; but feeling the strain continue, he was not long in forming a plan of escape, for in an instant he flew across the ledge of rock and dived to the bottom of the channel beyond; he then tore straight away up it to a distance of twenty yards, making the reel scream to a pretty tune.

Without a moment's hesitation he then doubled round the head of the ledge, keeping deep down the while, in order to make certain of fouling the line, which we felt he had done most effectually; and although he was still running we had no idea in which direction, until he leapt out of the water with fly and line attached, within a few yards of us, having thus completed in his course about seven-eighths of a circle.

This jump settled us, as the line came back, cut by the rock, and so off he went with minnow, treble-gut cast, and about 20 yards of reel-line, which no doubt kept him busy for some little time. We had another look at him, for he cleared the water again quite 30 yards from his first jump, the weight of the line trailing behind evidently giving him the idea that he was not yet free.

The whole episode did not take longer than 10 seconds, and if he had practised the manœuvre a hundred times it could not have been executed more efficiently. He was of about 22 lb. weight.

Since the flood the nights had been attended by



sharp frosts, which made the river quickly fall in, and in spite of the waves beaten up by an easterly gale, for the next two days we did nothing beyond bagging from 1 dozen to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  dozen trout each day, averaging rather over  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. apiece.

In low water salmon take badly after lying in a pool for some days, so we determined to devote the last day of our visit to trout-fishing, and whilst the feed came out in the middle of the day bagged a dozen or so; but the easterly gale was so cold and strong that the rise was of short duration, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that the line could be induced to enter the water, or remain in it when there.

While trout, during the rise of fly, occupy the centre of the current, down which the feed floats, the smolts keep at a respectful distance, contenting themselves with any stray bits that may chance their way; but so soon as the trout cease rising and retire to the stiller water, the smolts taking their place, pick off the cripples and sunken flies. While the March brown is on, at all events, the rise of a trout is easily distinguished by the initiated from that of the smolt, as the former in taking the fly makes a sort of flop on the surface.

At this season of the year the trout are ravenous and fairly rush at the March brown, as it is the first large fly to appear, and no doubt its upright wings, combined with the height at which it sits on the water, require an extra effort on the part of the trout, resulting in the flop on the surface alluded to.



Thus it follows that if, while the rise is on, the line be lifted when it arrives at the edge of the main current, smolts will be avoided and much valuable time saved.

The novice does not always grasp this situation, and often complains bitterly of the time he has lost on account of the smolts.

To return to the subject,—It was now 3 o'clock and the main rise over, yet we were on the alert to avail ourselves, should opportunity offer, of the second rise, which frequently occurs about half an hour after the first has ceased; and during the interval took a rest while disposing of the usual lunch, leaving the cast to soak in the stream so that no time might be lost, as at this season of the year the after-rise is rarely of more than a few minutes' duration.

Just in the nick of time out blinked the sun, and sure enough out came the second batch of feed; so we quickly jumped into the place where the trout were busiest, and soon bagged a brace of half-pounders.

Out shot the line again and we hooked another, that had taken the tail-fly under water, making no surface rise.

This, sure enough, was a big fish, as instead of shaking his head he contented himself with remaining deep below the surface, seeming bent on a long struggle.

Two or three minutes passed by without any signs of his giving in, when turning to our attendant on the bank, we jokingly remarked, "Hullo! Geordie, this one plays just like a salmon!"

“There is many a true word spoken in jest,” runs the proverb, and this was a fair instance, for the manner in which the fish now ploughed his way to the pool’s neck left in neither of our minds any doubts as to his species. The little trout-east cut the water as he sailed through the strong eddies, then, feeling the rod’s constraint, he mended his pace and to our dismay ran about twenty yards of line from the reel.

Such a length had not been unwound for many a day, and as we glanced down we perceived that the line proper was exhausted, and we had got down to some old silk-and-hair line which had been wound on the reel simply as filling, to increase the size of the drum, being knotted to the line proper.

The knot travelled smoothly through the rings of the butt-joint, but stuck in an upper one, and, as we could not follow, down went the point of the rod and smash went the cast, releasing the fish with nearly three yards of gut and the same number of flies.

Judging by the lie of the fish and the way in which he headed up stream, he probably was a fresh-run one we had observed jumping previously, and we regretted having prematurely parted company, although we should most likely have lost him when, at the finish, fetching his dead weight to within net distance.

In future, when fishing trout in a salmon river while the March brown is on, we shall be provided with at least 60 yards of line.

From this episode, which may not occur once in a

lifetime, we at all events learnt a lesson concerning knots, and gained convincing proof that salmon feed on small flies—small, indeed, in comparison with their own size.

We a few days later watched a fresh fish, which had drawn up behind a big stone in smooth water, not more than two yards from the bank, feeding on scores of March browns.

We thus killed during our visit 3 salmon, weighing 18 lb., 8 lb., and 8 lb., and lost six fish, and during the middles of the days killed 64 trout, averaging over  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. apiece, which were in exceptionally fine condition for the time of year, quite a month ahead of the average season, probably by reason of the warm fine weather which had been experienced in these parts during February and early March.

After a week's interval we returned for a couple of days, and killed a fresh fish of 20 lb. and 60 trout weighing 31 lb.; but on this occasion we gave more time to trout, and the water and weather were more favourable.

When fishing trout, in large rivers especially, there are a few points to be remembered.

The golden rule is to *follow the feed*: this is an easy matter when the river can be covered at a single cast, but in fishing a big water when a strong wind is blowing the angler must shift to some particular nook to which the feed is being carried, and there he may meet with more sport in an hour than otherwise would be found in a day.

The largest fish are generally captured while the rise is on, as they early appropriate the most eligible positions, and the smaller fish are only too glad to keep at a safe distance for fear of accidents.

