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St. Valentine's Day,
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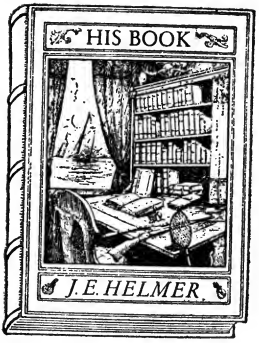
E. Marston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By Meadow and Stream

PLEASANT MEMORIES OF

PLEASANT PLACES

BY

THE AMATEUR ANGLER

Edward Marston

"Such were the days—of days long past I sing,
When pride gave place to mirth without a sting."

BLOOMFIELD.

LONDON
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON AND COMPANY
Limited
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FETTER LANE, FLEET STREET, E.C.
1896

MEADOW, where the young grass gleams, or darkens, according to the flowing of the breath of Spring; copse, where the rod must be carried low, because of the catkins and the crenelled leaves fluttering their new gloss against the fleecy sky; primrose, that may be any colour it thinks fit—for who could take two looks at it now? And then the sly wink of a very knowing STREAM, and the sound even sweeter than our true love's "*Yes*"—the silvery flop of a big trout rising in the limpid alcove from which we mean to haul him out. For all the above joys, see within!

Other delights of nature, too, (so freely afforded to the heart of man, that his small perception multiplies them,) into the bower of the memory come gliding, or jump, upon encouragement, the steps of hope; whenever a friend (whose accuracy has for many years been proven) tells us of the young renewal, which a good man only can achieve by tracing, in the latter days, the quiet outset of the path which has straightened—but not straitened—in the push and hurry of the less Idyllic life.

R. D. BLACKMORE.

January, 1896.

Dedicated

BY PERMISSION TO THE AUTHOR OF

"LORNA DOONE."

DEAR MR. BLACKMORE,

My best thanks are due to you, not only for permitting me to associate your name of world-wide fame with that of a mere *umbra*, a lover of the thymy grayling, an amateur, as well with the pen as with the angle, but also for allowing me to print the graceful tribute to the pleasure of angling, which you have so kindly written for me. My only regret is that my little book is not more worthy of your acceptance.

Yours very truly,

THE AMATEUR ANGLER.

PREFACE.

BOYHOOD, forming Chapter I. of this little book, now appears in print for the first time. My desire in writing it was to endeavour to present to some of my friends—especially to those "in city pent"—a picture of my early life on a farm, a lovely, picturesque old place on the Welsh Borders. I am conscious that I have not realized my ideal in this sketch of some of the incidents of the first, shortest, and most happy years of my life. It was a time of the most healthful, outdoor employment—a time of active enjoyment of all good things about me. I found

> *"Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,*
> *Sermons in stones, and good in everything."*

Writing as a septuagenarian, I can with all thankfulness attribute the measure of good health which I now enjoy, and the freedom from most of the infirmities which too often accompany old age, to the pure air, constant outdoor exercise, and wholesome life and living in which I was trained in those early days.

Doubtless it was the pleasant memories of these boyish

days that have reawakened the charm of angling which has been to me some solatium for the sorrow and solitude of old age.

> *"In 'pastures green'? Not always; sometimes He*
> *Who knoweth best, in kindness leadeth me*
> *In weary ways, where heavy shadows be."*

The remaining chapters are a bringing together, with sundry alterations and additions, of papers which (as was the case with my other volumes) I have occasionally contributed to "The Fishing Gazette." I am grateful for the very kind reception accorded to my previous volumes. This kindness has, perhaps, made me too bold in venturing once more to claim indulgence which I am quite sure is much needed.

*** *The illustrations in this volume are mostly from photographs taken by "Piscator Major" and my son-in-law, A. C. L.*

A. A.

LONDON,
February, 1896.

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BY MEADOW AND STREAM.

CHAPTER I.

BOYHOOD.

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"Fair scenes for childhood's opening bloom,
For sportive youth to stray in;
For manhood to enjoy his strength,
And age to wear away in!"

WORDSWORTH.

I WAS born in the country. My boyhood was spent in an old farmhouse, and few boys ever led a happier life than was mine for the first fifteen years. I was at ease with my surroundings, in sympathy and harmony with all things about me. I had a personal acquaintance with all the bipeds, feathered and un-

feathered, and all quadrupeds of fur, or hair, or wool.

I knew where every hen laid her eggs, in the hay-lofts, or stable-manger, in a bunch of nettles, or out in the hedgerows. The turkeys had no secrets from me. I knew all their odd ways, how they would trample on smaller poultry with scornful indifference, and I have witnessed a pitched battle with a neighbouring clan.[1] I have laughed at their strategic manœuvres to catch each other by the lower jaw, and then hold on till grim death or some outward obstacle separated them; that was their manner of battle: they never used wings or legs, with them there was no sparring or spurring and flapping of wings.

Birds and Eggs.

"Beautiful birds of lightsome wing,
Bright creatures that come with the voice of spring,
We see you arrayed in the hues of morn,
Yet ye dream not of pride, and ye wist not of scorn."

Hurdis.

I knew every bird that haunted the buildings, the garden, the hedgerows, and the surrounding woods, and where to find their nests. I knew all their eggs, and could tell their parentage from their colour, their markings, and their size. Of birds we had an infinite variety in the woods and dells that surrounded the dear old place.

Of their flittings and migrations I knew little and cared less. I welcomed them when they came, but I don't think I noticed or missed them when they went

[1] See "Fresh Woods and Pastures New," Letter V.

away. My knowledge of them was not obtained from books, but from everyday observation. Of course I knew about the swifts and swallows, their presence or absence was too marked not to be noted. Besides, I had seen hundreds of them in long rows on the tops of barns start off all together at a given signal to cross the sea, and not be seen again for many months. The cuckoo's coming and going was another matter which awakened lively interest. To give even a list of the birds to be found on this one farm would take up more space than can be spared. On looking through a list of Herefordshire birds by the late Dr. Bull,[1] I find but few that I was not acquainted with.

At various times of my boyish career I kept a small menagerie of beasts and birds—owls and guinea-pigs, rabbits and squirrels, magpies, daws, and turtle-doves, and at one time a young fox, though that artful dodger soon found a way out of prison.