The time of the rise of feed varies in accordance with the temperature of the day and that of the preceding night; a frost, for instance, will much retard it; but anyone frequenting a river will pretty accurately forecast its arrival.

In early spring the rise of the fly is not so profuse as it will be later on, and fish will rise to the artificial fly all through it; but when later on the feed rises, as it were, in clouds, the angler will do little while it is thickest—his time comes shortly after. A floating fly is best during the thick rise.

If the sun come out very brightly and strong for an hour, the feed all gets hatched out at once and the rise is soon over for the day; so a cloudy day with the sun blinking out at intervals of short duration is much better business for the angler, as the rise is thus maintained during two or three hours, and it is not so thick at any one time as to prevent fish taking the artificial fly right through it.

Especially when fishing large deep rivers, it should be remembered that trout upon their return from breeding in the small streams and runners first of all frequent slow-running water and the very tail of the pool, only drawing up to the streamy waters while the fly is out; then, as by feeding they gain strength, they

will gradually draw up and up into the streams, until, by the beginning of May or even a week or two later, when the creeper appears, they have established themselves in their summer-quarters.

The same more or less holds good with smaller rivers, only the pools and streams of course lie closer together. The number of flies a trout will capture in an hour is astonishing; we have seen a 1 lb. trout while in the net cast up on to the roof of his mouth the best part of two score.

While quietly fishing a stream the angler has frequent opportunities to observe the habits of fish, fowl, and fowl which inhabit its depths and banks; indeed many of these seem to get accustomed to the angler with his slow methodical movements, and do not pay the same attention to his noiseless procedure as they do to the casual passer-by.

Of the many curious traits and incidents in animal life which have in this manner come under our observation, perhaps the following, which occurred during the visit under notice, is not the least interesting.

We had gained the bank after fishing a pool, and happening to cast a glance up stream noticed an object projecting above the surface of the slackish water on the far side, about a hundred yards up stream.

The object, whatever it might be, was entirely foreign to the situation, but, nevertheless, appeared fixed, as the stream was setting off from it upon either side.

We hastened to the spot, and were surprised to find



that the object was the head and shoulders of a large salmon of about 20 lb. weight, which was heading up stream at an easy pace, propelled by a force evidently not supplied by his tail.

The head and back of the fish were heavily blotched with marks of disease, which enabled us to recognize him as one we had seen upon previous occasions lying close to the bank at this spot.

The fish seemed absolutely powerless and held his mouth wide open, which gave him an expression of abject terror and helplessness which we shall not soon forget.

In this position he slowly pursued his way up stream for about 20 yards and then disappeared beneath the surface without a struggle.

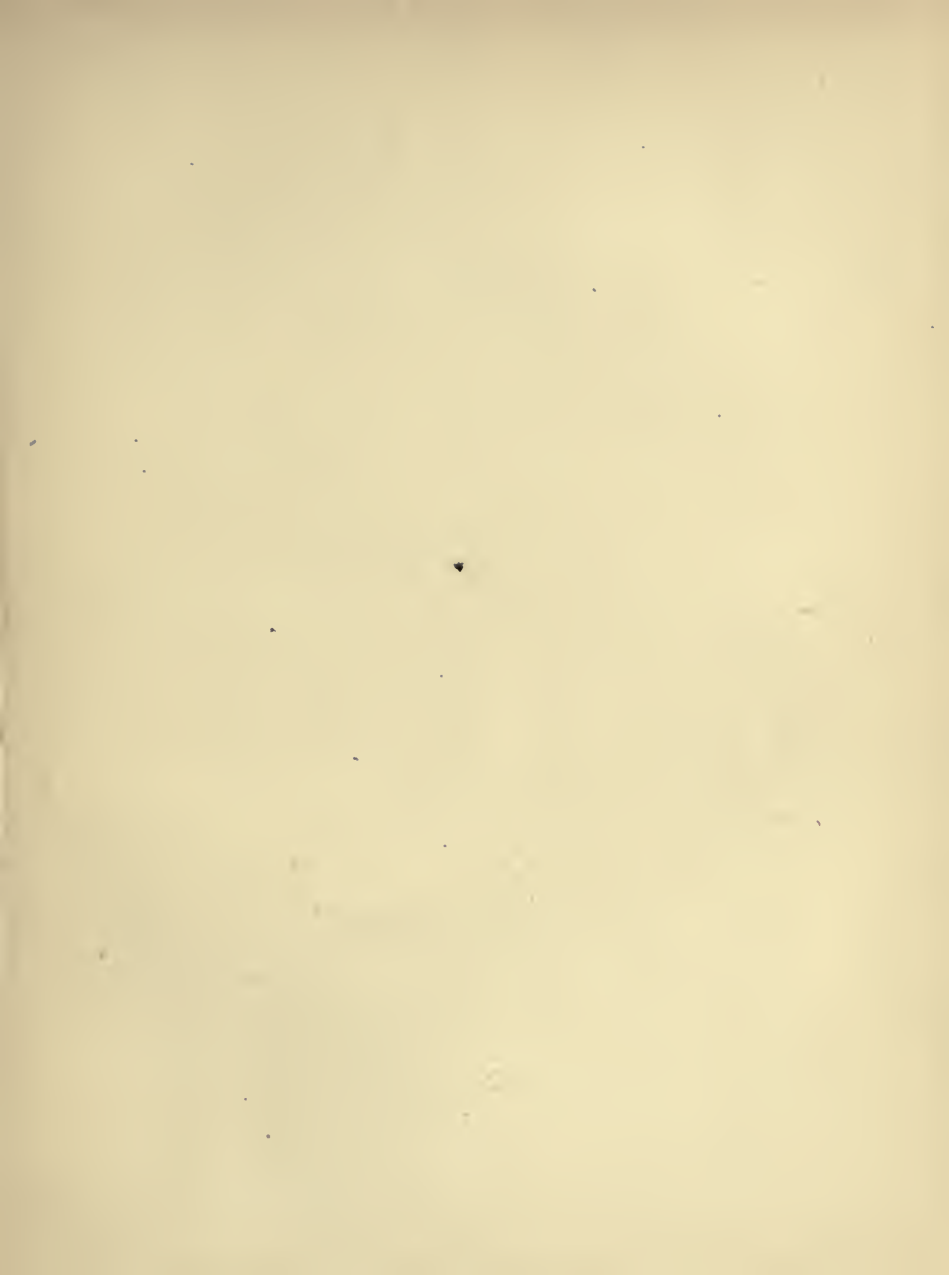
We remained on the look-out for five minutes or more, when he reappeared in a similar manner about 40 yards higher up, and so continued until he arrived at the neck of the stream just outside the strong water, then for the last time disappeared.

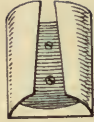
Beyond all doubt an otter had seized him from behind while lying under the bank, and had taken him in easy stages up stream in the slack water, so that he might utilize the stream to swing the fish across the river to his stronghold on the opposite bank, upon which we were standing.

We saw nothing further, which, however, was not remarkable, as of course the prey would be dragged into the den through the entrance under water.

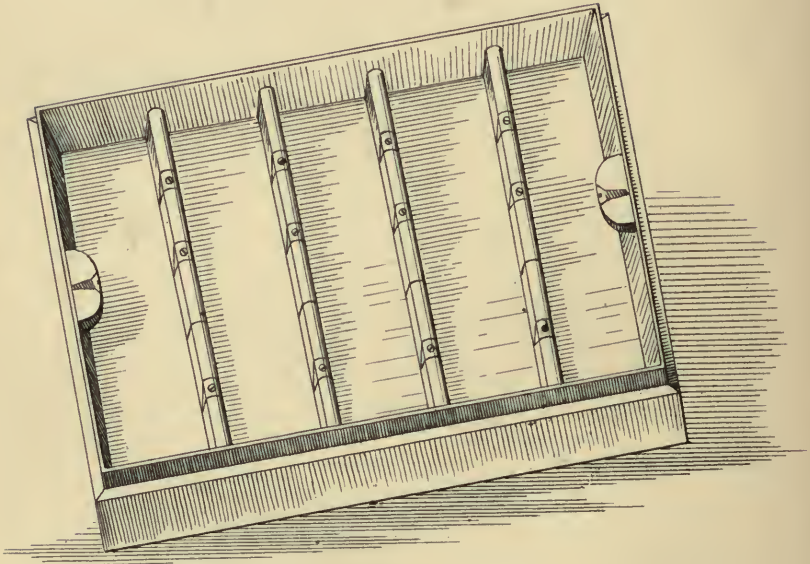
Otters were known to inhabit the bank on our side.







FITTINGS FOR MINNOW BOX.



FLY BOX.

During an idle day we carried out an idea of converting two ready-made boxes into convenient receptacles for flies and minnows, and they answered their purposes so well that we must describe them.

The necessaries are as follows:—

1. Two boxes of preserved plums (these nicely fit the pocket). The boxes measure about 6 in. × 4 in., and are marked in black stencil on the lid "Carlsbad Plums," "Prepared in Germany." Cost 1*s.* each.
2. 6 best wine corks, split lengthwise in two, cost 4*d.*
3. 1 gross  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch screws, cost 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ *d.*
4. 2 sheets glass-paper, Nos. 2 and 1, cost 1*d.*
5. Varnish, cost 2*d.*

Screw the top and bottom on to their respective sides, then paper inside and out, taking care to remove the lettering; cut slips of cork and screw them on to the bottom, also fix two pieces on to the top and bottom sides (to lodge the gut under). Then varnish, and when dry paper and varnish again.

The flies of course can be stuck into the cork at any angle, but, if preferred, kerfs can be cut at intervals with a fine saw to receive the hooks.

To fit up the inside of the box for minnows, cut corks as shown in the diagram, glue and screw them down.

The slots in the cork to receive the minnows should be cut at same angles as those of the body of the minnow, and taper so as to bite the minnow and hold it firm.

The boxes should be marked at one end to show how the lid fits on, as although they are beautifully made they are not perfect; and the lids had better be distinguished by F for flies and M for minnows.

They will carry respectively 20 salmon-flies and 4 minnows.

Taking the original contents of the boxes as good value, the boxes themselves cost nothing, and thus fitted cost 1s. the pair. They answer their purpose much better than any steel or tin boxes, as they keep the contents fixed inside, and, being of wood, will not cut or "neck" any piece of gut that may by chance be left hanging outside while the box is being closed.



SALMON SEIZED BY OTTER.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

*A PRETTY KETTLE OF FISH.*

WE were in an exceedingly pleasant humour one spring morning, for the prospect of a week's leisure lay before us, likewise the choice of two opportunities to fish for salmon—one an invite to a friend's house and river, the other an offer of a ticket giving the right over a good stretch of water in sight of a comfortable little Inn capable of supplying the requirements of an angler.

The probabilities of sport at either river were about equal, and we were prepared to stand ourselves a little treat; yet we were on the horns of a dilemma—swayed on the one side by visions of the pleasant companionship of our host's household, the good things he would have in store for us, and, last but not least, by the advantage of private water.

On the other hand, the advantages of the freedom and independence of the Inn were somewhat discounted by the probability of having to compete with other rods, and take our turn at the pools.

It was long before this knotty point was solved, until

post-time entailed a determination, when, for once in a way, we selected the narrow path represented in this case by the ticket and Inn.

With a lingering regret the refusal of our friend's kind offer was dropped into the post-box, and we could but console ourselves that no particle of constraint would hinder operations—we could rise, turn in, and feed when we might wish.