I have had many a narrow escape and many awkward falls, from my propensity for climbing trees—any tree that I could grip I could go up for magpies' or jays' or rooks' nests; but of all the nests I have seen none were equal to those of Jenny Wren. They were perfect little gems of moss lined with wool and hair, covered over and cosy, the small entrance being at the side. I have found them hanging on a small thorn bush

[1] Dr. Bull's "Notes on the Birds of Herefordshire" is a most delightful book. He was an admirable ornithologist, and loved the birds he describes so well. He mentions another charming book, published in 1851, as being now out of print, "The Songs of the Birds," by the Rev. W. E. Evans, Canon of Hereford. It has since been reprinted and published by Sampson Low and Company.

standing by itself in a field—a tiny green nest, amid green leaves, invisible but to the inquisitive eyes of a boy,

> "What nice hand,
> With every implement and means of art,
> And twenty years' apprenticeship to boot,
> Could make me such another?"
>
> HURDIS.

FIGHTING SHELLS.

In the springtime we searched the hedgerows not only for nests but for land shells—"snails' houses" as we called them—not by any means with a scientific motive. We knew all of them, it is true, that were to be found on our farm, and we classified them, not according to the proper order of the family *Helicidæ*, but in strict recognition of their fighting qualities. Those with the thickest and hardest points were classed as A 1, the rest were nowhere. The boy who possessed a conquering shell, one that had smashed the tops of all other shells in fair and honest fight, was regarded as a conquering hero.

FIGHTING NUTS.

So, in the nutting season, we knew where to look for, in hedge and coppice, the hardest kind of nuts for pugilistic purposes. A hole carefully burnt through the centre with a red-hot knitting-needle, a strong piece of whipcord passed through it, with a knot at the end to prevent it re-passing, a swinging weapon was thus formed. Armed with this, two boys would fight their nuts, each boy in turn placing his stringed nut on the top of a felt hat or cap; his

opponent swings his nut, and tries to smash the other, this is done alternately: the nut that smashes the other is conqueror. One good nut will sometimes conquer scores or hundreds, and reign all through the season, the happy possessor of such a weapon being looked up to as to a king.

NUTTING.

"But of all places at this season give me the nutwood, and the old umbrageous lane, with its tall hazel thickets and hedges. How many delightful days spent in these places with young hearts and congenial souls come back upon the memory."—W. HOWITT.

"Then sprightly Carry shouts in French,
'All boys and girls come nutting.'"

R. D. B.

What a jolly time it was when we ran off, full of glee, half a dozen of us, boys and girls together, to the russet woods; the lasses with baskets, the lads with nut-hooks to pull down the hazel branches, all overladen with the brownest of brown nuts. We cracked our nuts, and with them our little jokes, whilst the jealous squirrels up in the tall trees looked down upon us, barking and scolding, afraid that we should carry away all their winter provender:

"The copse, the lane, the meadow paths,
The valleys, banks, and hedges,
Were green with autumn's aftermath,
And gold with autumn's pledges.

"Wild rose, hung coral beads above,
And satchel'd nuts grew nigh them,
Like tips of a little maiden's glove
Ere ever she has to buy them."

R. D. BLACKMORE'S *Fringilla.*

Never since have I seen such woods for hazel bushes, nor such bushes for profusion of nuts, "brown shellers" of the largest and sweetest kind.

Our baskets were soon filled, and we played "hide and seek" in the bushes. We chased each other home across the green meadows, and gaily looked forward to the time for another such an autumn day,—

"One of those heavenly days that cannot die"—

and hoped that our "sprightly Carry" would be there and ready again to shout,

"All boys and girls come nutting."

SHOOTING.

As boys of ten or twelve we were very unwisely allowed the use of a gun. What glorious fun it was (and wonderful that we did not shoot each other) when we started off on a spring evening to the big fields about a mile away from home, which were for a long distance bounded by a wood. Here we stalked and fired at scores of rabbits out in the field feeding on the young oats and barley just peeping above the ground. We fired through hedges or gates, and sometimes we actually killed one.

RAT-CATCHING.

Another fine time of excitement was when the rat-catcher came with ferrets and half a dozen terriers to clear the wheat ricks of rats and mice. Ferrets were put into the runs, whilst dogs, men and boys with clubs, stood in anxious expectancy all round the ricks. Presently a rat makes a bolt, and Towser, or Bob, or

MEADOWS AND ELMS, OLD FARM.

Vixen snaps him up, gives him one scrunch, and he was as dead as the Sphinx. Hundreds of rats have I seen killed in this way in a single day's sport.

Sparrow Pie.

Then wasn't it glorious when, on a dark winter's night, we got one of the farm servants to arm himself with a large "riddle," fixed on the end of a long pikle (as it was called, or pitchfork), and a horn lantern fixed at the back of it, and we all sallied forth to the stackyard? The riddle was carefully placed against the eaves and sides of the rick, and—attracted by the light and frightened by the rumpus—scores of sparrows would fly out; and that was how we got "sparrow pie."

My Pony.

Our farm was a very large one, and, as I have always thought, beautiful in a romantic sense, because of the great variety of its picturesque scenery, its undulating green, lush meadows, its gigantic elms and oaks, its woods of every kind of timber and shrub, and its brimming river. Was I not proud when I was first commissioned to ride my pony round, sometimes to count sheep, ewes, and lambs, and see that the shepherd was on duty on one side of the farm, and then to gallop off to look after cattle and colts on the other side!

That was a plucky little brown mare of mine. I one day rode her forty miles—galloping most of the way. I had ridden with my father to market ten miles away when he remembered that he had in his

pocket a document which had to be delivered to the revising barrister the same day at another town ten miles off. He sent me off with it with all speed, and I galloped all the way; I got to the town hall, and handed it to the venerable old gentleman who, I remember, patted me on the head and said I was the smallest churchwarden he had ever seen. Then instead of going home, as I ought to have done, for it was only seven miles, I galloped back to the other town and caught my father who was just starting on his return journey. My poor pony was in a white foam from head to foot, and I got a severe reprimand for my cruelty to the mare. I thought I deserved praise for my pains, it never occurred to me that my willing pony was a sufferer, and she had still to carry me ten miles, but fortunately I was a light weight; and after a good rub down and bran mash she took me home bravely.

A Sad Tragedy

was more than once mixed up with the comedy of these boyish days. One of my uncles had taken a fancy to and bought a beautiful bay pony which had only partially been broken to harness, and had then been turned out to grass with a number of young colts. Several of the farm servants had been sent down to the *Tors*, as the large woodland pasture of about fifty acres was called, to bring the pony home.