We arrived the next evening in time to get the tackle to rights for the following day, and ascertained that, since our last visit, a possibility of sale of portions of the water, which the ticket included, had suggested to some occupiers of land adjacent to the river to erect notice-boards at frequent intervals, warning off trespassers in general and anglers in particular.

Upon inquiry at headquarters we ascertained that the boundaries stated on the ticket still held good, and were instructed to ignore the notices of the tenants and others, who were said to be simply trying it on, actuated by a policy by which they could lose nothing and possibly gain; so under the circumstances we did not anticipate serious interference, and after a pipe and glass with some of our old village friends in the kitchen of the Inn, we turned in at a useful hour.

How keen is the angler to commence operations each successive spring! With appetite whetted by enforced inactivity of the close season, he looks forward to the opening day with as much anxiety as the schoolboy does to the holidays while striking off from his calendar



the remaining days of the term, and we dread the season which will find us less keen.

The water was in fine order the following morning, so we made an early start, and after a sharp walk arrived at the first pool and were soon ready to commence hostilities, wading across to an island, the fishing from whose banks had previously been held to pertain to that bank of the main stream which each faced.

But a change had come o'er the scene, for above the heads of the gorse bushes strange timbers stood erect, bearing on their faces in curt phrase the apparently unnecessary information that what gave them support was NOT ICE.

Tempted by curiosity to closer inspection of these, we found that what we had taken to be a kindly warning was in reality but the heading of a strange legend, which in precise terms threatened with severe penalties those who might disregard its ruling.

We were fully determined to exercise the rights we had purchased, so ignored this interference and walked halfway up the island, where the catch commenced, and started casting.

In a short space of time we had a fresh fish of 12 lb. on the bank, which was soon after joined by another of 16 lb. that gave a considerable amount of sport, so we were fairly in it, and then conveyed them to the mainland beyond the jurisdiction of any unfriendly native.

There still remained unfished about thirty yards of

the cast, so we retraced our steps to the foot of the island, and had waded down nearly to the end of the catch, when we became aware of a presence on the bank, and upon facing round were greeted with a cheery "good morning!" followed by an inquiry as to what sport we had experienced.

We replied "pretty fair," and continued casting, noting that the new comer stood about 6 ft. 3 in. in his boots, which, topped with leather leggings and corduroy breeches, gave him a particularly business-like appearance, and imbued us with the idea that it would be no pleasant job to take him on.

A few yards behind him stood a stout cob with a lad on his back, which evidently had brought the visitors over the ford, for the cob was the only wet-footed one of the party.

Whatever might be the keeper's business, it seemed to hang fire a bit and evidently was against the grain, but after much hesitation out it came—

"Sorry to disturb you, Sir; but my orders are to warn everyone off from fishing from the island."

We replied that we had liberty to fish from it, and under such circumstances intended to enjoy the right and exercise it.

"I'm only doing my duty, Sir," he replied; "and if anybody doesn't move off when he's warned, my orders are to throw him in."

In a case like this it is much harder to deal with a deputy than with a principal, as, after all, the deputy,

whether right or wrong in the main question, is no doubt but doing his duty to his employer; yet one cannot afford to consider this; so we replied that in the event of his attempting to throw us in there probably would be two persons with wet skins, adding that, for the present, at all events, we were casting from the bed of the river and not from the island.

This point seemed new to him, but after a few moments' consideration he answered, "That doesn't count, for you've got your back into our place"—meaning that we were casting towards our own shore.

By this time we had reached the end of the catch, but in order to argue the matter out we cried, "Oh! it's quite immaterial to us if we cast face forwards, or turn round and cast backwards over the shoulder; and if the latter will afford you any particular pleasure we have no objection to humour you on this occasion;" and suiting the action to the word we quickly faced about, hoisted the line in air and replaced it in the stream.

It so chanced that the fly when at full length in the air swished round just over the cob's head, who bucked up and neatly laid the lad on his neck, then, astonished at his achievement, stood still.

Fortunately the lad was righted, and so comic was the incident that we all burst out laughing, in which we were joined by a knot of idlers who had gathered to see the fun from the opposite bank.

The keeper, with still a smile on his face, said, "That

won't do, Sir!" but, as we had complied with all his rules, was at wits' end to continue the argument; however, as we moved on, remarking that for the day we had finished with the pool, he suggested that should we apply for leave it probably would be granted; but this was not to the point, nor had we any desire to assist in the establishment of rights claimed by his employer.

The keeper was really a very good fellow, likewise his master, and later on we all became the best of friends; yet this was hardly a pleasant commencement to the week's fishing, but was nothing to what was to follow.

It was with a certain feeling of relief that we walked down to the next pool, where certainly we should be unmolested, and so were the fish as far as we were concerned, for we did no execution with the big rod.

The midday sun now began to hatch out the fly, so as the trout were popping up in all directions the little rod was put up, and after an hour or so's work claimed five or six brace of nice fish; then, shortly after, the rise ceased and we gave it up, as it is weary work fishing "blind" for trout in early spring.

Leaving the trout-rod safe amongst the trees, we made away down to the next salmon pool, having to miss out  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile *en route* not included in the ticket, and were strolling leisurely along with rod on shoulder, congratulating ourselves that half the distance was traversed, when our attention was arrested by shouts emanating from an individual who was sawing the air

by a windmill-like action of the arms, while standing on the brow of an adjacent hill.

He was evidently in a state of unusual excitement, but at the distance was quite inaudible; yet there could be no doubt that some action of our's was the cause of his perturbation; and such was the case, for during a lull in the wind we managed to catch something about having us "up at ——" (the nearest town).

The hilly nature of the country was not adapted to any rapid movement of this person's figure, which appeared to be of the bulky order, and as, to the best of our belief, the right of angling also gives the right of access, we pursued our way without wasting time to argue.

At length we gained the pool, but could make nothing of it, as it was quite impossible to command the catches, so we trudged on, and were just thinking what a fine resting-place for a fresh fish would be that bit of stream on the top of yon head, when up rose a big, fresh-run fish, falling back with a splash which sent the eddies to either bank.

With time and difficulty we managed to wade out upon the ledges of rock until a fair cast could be obtained, then got out the necessary length of line without disturbance of the water, and shot the fly out a few yards above and beyond him.

No laggard was this one, as he came first time with haste, making a break on the surface—but, alas! only to get hard pricked and scared for the day. Bad luck indeed!



We gained the bank and examined the hook, but no fault was there; then the splash of an oar fell on our ears, and, looking up, we saw a boat being propelled towards us from the opposite bank.

More trouble in store! for we recognized the figure which was now approaching us in waders as of one who had, upon previous occasions, tried the scaring-off scheme without success.

He said, in a tone none too civil, "I've warned you off here many a time, Mr. —, and if you won't go I shall have to make you;" adding, "the leave on your ticket is neither here nor there."

We told him that his opinion of our ticket did not interest us, and that he might turn us off if he could, upon which he contented himself with a long harangue about "gentlemen," and nothing in particular.

He followed us down to the next pool, where we killed a 10 lb. fish under his eyes, which only produced rather stronger language and a threat of legal proceedings, but none subsequently came.

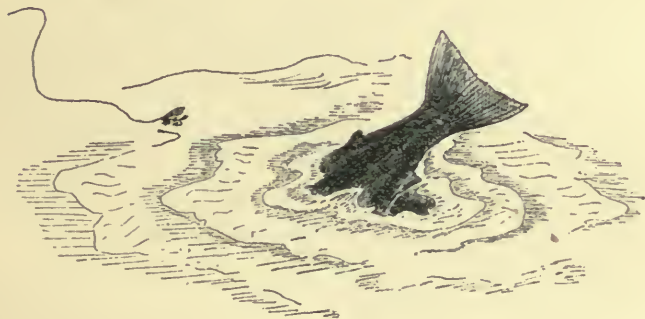
It was now getting dark, so we gave up fishing, having had not at all a bad day, in spite of trouble.

They evidently had leagued together in an attempt, by annoyance and intimidation, to drive anglers from the water; but we knew they neither dared to assault us nor to take the initiative in any legal proceedings, so we fished the week out with fair success, regardless of their threats, which gradually ceased, as they were found to be unavailing.



This style of fishing was certainly not of the pleasantest; still, "All's well that ends well."

The right of fishing from the island was subsequently relinquished by the authorities who issued the tickets; but whether because they had no right, or for other considerations, we could not ascertain, but of course we discontinued to fish from it.



GONE!

## CHAPTER XXX.

*THE INSTINCT AND SENSES OF FISH.*

THE element in which fish exist naturally renders them more difficult of study than flesh or fowl; nevertheless observation and experiment have cleared up many disputed points, and have provided theories, which although perhaps not at present accepted facts, are pretty generally admitted.

Many a habit of fish seems marvellous and incomprehensible to the stranger, but intimacy and study reveal the marvel in its true light, viz. a purely common-sense action; so, in attempting to elucidate matters, it is well to remember this in preference to seeking a more romantic theory.

Fish pay strict attention to sustaining themselves and the reproduction of their kinds; indeed, the males of some kinds, if by accident they have no opportunity to fertilize strictly kindred ova, will impregnate that of other kinds of their own species, should they have the chance.

We have yet to learn that Nature has imposed upon fish any duty or desire of exploration, beyond those requisite for food and reproduction. There would not appear to be any particular reason why fish should travel farther than necessary for their requirements; so when they do travel far, the probable explanation is that their requirements cannot be satisfied nearer at hand.

It is established that, as a general rule, salmon return from the sea to the river in which they were bred, or have subsequently spawned, which is by many considered a most curious trait; but if it were ascertained that fish during their visit to the sea remained in the vicinity of the estuary, the coincidence would be robbed of much that is marvellous.

By his sojourn in tidal waters the salmon loses the parasites contracted in fresh water, and gains food to give him condition and increase of size; so if it should so happen that he can satisfy these requirements while skirting the estuary, he possibly might feel disinclined to wander farther afield.

When a creature is weak and in wasted condition, great exertion is distasteful, restoration to health and strength being the first prompting of nature.

The idea that salmon travel thousands of miles between their periodical visits to fresh water, no doubt is most romantic; but for all that it may not be correct as a general rule, although that occasionally they make

long journeys has been proved, which, under certain circumstances, may be obligatory or even accidental.

When it is considered how much lee way in point of condition the kelt has to make up on return to salt water, and his rapid growth while therein, a course of comparative inactivity does not appear unreasonable.

As regards the sense of hearing of fish, in the absence of discovery of aural structures, it is pretty generally accepted that they possess no mechanism similar in construction to the ear; yet it is possible, even probable, that they possess some organ susceptible to the effect produced by concussion, and capable of conveying it to the brain.

This structure, it is reasonable to assume, is delicate in form, and, as has been suggested, may well be the flat, independent bone situated on the top of the snout.

It may be doubted if this fan-shaped structure is sufficiently delicate to record the transmittal by water of wave-sounds such as those produced by the human voice, and as upon occasions, when close to fish but concealed from their view, we have shouted with no effect, we question this possibility.

Concussion produced by bringing an object in contact with water is another matter, and would be more easily conveyed to the fish; and as when, from a concealed position, we have cast a heavy object into water behind a fish he has responded, we cannot but think that he was informed of the occurrence.

He may have seen the missile in air, it is true; but we think he did not, as the object was cast from directly behind him and he did not shift until the circle of disturbance reached him.