I rode my pony with them; we managed after much scouting and shouting to drive the unruly herd up into a corner of the field, and then to get a halter over the pony's head, after many bolts.

Old Sam Griffiths succeeded in catching him. No sooner had he mounted him, bare-backed, and with only a halter on his head, than the pony bolted after the colts. Sam was a good rider, and stuck on manfully till the pony made a dash under the low, spreading branches of a large oak tree. Sam was struck against a big branch and fell on his head to the ground.

When I galloped up to him I found him on his back, his eyes half closed; he gave a convulsive gasp and was gone: his neck was broken.

Poor old Sam! I have a vivid recollection of him to this day. He was a little man with a large head, and a very pleasant face, his hair reddish grey. Whenever I have in after years seen the late Lord John Russell, I have always been reminded of him.

The men soon came up and took proper care of him. I galloped home full of the sad news. I was telling my mother and sisters, I suppose in a very excited way, forgetting that one of the servants was Sam's daughter—and she was standing near. She uttered a terrible scream and fell down in a swoon.

That was a time of lamentation and mourning in our village, for old Sam Griffiths was beloved by all: his daughter as I remember her was a pretty and modest good girl. I was then but about twelve, and it is curious how both of them, and, indeed, all the people in the neighbourhood are still photographed in my memory after nearly sixty years' buffeting with the world.

An Awful Accident.

Not long after this another terrible accident occurred which caused a sensation not only in our village but throughout the county.

They were repairing a pump at our school, which was supplied from a deep well. A workman had gone down in a bucket without testing the air; he gave no sign of returning; another man went down; he too made no sign; a third man went down, and no sign came up from him. Then the bystanders became alarmed—the headmaster and the second classical master were at their wits' end, when the drawing-master came on the scene. He immediately sent a lighted candle down, which was at once extinguished; it was thus he discovered that there was carbonic acid gas down below, and he nobly, at the risk of his life, volunteered to go down; he knew the risk. He placed a piece of wood between his teeth to prevent their closing, and down he went with ropes and proper tackle: presently he was hauled up with one of the men—dead. Down again, and up with a second. A third time he descended and successfully brought up the third; then, although all but dead himself, he set himself at once to try at least to revive the three men, but it was in vain; they were all dead men. He told me afterwards that he had hoped to recover them by bleeding, and he accordingly cut great gashes across their temples, but with no result. I do not vouch for the absolute accuracy of this description of his mode of treatment, for I was but a child at the time. I was present, and I have a distinct recollection of seeing

him crawling on the ground with a lancet in his hand : whether his treatment was right or wrong I know not, but I think it must be admitted that he performed a most heroic deed, and in these days he would have been recognized as a hero, but, I am sorry to say it, in those old times such heroism was not fully considered. I fancy no Royal Humane Society then existed to award its gold medal for his bravery, and as far as I can remember nothing was done to reward him in any way for his noble self-sacrifice.

He was my drawing-master, and I am sure we were very good friends. I have a distinct recollection of the little man. He was very short, thick-set, and rather bow-legged ; of a sallow complexion, and a somewhat Jewish cast of countenance, with bright dark eyes ; he was of a kind and gentle nature. He said I had some taste for drawing, and I regarded him as a wonderful artist. A painting of his which was awarded to me as a prize is in the possession of one of my family to this day. I am afraid it does not quite justify my boyish enthusiasm.

He left the school shortly after this event, consequently my artistic proclivities remain to this day undeveloped. I have never heard of him since, and of course he has joined the majority long since. The other masters, both of them clergymen, lived to a good old age. One of them, with whom I had kept up a fitful correspondence up to the time of his death, died only a few years ago.

TROUBLE.

Our "Old Home" life, joyous and pleasant as it was for the most part, was not altogether made up

of mince-pies and apple-tarts. There were times when we got into trouble.

My good father was a very strict disciplinarian, though he never had occasion to whip me but once, and then he certainly did not spare the rod. It was, as he believed, for disobedience and lying. He had strictly forbidden me to go a-bathing with some boys who usually went to the river in our meadows. One day I had been fishing for minnows in a "carrier" lower down the river, and on returning homewards up river I came upon these boys in the water. They strongly urged me to join them for a swim. I resisted the temptation, and went home with a sense of being very virtuous.

What was my surprise then when my father met me with a severe look in his face and a light riding-whip in his hand. He took me into the dairy and locked the door, so that my mother should not come to my protection. Then he gave me a long lecture on the sin of disobedience, and he quoted Scripture to prove to me how necessary it was for him to perform the sad duty of giving me a good thrashing!

"But, father," I cried, "I have *not* been bathing with those boys! I——"

"Stop!" said he. "Don't add the sin of lying to that of disobedience. I *saw* you myself!"

He *had* seen me, at a distance, with the boys on the bank, and he jumped to the conclusion that I had been bathing with them.

Then the whip was swung with vigour over my shoulders. He certainly spared me not. My back was covered with great wales which tingled for days after.

VIADUCT COTTAGE, OLD FARM.

The aggravating part of it was that when he had done, he protested with tears in his eyes that it was certainly far more painful to him to chastise me than for me to be whipped. I entirely dissented from this doctrine, though I am bound to confess that, urchin-like, I wished it were true.

I was sent off to bed without my supper, and told severely to pray to God to forgive my wickedness.

I convinced my dear mother when she stole up to my room and gave me a kiss and a hunch of bread and butter, that I was perfectly innocent, but that my angry father would not listen to my explanation.

I believe that when he heard the facts he was a bit ashamed of his hasty anger; he never apologized to me—that would have been far too undignified—but I think it was a lesson for him which he never forgot. Ever afterwards he was most tender and affectionate.

Perhaps it was but fair retribution after all, for I got into many a scrape for which I well earned an equal thrashing, but of which my good parents remained in blissful ignorance.

Dangerous Use of Firearms.

I am not a little surprised now, on looking back at the thoughtlessness of these good people all—both my father and my uncles—that they should have entrusted us mere children with the unconstrained use of fire-arms. On two occasions we all but enacted a fearful tragedy.