The power of sight in fish, if not more interesting, is of the greatest importance to the angler, who, in spite of all difficulties, must endeavour to appreciate it, although he starts with the knowledge that the result of his studies will be but mere guesswork, for the simple reason that the eye of man differs much from that of fish.

With the purpose of viewing a submerged object, a man may place himself in the same position as fish; but then he merely sees as *he* sees, not as do *the fish*; and the same result attends attempts to gain information with the aid of glass-sided or glass-bottomed tanks, yet some knowledge may be gained by such methods as to the comparative invisibility of different materials and colours.

By the action of the eye a picture is reproduced on the retina, but beyond this there is little similarity between the eye of man and fish; for whereas the form of the fish's is round, that of man's, although convex on back and front surfaces, is much more so on the former than on the latter.

This construction of the human eye affords the means of almost instantaneous contraction and expansion of the lens, thus providing the ability to focus

objects at various distances, a result which is achieved in the telescope by varying the length of the tube, or, in other words, the distance separating the glasses.

As proof of this, if the eye when employed with a near object be suddenly lifted to another farther off, it will be noted that a moment will be required to correctly focus the new picture.

It is difficult to determine the range of a fish's vision as regards submerged objects, for opportunities of observation are of rare occurrence; perhaps that afforded by a bridge is as good as most, as the fish, having become accustomed to the structure and its traffic, behave in a natural manner.

From such observatories we have remarked that natural or artificial flies do not attract the attention of fish until within the range of a few feet, suggesting the inference that they have no very extensive vision; likewise they will remain stationary until the close approach of a boat, but they are easily shifted by a person wading, unless he come upon them from behind.

When wading up stream to command a particular catch we have accidently waded right over fish, and have only become aware of the fact by their haste to escape; but fish see very badly any object approaching from the rear, as their eyes are not set for the purpose, and their habit is to watch for objects floating with the stream.

The facility with which fish discern objects on or above the surface of water is another matter, as doubt-



less in either case the position and power of light above are more important factors than when the object is immersed.

To the immersed human eye, when gazing upwards, the surface, under certain conditions of light, appears as of molten lead, impenetrable to the eye, and a somewhat similar effect is produced by a broken surface—both tending to impede the view of fish as regards matters upon or near the surface; and old anglers may be heard to remark, that “no good will be done with that ‘glint’ on the pool.”

A tray with glass bottom, placed upon rough water, will reveal the position of any object, which previously was hidden, by refraction of light.

When resting in heavy boiling water, fish either cannot see, or, being intent on other business diverting their attention, do not exercise the faculty against objects above water; for upon many occasions while standing at the foot of a fall we have, with a crooked stick, lifted a salmon half out of the water without his having given any signs of alarm, but when we advanced a few yards away he went.

Now, in consideration of the want of positive proof as to the comparative invisibility to fish of materials of various hues when immersed in water, the question arises,—Had we not better be guided by hints provided by nature?

In these pages we have previously had occasion to allude to the heron, and we must revert to him; for,

fisherman as he is, standing knee-deep and close upon his prey, surely the colour of his legs and plumage must be well adapted to his purpose; so if the angler reproduce these tones in his tackle he may be satisfied that he is not far wrong.

Day after day the heron will frequent the same spot, standing on almost the identical stone, motionless, with neck only half stretched out across the stream, at about an angle of 45 degrees, so that he may instantly extend it.

He selects a position within reach of a spot offering peculiar charms for his prey, and fishes, as it were, "up stream;" and as he claims each victim he knows full well that another will soon supply the place of the last.

In cold-blooded creatures the sense of feeling is of very low grade, and if this were not so with fish they would not offer such strenuous opposition when hooked, in direct contrast to the behaviour of warm-blooded animals, when controlled under like circumstances; for instance, a bull with a ring or a horse with a twitch on his nose.

Upon being grasped a fish is momentarily inactive, but he soon overcomes the effect and strives for freedom.

That the sense of smell is enjoyed by fish is evidently the belief of those who advertise for sale variously scented oils, or, at all events, they must be of opinion that others, whom they choose to designate as "sportsmen," hold such views.

It is a matter of difficulty to decide if fish possess this sense, for although they may take with avidity a natural bait, such as worm or insect, the sense of sight may be sufficient to account for their acumen.

Animals and fish are supposed to claim a natural food, but were the young not tutored by their seniors it would probably take them some time to discriminate between food wholesome or otherwise; yet fish will readily seize such unusual food as gentles, and it may well be argued that a sense over and above that of sight prompts them so to do.

The use of salmon roe, we all know, is illegal in the capture of fish; but many of us have seen baskets of trout, which could not have been taken by any other bait, and some of us have seen fish taken with it in out-of-the-way districts; and there can be no doubt that fish draw to it from afar, and we cannot but think that they become aware of its presence by other means than sense of sight; these other means may be correctly described as instinct, but we prefer to define them as sense of smell.

Fish are quick to reject from their mouths articles which they find unsuitable for food; but a certain space of time elapses before they spit them out, such as would lead to the inference that the object had been examined by the mouth and tongue.

We have seen fish take "necked" trout-flies when cast on the water, then expel them under water to a distance of six inches; and although the hook would

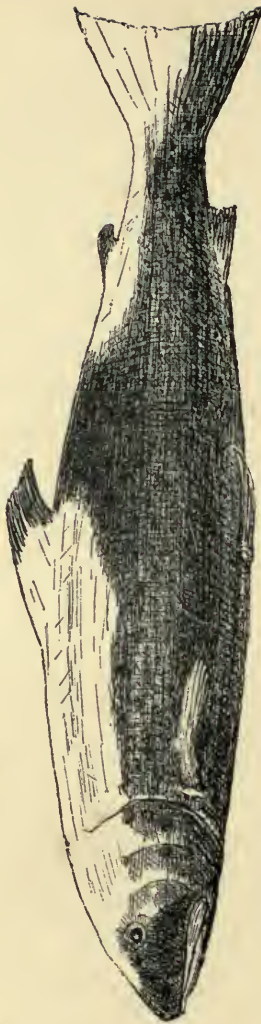
likely enough apprise them of the deception, we think that they were warned by the sense of taste as well as by that of touch.