The first was once when I was on a Christmas visit to an uncle. I was entrusted with his gun and

ammunition as a matter of course. I was in the farmyard, round which was a high stone wall; standing three or four yards from this wall I was aiming just above it at a blackbird in an apple-tree in the orchard across the road. Just as I fired, a tall hat appeared above the wall. My gun was pointed slightly upwards, but I believe a great part of the charge passed in an upward direction through the top of that hat. Had the workman who wore it been three inches taller he would certainly have been saved from the sin of blasphemy—for he promptly alarmed me with his curses—but I should have been sent to gaol, tried by jury, found guilty of murder, and hanged by the neck till I was dead! That was the terrible thought that overwhelmed me, and I fervently thanked God for having made that man so short and the wall so high, and for so mercifully preserving me and the man from such an awful fate. It was a long time before I could venture to touch a gun again.

Another Fearful Accident with a Gun.

Not long after this an equally ghastly event happened to my brother in our own home.

He was younger than I, and yet he, too, had been allowed to fire away at rooks or wood pigeons around the house. He had brought the loaded gun into the hall, and was fooling somehow with the cock, or trigger, when, bang! it exploded. The charge smashed through the parlour door, and lodged in the leaf of a large polished oak table, where the shot remain to this day.

There were two tailors at work in this room, for-

tunately not sitting on the table as was their usual custom. I believe one of them fainted, and the other was driven crazy for a time, and no wonder. Surely a merciful Providence overruled our monstrous folly.

Harvest Home.

The day on which the last load was carried home was always one of festivity in the old home. I catch a glimpse of it now, and it is like taking a peep at another world and another stage of existence, as I see the men at a table the full length of a large kitchen—twenty or twenty-five of them—as jolly as men could be. They had put themselves outside of the best part of a four-year-old wether, a large round of beef, and puddings and pies galore, with good cider to match. The dinner being over, we youngsters were allowed to go into the kitchen to hear the singing.

My father took the head of the table, made a short speech, and then called upon old Joe Hammond, the head waggoner, for a song; but Joe, too modest to begin, begged to be excused, hoped *Maister* would set them all an example, and he would try what he could do later on. "Maister" stood up at once, and started with a song of which the refrain was:

> "Like a fine old English gentleman,
> All of the olden time."

Another of his songs began something like this:

> "My friend is the man I would copy through life
> He envies no mortal, he harbours no strife," etc.

Another, I think, was about a woodpecker; it began:

"By the side of yon sumach,
Whose red berry dips
In the gush of the fountain,
How sweet to recline."

He sang very well, and played solemn music on the piano to his own satisfaction.

By this time old Joe had got his throat clear. He began, in a stentorian voice, a song on the battle of Waterloo, of which I only remember the first verse:

"In aighteen hundert an' fifteen,
Of June the aighteenth daay,
We fought the French at Waterloo,
An' made them run awaay."

Then Tom Dyer, the ostler, gave us a sporting song about "Little Brown Bess." This extraordinary mare

"Had won more money on this very daay
Than a coach and six horses could carry awaay."

Bill Watkins, the cowman, was a tall, handsome young fellow, upright as a grenadier, with black mutton-chop whiskers and curly black hair, and conceited and vain as a peacock. They called him "Swaggering Billy." He fancied himself a poet, and composed a song in praise of himself, and sang it; it began in this way:

"Six feet high is Billy's portion,
I know he is a clever lad,"

and so on for several verses. He had a rich, powerful voice, and sang very well; his music atoned somewhat

POLLARD OAK.

for the coxcombry of his verse. Swaggering Billy was not a bad prototype of the Ingoldsby "Smuggler Bill:"

> "Smuggler Bill is six feet high,
> He has curling locks, and a roving eye,
> He has a tongue, and he has a smile,
> Train'd the female heart to beguile."

Old Bob, the *oont-catcher*,[1] celebrated the country round, also, as the best mower—he could mow from three-quarters to an acre of grass in a day, the average of good work being half an acre. The old chap knew a good deal about hares and pheasants, as well as moles. He sang a song commencing:

> "'Tis my delight, on a starlight night," etc.

Next came the turn of Tim Hughes, the shepherd, a tall, gaunt, lean old chap, over six feet; he had a dumpy little wife just up to his elbow. Abraham Lincoln and his wife ("the long and the short"), whenever I have seen their portraits, have recalled old Tim. He was tongue-tied, and had a curious lisp. His song smacked of the Arctic regions, though certainly he had never been ten miles from home in his life. This was the first stanza as I remember it:

> "Hereth a whale, hereth a whale,
> Hereth a whale fith, he crieth,
> An' she blowth at every spring, brave boyth,
> An' she blowth at every spring."

Tim was the son of a celebrity in her day—"Betty Hughes, the witch of Fowden." She had been consulted, it was popularly believed, by the nobility and

[1] Mole-catcher.

gentry, and even by royalty, in the troublous times at the end of the reign of King George III. A coach and six had been seen at her cottage door, and many other chariots besides. I have frequently, as a child, seen the old woman in her garden, bent almost double with age, and leaning on a tall, weird-looking staff, the handle resembling a note of interrogation upside down ⸮. I remember her long hooked nose, the pointed chin which almost met it, and dark, piercing eyes; she was in truth the very personation of a witch, and we always passed her cottage with fear and trembling. Her witching days were over in my time. I never heard of her having done harm to man or beast, except that she was said to turn herself into a black cat and catch rabbits, which, after all, was a venial sin.

"Auld Lang Syne" they all sang together, and "God Save the King" closed the evening, William IV. being then on the throne.

A Lovely "Little River,"

> "'Twill murmur on a thousand years,
> And flow as now it flows,"

formed one boundary of the farm for a mile or more. I was never an enthusiastic sportsman, and after the terrible accident I have already described I abhorred the very sight of a gun, and so I betook myself with all the more zest to the calm, quiet, innocent, gentle art of angling. I took to fishing just as naturally as a baby moor-chick drops from its shell and floats on the water; first with a hazel rod, a thread line, a bent pin, and a worm. Then came a time when I began to manufacture my own tackle.

The village carpenter lent me his valuable aid in making a wonderful rod in three pieces with tin ferules complete; floats and lines I made myself. There was on the farm a fine easy-tempered old grey mare with a long white tail. Old Joe the waggoner was proud of this tail, and would never allow us to touch it. Our method of obtaining material for our lines was to catch her in the meadow, coax her up to a gate with a wisp of hay, and while one of us stroked her old nose, the other selected a good hank from her tail, and tied it firmly to a bar of the gate; we then gave her a swish, and off she went, leaving a nice bit of her tail behind her. She enjoyed the fun, and we got as many long white hairs as would make half a dozen lines.

We were adepts in line plaiting, nine hairs knotted together, and then divided into three strands of three hairs each. Each strand was passed through a bit of goose quill half an inch long; into these quills were fixed three bobbins, just firmly enough to allow the hairs to slide out as the plaiting went on; and our machinery was complete. The knotted end being fastened to some fixture, not infrequently to the knees of our trousers, and the spinning began; when a hair dropped out another was inserted. Gradually the number was allowed to drop down to six, and thus we got a well-tapered line of five or six yards long.

In process of time I became the proud possessor of a good fly-rod. A friendly keeper supplied me with flies, and taught me how to make and cast them. Under his able tuition I became far more expert in

casting and catching than after a broad hiatus of almost sixty years I can boast of being now.

The days of my boyhood passed rapidly away, and at the age of fifteen I had to quit school and the old home for other scenes and other experiences.

My father was an only son, and the last of his race until his own sons were born; his descendants now number about eighty.

My mother had seven brothers and five sisters. All lived to be married; and now, in the year of grace 1896, there is only one solitary male descendant bearing their name, and he, now a lad of sixteen, narrowly escaped coming into this world at all; his father never married till he was sixty-five, and died very soon after this son was born.

Two of my uncles had died before I came on the stage, but five of them I knew well. They were all substantial, well-to-do farmers, fine stalwart, honest, God-fearing men; the old homestead from which they sprang had been in the family certainly for nearly three hundred years, as an old family Bible and tombstones in the churchyard testify. They all lived within a circle of twenty miles from our home, and one of the joys of our boyhood was to go a-Christmasing by turns to these jolly farmers.

We go a-Christmasing.

We had two ponies between four of us, and we travelled on the plan of "Ride and Tie." Two horsemen would gallop on for two or three miles; then dismount, tie their steeds to a roadside-gate and walk or run on. When the pedestrians came up,

they mounted and cantered a mile or two beyond the pedestrians, and so in turn till we reached our journey's end.

In those good old Christmas holidays, which lasted for six weeks, the atmosphere was always bright and bracing, the roads always hard with frost, the hills and fields covered with snow; ponds and lakes were always frozen, and we had pleasant times. We also visited an old uncle and aunt of my father's, and there we had our grandest revels, for there were two grandsons and two granddaughters of our own age.

They dwelt in an old manor house, and nothing pleased the old gentleman more than to have a houseful of youngsters about him. There was an ancient hall connected with the house large enouh to hold fifty, or perhaps a hundred young folks, where we danced, and played all sorts of games—"blind-man's buff," "turn the trencher," "egg in the hat," "drop the glove," and others I cannot recall. My great-aunt was a wonderful little woman. I remember well her mob-cap, rosy cheeks, and happy, cheerful, chirpy ways, above all, her delicious mince-pies. She lived to be ninety, and as she died about the year 1840, she must have been born 146 years ago—about 1750. I remember seeing in this hall, hung over the wide fireplace, a plaited thorn which had been blackened over a fire made at midnight out in the fields, about the time of the young wheat just coming out of the ground, by the servants with, I fancy, some sort of incantation. Then it was brought in with much ceremony, and hung up in this place, where it remained for a year, when it was burnt, and the same

ceremony repeated with another blackthorn. This blackened thorn was supposed to be the emblem of good luck to the household, and to act as a charm against mildew or smut in wheat.

My last recollection of the old gentleman was seeing him in his armchair with a cat on each knee and one on each shoulder, all asleep and all happy.

My first Journey to London.

On the 29th of May (Oak-apple day), 1846, my father drove me ten miles across country to take the coach for a sixty miles' drive to Birmingham. It was a lovely day.

This was about the time of the great railway mania. The top of the coach was full of railway engineers, surveyors, and speculators, and their talk was of new lines, cuttings, tunnels, and viaducts. It was the opening out of a new world to me, who had never seen a railway. I travelled by train from Birmingham to London, and my first night in a second-rate hotel near the station (for I had arrived late at night) I am never likely to forget. I suppose my wholesome flesh was a sort of godsend to starved inhabitants of that bed of a kind that I had never even heard of before.

I had quitted my dear old home with regret, and that night I bitterly repented having left it. I was, I am sure, the first and the least worthy of all my race who had ever dwelt in London, and I longed, how I longed, to leave it. But I had come to London to make my fortune (that elusive phantom), like many another ambitious youth. I had brought with me a good constitution, a "little Latin and less Greek" in

my head, a little money in my pocket, a good conscience, full trust in Providence, and a determination to work.

My good mother died a year before I left home, and shortly after I left my dear old father gave up his farm and retired to another county.

Only once after many years have I found the opportunity of revisiting the scenes of my childhood, and then all was changed,

"All, all, were gone, the old familiar faces."

All my uncles and aunts were dead—my father alone survived. He was born 106 years ago, and he died in 1875 at the good old age of eighty-four.

I was a fairly good angler in my youth, but for nearly forty years, immersed in the worries, anxieties, and ups and downs of a city life, I never touched rod or line.

When I took to angling again, it was in Dove Dale, some twelve years ago, I discovered that I was a mere novice. I had forgotten how to handle a rod or cast a fly. I was a mere "duffer," ages behind the age. I had to begin all over again; my early education was quite lost upon me. Under the guiding hand of *Piscator Major* (whom I saw christened) I have of late years been slowly improving, but even now in this my *Jubilee year* of London life, I am still, as the following pages will show, but a mere amateur angler.

CHAPTER II.

AN EASTER OUTING (AND INNING).

April 15th, 1893.

Splendid March—Gilbert White's weather record—Troubles—Netting for jack—Coming to grief in a quicksand.

THE oldest inhabitant whom I have encountered lately, and he was between eighty and ninety, assured me that he never remembered such a splendid March as this last one. It by no means follows that during the eighty odd years of the old man's memory there has not been many such March months.

I have seen many months of March in my time, but in such matters my memory is so treacherous that I could not say with certainty what sort of a March we had even two or three years ago. I leave it to chronologers to say how many such months of March there may have actually been during the time of this old man's pilgrimage. My general impression about the month of March is that it has almost always been cold and wet, and sleety and snowy, with biting

easterly and north-easterly winds, and altogether disagreeable.