It must be remembered that fish have no limbs with which to test or experiment, so these duties entirely fall on the mouth, the result being that, frequently, they have to suffer for curiosity and misplaced confidence.

There is one exception, for occasionally a fish will throw his body over an object with apparently no idea of seizing it; we have seen our fly or line repeatedly treated in this manner—for what reason, we have not the slightest idea.

We have also seen a fish, when hooked, fly to another, apparently for assistance, and the fish thus appealed to has jumped across our line, but whether by accident or design it is impossible to say.





A DISEASED SALMON.



## CHAPTER XXXI.

*SAPROLEGNIA FERAX.*

THE magnitude of destruction wrought at the present time by this scourge appears to be little appreciated by others than those who unfortunately, in one sense, have its fatal results brought immediately before their notice, or surely remedies would ere this have been attempted. But no! the authorities at headquarters treat the disease with phlegmatic apathy, the Fishery Boards confine their operations to interment of its victims, and riparian proprietors do nothing whatever.

Under such circumstances it is not to be wondered that the disease is yearly becoming more virulent, while extending its deadly clutch.

Inspectors from time to time have visited the affected districts with no further result, and the time has now arrived when the value of many fisheries will be seriously diminished unless drastic measures of reform be very shortly put into operation.

Rather more than twenty years ago a combination of circumstances had so fostered the germ of this disease that it had made sufficient progress to attract serious attention, and from then until the present date it has steadily and surely gained ground, so that during the first three months of this year near upon 2000 salmon have been removed and buried by watchers and keepers on the Solway rivers alone, while many thousands affected in a less degree have found their way into the market to be consumed by the public, and many others have died in the rivers, where they either now remain or have been washed away.

The disease attacks clean fish and kelt alike, being often contracted by the former when barely out of the tide-way. Within a day or two after a flood, while the water is yet thick, the presence of disease can be clearly detected upon fresh-run fish as they leap above the surface; a week later the majority become affected, and within two weeks after a flood there is scarcely a fish free from it. Fresh-run fish when first affected frequent the swift-running streams as usual, then, as they sicken, may be seen jumping and sliding, as it were, upon the surface as if to allay irritation by friction, flying about like mad things—in fact the uninitiated observer might imagine that the movements of one were those of several, so ubiquitous are the movements of the diseased fish.

Day by day the fungus extends over their bodies and they quit the streams for slacker water, until in

the last stages six or more will lie side by side together close in under the bank, little heeding the passer by.

In such predicament a fish will remain motionless for half an hour at a time, when some sudden impulse causes him to dash about as if scorched with a red-hot iron.

The fungus first attacks the parts of the fish which are unprotected by scales, such as the top of the snout, back of the head, adipose fin, and tail; thence it gradually extends until the entire body may be covered, causing it to appear as if clothed in white cotton-wool. Abrasions of the skin caused by accident are nearly always assailed by the fungus.

The head is frequently attacked so severely that the flesh is eaten away from the outside down to the teeth, while the body is intact; again, the growth may enter the gills, when death quickly results. The disease probably takes six weeks or more to entirely clothe a fish; but should it approach the gills, much less time will suffice to destroy him, so, should there be a lengthy interval between floods, many die.

A flood makes a clean sweep of diseased fish, for the simple reason that they have not strength to contend against its volume, so, fortunately, get carried down to the salt water, which effects their cure; but the indentations left by the fungus are apparent if the fish be captured upon re-ascending the river, for although the scale-covered parts are without blemish, the parts of the head upon which the fungus previously

existed now appear sunken below the natural level, and are of a red colour,—but healthy wounds.

It is unfortunate that the application of a rough cloth will readily remove from the scales all trace of the growth, but should the flesh be boiled its deep red colour will reveal the late seat of disease.

During the first stages of the malady, when the spots are no larger than a crown piece, a proportion of the sufferers will take the artificial fly or minnow, but when further advanced nothing will tempt them.

In addition to the injury to sport, a river thus affected affords a distressing spectacle to the angler and admirer of the salmon, which, instead of selecting the aerated rushing streams, lies skulking under the banks, whose upper surfaces have already been converted into one long cemetery for others of his species, the frequent patches of freshly laid turf bearing evidence of the work of the gravedigger—the watcher, while the occasional dead carcasses lying at the bottom or edge of the water pollute the stream and atmosphere.

Kelts are also affected by the disease and die in vast numbers, but those caught towards the end of March and later are mostly free from it, although captured in pools which teem with diseased fresh-run fish; and as these well-mended kelts have undoubtedly dropped down from the *uppermost waters*, it clearly indicates that *in those parts* the conditions are healthier, as they are less densely inhabited.

It is a fact that an exceptionally heavy run of fish,

such as that which occurred in the autumn of 1891 in the Solway rivers, is invariably followed by a corresponding increase of disease.

This fairly represents the present state of affairs, and holds good to a minor extent as regards many other rivers; in fact each successive season brings recruits to the already long list of polluted waters.

When food material, such as beast or bird, is threatened by disease, authorities or breeders at once take steps to eradicate it, but in the case of fish it appears to be no one's business or concern.

The proprietors of net-fishings in the lower and middle waters see no cause for exertion, as by the assistance of disease every fish in the pool can be counted as gain, for while cowering by the banks half a dozen can be secured in open daylight at one haul of the net, which, after being wiped over with a cloth, command as high a price as healthy fish, unless the head be scarred, when a shilling or so per fish is knocked off for the benefit of the retailer alone, as, in nine cases out of ten, the consumer does not see the head, and would not put the correct construction upon it if he did.