My old and venerated friend, Gilbert White, gives us a record of the weather for every month for twenty-four years (1768-1792), and of all those months of March there is only one, that of 1770, which can be quoted as even approaching the one which has so pleasantly, and alas, so swiftly just passed from us, all the rest have the bad character my own memory attributes generally to this ungenial month.

"1770, the whole of March frosty with bright weather."

Our March has been somewhat "frosty," and I know not what our fruit growers think of it. My own small garden seems to have enjoyed it thoroughly, though now looking out for the warm April showers, which as yet do not seem to be forthcoming; apple and pear, plum, apricot, and gooseberry buds all appear to be plentiful and firm. Gilbert White's April of 1770, following the bright March, was "cloudy, with rain and snow."

So much for the weather, bright and beautiful it has been since March came in, and still continues, for April though now far advanced, hath not yet "with his sweet showers pierced the drought of March, and bathed every vein in the balm that produces flowers," as he did in Chaucer's time.[1]

Such bright weather with an easterly wind, however gentle and breezy it may be, is not the best kind of weather for angling for trout; nevertheless when

[1] Leigh Hunt's paraphrase of Chaucer.

the Major said to me three or four days before Easter, "Will you go a-fishing?" I responded with alacrity, "I will"—and so it was that on Thursday, March 30th, we found ourselves on the banks of the ever-pleasant Itchin. My old henchman was there, hale and hearty and eighty-two as he often told me, and ready with net and basket. It was in full stream, bright and clear as crystal—but the fish were not "on the rise." Dry fly-fishing was not practicable, our only chance being to fish the stream—a kind of fishing which the accomplished Major somewhat despises. He prefers crouching on bended knees half an hour at a time waiting for a rise, and then to drop his deadly fly, dry and floating, just above that fated trout, which would of course soon find his way to creel. But in this very bright weather even the Major soon grew tired of his favourite method, and, like me, he mostly devoted himself to the streams and rippling shallows. Fishing in this way and wading down stream, casting straight across and allowing the fly to float down slightly under the rippling water, I was the first to get a rise, and a nice half-pound trout came into old Davis's net. This was a fair beginning. I soon hooked another and brought him in, but, alas! he was a grayling of a pound and more—out of season, he had to go back with grace to grow bigger, please goodness, to give me another chance at him next autumn.

And now our troubles began. The Major was unfortunate, he caught one 1½ lb. trout, and then neither of us could catch anything but grayling. "Confound these grayling," we said; "what right have they to

be rising like this when they are not in season?" There must be ten grayling to one trout in this bit of our river—they really ought to be thinned out, or else they should keep themselves down till they are wanted. One proof that they are more numerous than trout is that when we netted the river for jack in February last we brought up at every draught three or four or six grayling and only a trout or two. On that interesting occasion of netting for jack, which I had never witnessed before, and which deserves a longer description than I can now devote to it, we caught twenty-two jack, varying in size from 2 lb. to 10 lb. A curious lot they were. One of them had an ancient gash in his side, in which one could bury one's finger, but he was otherwise in good health, and as lively as he could be expected to be when turned out to grass; another disgorged a live quarter pound trout, which went back to the river to grow bigger. One trout was caught with four flies hooked to his lips, and bits of gut sticking out like a cat's whiskers.

They were netting again a few days afterwards when I was not present, but our valiant keeper, old Davis, was there to see that our trout and grayling were properly put back. Davis vows that on that occasion he saw in the shallow water a jack of about 4 lb. go quietly up behind a 1 lb. trout and swallow him at a gulp. The trout was entirely taken by surprise, and was allowed no opportunity for making a splash about it. The most curious thing was that immediately afterwards they drew the exact spot where he had seen this tragedy enacted, and their haul brought up amongst others a 4 lb. jack in which they found a 1 lb. trout,

which was already partly digested! Now ye learned piscators, tell me if this was the same jack and the same trout which Davis had seen performing as above not many minutes before? But to return to our trout and grayling.

I had another good trout, over a pound. I caught him in a very awkward position. I hooked him down stream nearly on the opposite side; I could not get below him on account of a deep pool and a hedge, so I had to draw him across and up stream. He fought well—I never had such a fighter. I was in middle of the river, and I got him at last to close quarters, when he sank and sulked in a bed of weeds, and there he held on tight and motionless. At length I got the net from Davis and gave him a prod; out he leapt, but still hook and gut held on to him, till finally after a few minutes' struggle I got the net ouside his pretty pink-spotted body.

Now, although the pesky graylings kept our baskets light, I must say they gave us good sport, and the game was lively and interesting. There was scarcely a fly to be seen on the water. Occasionally one came across a solitary "March Brown." We were too early for them, the nights being very cold; but the days were glorious, and I assure you, my friends, we had a most delightful little holiday. All nature was alive and gay, the air was exhilarating, the birds sang their sweetest songs in the woods, and in the trees and bushes by the river. A sweet little black-capped fly-catcher followed me all down the river on the opposite side; he seemed to be particularly amused and interested in my flies, and frequently when I threw across

towards him he would dart out and make believe to catch them, but I am sure he was only joking, he knew quite well what they were made of, his bright quick little eye could easily see through these "barbed betrayers," as Canon Scott-Holland calls them.

I might have mentioned before that we were three in our party, the third being a young disciple of the Major's, who managed to get his flies on the water in very good style, but in a manner quite original, and contrary to accepted methods; nevertheless, he got many a good rise, and lost many a good fish, whether trout or grayling, for he was not an adept at landing his fish, and, besides, he had no net. Notwithstanding all these disadvantages, to him belongs the honour of having hooked and landed the biggest trout that was caught on this expedition.

Easter Monday—a brilliant, genial, lovely day—we sallied forth in the morning as usual, and we did our usual execution amongst the grayling, but trout would not be lured. I may remark here that nearly all our fish whether trout or grayling were caught before one o'clock. Not a rise could we get in the afternoon or evening.

This was our last day, we had to return to town in the evening, and, alas, that I should have to record it, or rather, I should rejoice that I am alive to tell the tale, for on this morning the "Amateur Angler" came to grief.

I saw a rise, the only one I had seen that morning, within six inches of the opposite bank and under a small bush. It was a long cast, my fly hooked itself on to a twig of the bush, just above the trout, and

would not come back. I was wading, the stream being about two feet deep all across. I came within a yard or two of the bush. I could see the gravel bottom all the way across. I stepped unwarily on an innocent-looking bed of weeds, and down I sank, down, down, till I feared I was making a short cut to the Antipodes. My waders were soon waterlogged, and my legs fast in the soft sinking and yielding mud. Happily for me the Major was there, he rushed into the water and came to my help. I should have found a difficulty in extracting myself, for I could not lift my legs at all. With his welcome help I struggled ashore, and started off for home. The house was quite near, if I could only get to it by crossing another branch of the river, otherwise I must take a long round. I reached that river. It was a full strongly-flowing stream, and seemed to me to be about two and a half feet deep. I am wet, I said to myself, I cannot get much wetter, I will make the venture. I rushed into the strong current. In the middle of the river I found the water up to my arm-pits, and flowing strongly. Luckily that was the deepest part; it soon grew shallower. There must have been many gallons of water in my boots, but there was no mud. I scrambled over the gravel, and was really thankful to find myself on land. I lay down, and turned a small river out of my boots, ran off to the farm, changed everything, had my wet clothes hung out in the hot sun, and within an hour, filled with new enthusiasm, I was down at the riverside again, fishing away more vigorously than ever.

Our brief holiday came too quickly to an end. We had good sport, though, for the reasons given already,

our baskets were light. Indeed, there was a sort of satisfaction, to one of us at least, after having had a pleasant tussle with a gamesome grayling, and showing him for once in his life the upper world and the green grass, in sending him back rejoicing to his native element. Think what a yarn he must have to spin to his astonished brethren about the wonders he had seen in a world where there is no water: he will try it again some day.

Last June we had a delightful time on this water when the May-fly helped to fill our baskets. Let us hope the genial Doctor will be with us when the next May-fly time comes round.

CHAPTER III.

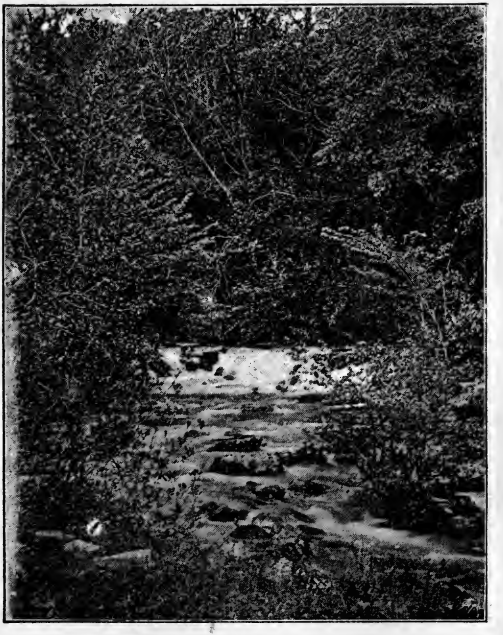
SPRING AND SUMMER RAMBLES.

August 12th, 1893.

Worthing—Over the Downs to Chanctonbury Ring—Snakes and adders—Best cure for adder's bite—Drive through Arundel Park—First cuckoo and nightingales—Shanklin—Old Roman villa—Alum Bay—Two cuckoos—Martin caught by "barbed betrayer"—Three playful stoats—The Lugg—Lovely scenery—Remarkable rainbow—The Teme—Continued drought.

WITH every desire to maintain my long-established character as a steady-going business man, I am bound to confess, and I do so with some compunction, that of late I have done much that is not quite consistent with that respectable character.

I have been a wanderer from my stool and my desk; my office has been too frequently deserted. I must see to it, that I do not set too lax an example to my young *confrères*. I find that I am now looked upon by them as one of the ancients; they urge me to think of my precious health, and beg me to go away into the country for a change of air. On some such



THE LUGG—AMONG THE SHOBDEN WOODS.

flimsy pretences as these I have this year frequently been beguiled to take many a week-end run into the country.

Then a little later in the month of April I found myself and some members of my family at Worthing. On this occasion I was not on fishing bent. At that time we were in the full enjoyment of splendid sunny weather, and were only just beginning to wonder when rain was coming, for the trees were budding and bursting forth into leaf and bloom, but there was no grass on the face of the fields, which already felt the unusual drought, and it was pitiful to see the poor cattle and sheep wandering disconsolately over the brown close-cropped meadows. We enjoyed our stay at quiet Worthing very much, quite unconscious of the terrible disaster which was then brooding, and which has since smitten that favourite resort. There are many charming walks and drives in that neighbourhood. One day I wandered over the Downs as far as Chanctonbury Ring, a most picturesque spot, where one gets a grand view of the country looking northwards and westwards towards Brighton. Here amongst the furze bushes on the sunny little banks I kept a look out for snakes and adders, for this was just the place for them, and this the time when one might expect to see them; but I saw none. I met an old shepherd who for many years had been monarch of all he surveyed round "the Ring." From him I learnt that the place used to swarm with adders, but he had waged such constant war against them that they may be said practically to be exterminated. He told me that the very best cure for an adder's bite is

an adder's fat—you cut a strip out of the back. Now I am not quite sure whether the fat has to be eaten or only applied to the wound. I think a little of both would be good. I have slaughtered many of these creatures in my boyish days, by a good swish on the tail with a hazel rod. This may account for my desire, in my old age, to renew acquaintance with them.

Now that we have advanced so much further into summer, and have become accustomed to the sights and scents of all kinds of flowers, one almost wonders at the childish delight one feels at the first sight of a bright bunch of milk-white May. Here and there in the hedgerows I came across many white and pink May trees just bursting into bloom. These and the pink-tipped apple blossoms are amongst the first harbingers of spring.

A few days later on we took a drive through the extensive and lovely park which surrounds and overhangs the fair Castle of Arundel. Here the foliage was just bursting into leaf; but the undulating meads and bosky dells were sad to see, for the long drought and the hot sun had burnt up the grass, and left the ground bare and hard and pastureless. The deer were herded together in the shadiest spots, for the sun was fierce as midsummer, and they had still to be fed with hay strewn over the brown fallow-like pasture. It was curious to notice here and there, far away from the herd, a solitary and melancholy buck standing beneath a spreading oak, and looking the very picture of misery, as if for some misdeed he had been banished from the herd, and was weeping and bemoaning the

hardness of his fate. We saw three of these "solitaries" in far-away nooks of the park.