In consideration of the conditions which have so favoured the increase and spread of the disease, it is remarkable that it almost entirely exists in rivers whose watersheds include large districts devoted to agriculture, and it must be noted in what respect these differ at the present day as compared with 20 or 30 years ago.

From various causes the farmer has turned to account every rood under his control, and with this object has drained all low-lying swampy lands, so converting hitherto wasted ground into productive soil. By this process a fall of rain, which formerly took weeks to filter into the river, now takes as many days, with the result that a flood which maintained the river in angling trim for a space of three weeks, now scarcely provides a week—running off as from a duck's back.

It follows that the general volume of water in a river is much less than formerly, and it *would appear* that fish have one third of the time in which to run up and surmount obstructions; but such is not in reality the case, as in many instances the abnormal height of the water at the commencement of a flood actually prevents the fish negotiating obstructions, and compels them to await a subsidence; thus their running periods are curtailed at the commencement and end of a flood.

It results—that the fish are confined to a smaller area than was formerly the case, while they are more strictly protected by law with the object of increasing their numbers.

To eradicate, or at any rate to reduce, the sway of disease, one of two methods must be adopted: viz., either allow more fish to be taken, by the repeal of laws now in existence governing the capture of clean fish or kelt, or both—or else allow the fish more scope in the river.

The latter method, naturally, is the more advantageous,



but more complicated and expensive at the outset; yet it should be given every assistance by the upper proprietors, for by it the fish, which under existing circumstances are in great measure wasted, would be converted into gain to them.

The cost of carrying out such a scheme would necessarily vary upon different rivers, for, in some, miles upon miles of little inhabited water could be opened up at the expense of a ten-pound note; while upon others, cauls with fish-passes would have to be constructed and even artificial lakes made; but sooner or later such work will have to be undertaken, simply to compensate for excessive drainage.

It is sometimes objected that spring fish are not so keen to surmount obstacles as the autumn fish, and seem satisfied to remain in the lower waters; but this is all the more reason why every means should be adopted to induce them to ascend by the assistance of easy passes.

Trout affected by the disease are frequently observed, and should this increase, the result will be even more disastrous than in the case of salmon, for trout make no voyage to salt water, the only natural cure.

The presence of disease in a river also attracts the loafer for obvious reasons, who perambulates any right-of-way along the banks which under ordinary circumstances has no charm for him. If he were to confine his attentions to the diseased fish, not much objection would be taken to him; but unfortunately he is often

of a class which attaches no distinct meaning to the words *meum* and *tuum*, as regards fresh fish, game eggs, and tackle.

In this connection an amusing episode occurred :—

Two such gentlemen marked, from afar, a watcher take and bury a diseased fish ; later on, when the coast was clear, they visited the spot with the object of recovering the fish, but found to their disappointment only the head and tail, the watcher having taken the middle piece with him.

By reason of the long drought throughout the spring of 1892, the disease, in addition to having played unprecedented havoc among salmon, has realized the worst fears, by having extended to the yellow trout, which have been found in large numbers, dead or dying, more or less covered with the fungus, and in both of these conditions have been removed with the landing-net.

With the exception of a few injured by trout-hooks, the smolts appear to have escaped the visitation, and as by this time (25th April) they in the mid-reaches are those which have descended from the upper waters, it would appear that the latter districts are little, if at all, infected.

The following is an instance of the ignorance of Conservators as to the state of affairs in the rivers over whose destinies they preside, and of the puerile, flip-pant manner in which they dismiss the subject of disease.

The quarterly meeting of “ The ——— Conservators ”

was reported by the press, and the Board stated "that the salmon disease had of late much increased, but spring fish had not been affected to any great extent, a large number of the early-run fish having dropped back to the sea."

Probably many fish in the *lowest* waters had dropped back to the sea, but, at the time this report was read, in the *middle* waters as many as 20 diseased spring-fish could be seen in one pool alone, and in about 4 miles of water it is no exaggeration to say that hundreds were observed lying together, in batches of 7 to 10, in slack water by the banks. As they became blind by the fungus the majority fell an easy prey to poachers, who reaped a rare harvest.

A member of the Board realized the necessity of grappling with the disease, and suggested "that the committee should give their serious attention to the desirability of stamping out the salmon disease."

This suggestion, however, was derided by another member, who countered with the remark, "that they should appoint a committee to send a flood down;" and with this inane and frivolous speech "the subject dropped." Apart from the levity of the remark, the latter speaker demonstrated his ignorance of the subject under consideration, being apparently unaware that the remedy he facetiously alluded to had been applied, without success, by nature throughout the last five-and-twenty years.

Under the present conditions of infected rivers a

flood simply sweeps away the diseased fish, but within a few days the malady reappears.

When the health of human beings or animals is ascertained to be injured by overcrowding or defective sanitary arrangements, not only are endeavours made to cure the sufferers, but precautions are taken to prevent the repetition of the initial causes of the evil, by the correction of defects.

It is impossible to gauge the extent to which the present stock of trout may be affected in the near future, and it must be apparent that their non-migratory habits deprive them of the same natural means of recovery as is possessed by salmon ; so, in all probability, each fish attacked—dies.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

*TIDAL WATERS.*

It may occasionally be the angler's lot to fish for salmon or sea-trout in tidal waters, when the following patterns of imitation sea-shrimp will be of service in the vicinity of rushes or weeds growing about narrow channels—the last of the ebb being the most likely time.



Hook.—Small salmon size.

Body.—Yellow stained whole quill.

Tinsel.—Medium silver oval braid, with black silk twist behind.

Hackle.—Black Cock's.

Tail.—Points of black, or yellowish-brown Cock's hackle.

The tail must not extend beyond bend of the hook.

**FINIS.**

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