We returned by way of the cool and pleasant dairies, and had a peep at the fish-ponds, which seemed to be more or less overgrown with wild weeds, and had the appearance of being quite neglected.

Here in the park we first heard the monotonous song of the cuckoo,

"With its twin notes inseparably paired;"[1]

and our coachman drew our attention to a nightingale's sweet warble, almost lost in the noisy songs of scores of other birds. I had an idea that the nightingale sings only at night, but I find this is not correct. He sings like other birds by day, but his note is not then so distinguishable as when he has all to himself the solitude of night to utter his thrilling notes. This "chiefest of the little nimble musicians of the air, that warble forth their curious ditties with which nature has furnished them to the shame of art," as says Izaak Walton. is peculiar in his choice of locality. He is never found in Cornwall and South Devon, the climate of which would seem to suit best his delicate nature; nor is he often found north of the Trent.

A day or two later we migrated to Shanklin in the Isle of Wight, which we made our headquarters for rambles and drives and railway trips to different parts. One very interesting spot is the Old Roman Villa discovered a few years ago at Morton Farm, between

[1] *Wordsworth.* But not always twin notes; later in the season it has "six *cucks* to one *coo*."

Sandown and Brading—a place which no visitor to the island should leave without seeing. It has now been very extensively developed. Curious mosaic pavements of singular mythological designs, black pottery, old bones, a human skull, iron nails, fragments of glass, a remarkable lock, etc. No less than thirty-six chambers have already been opened up.

Another day we drove to Alum Bay and walked over the downs to the Needles. A pleasant drive it was, for it was just the time when furze and broom were in fullest bloom. Roadsides were lined with gold, and the patches of golden masses on the hillsides were a pleasant relief to the otherwise brown of the downs, burnt up by the long drought. I never saw furze in such absolute perfection. We passed a small tablet on the edge of the cliff which marked the spot where a hapless wayfarer a year ago had lost his way in the fog and fallen over into the sea. Now a broad chalk path has been cut across the hillside, which can scarcely be missed in the darkest night. It was curious to notice a score of long-horned sheep standing on the highest peak of the cliff. They seemed to be looking out to sea, and longing to get down to the water, as if that would quench the thirst from which they must have been suffering, for certainly no lush herbage was to be found on that bare and burnt-up hill.

A cuckoo was sitting on a rail not far from our path, and playing such curious pranks, singing and flitting about the bushes, that I thought she must be nesting somewhere thereabouts. She flew away at our approach, but there she was again on the same

rail when we returned. I searched about amongst the bushes in the hope of finding some nest—not her own, of course—in which she had deposited her eggs, but I failed to find one. Evidently there was some special attraction for her at that spot, for we heard her note and saw her return there when we had got some distance away. Her mate was answering her from a long way off. It is surprising what a distance that monotonous cuckoo note can be heard.

Cuckoos are more often heard than seen. Wordsworth calls him "The darling of the Spring . . . a voice, a mystery."

> "To seek thee I did often rove,
> Through woods and on the green;
> And thou wert still a hope, a love,
> Still longed for, never seen."

May 17th was remarkable for the fact that a little rain fell at Shanklin for the first time for about ten weeks.

On the 20th I found myself again on the banks of the Itchin, and with an interesting company, for the early May-fly. We had a good time and excellent sport. I fished, of course, and with good success, but I was quite as well pleased to sit idly under a tree or a hedge, or on the bench in front of our humble straw-thatched hut and watch the skilful performance of my friends. I must say I was equally interested in watching the antics of that amusing but timid little reed bird, the black-capped bunting, sometimes so shy that he will not permit himself to be seen; at another time so bold that he would flit across from the opposite bank and twitter on a rail within a few

yards of me. It is delightful to hear the yellow-hammer's song—his only song :

"A little bit of bread and no c h e e s e."

Or the skylark singing :

"Up in the lift go we,
Tehee, tehee, tehee, tehee !
There's not a shoemaker on the earth
Can make a shoe to me, to me !
Why so? Why so? Why so?
Because my heel is as long as my toe."
From Chambers, quoted by Swainson.

On the 27th I went down again for a few hours' fishing, but it came to nothing. It was a scorching time. I did little but sit on the bench in the shade of our beautiful May-tree watching and waiting for a rise. Water as clear as crystal, reflecting with perfect distinctness streaks of blue sky and flitting white clouds—not a May-fly or insect of any kind was to be seen on the placid surface, which was never disturbed by the slightest motion of a fish. Sedgebirds twittering in the reeds, rooks cawing in the trees, waiting to come down to the lush water meadows from which my presence kept them away, peewits floating about overhead, chaffinches and robins singing in the woods, starlings feeding their young ones in the trees; a gentle north-west breeze blowing; fishing a useless waste of streng th. Yonder—as pleasant a sight as any of the pleasant sights around—comes a boy with a basket filled with good things specially intended for consumption in the straw-covered cabin sacred to piscators.

For my own part I repeat what I have said before,

if the catching of fish was the only pleasure to be derived from going a-fishing, I for one should necessarily soon get tired of it. Is there nothing, then, in the pleasant exercise of casting your fly over the water and watching it float upright and steadily over a rising fish, even if that educated sharp-eyed trout or grayling scorns to be beguiled by it? "The barbed betrayer," will not always "betray," even when cast by the most cunning hand; were it not so, where is the trout stream in this beautiful island of ours that would not soon be denuded of its finest fish?

Is there nothing in the lovely surroundings of a pleasant river? "The barbed betrayer" is sometimes guilty of a worse deed than even betraying a lusty trout or grayling. The other day as I was crossing a plank bridge over a stream, and gently swaying my fly in the air, I felt a sudden tug—and there, betrayed by this perfect resemblance of an insect, was a poor little sand-martin, struggling and fluttering and terribly frightened. Evidently its quick little eye had discovered its mistake—but too late—for it had not swallowed the fly after all, but it had come too near, and the hook had caught it just in the joint of its wing. I had a terrible job to get that nasty hook out without causing more pain than was necessary. When at last I had succeeded, it lay for a moment on the palm of my hand, its eyelids covering the eyes, and quivering as if all but dead. I pitied and patted and caressed it, and when I opened my hand again it flew off as if nothing was the matter. I was delighted, for I was afraid the wing was broken or injured enough to prevent its flying.

At another time I was reclining under the friendly shelter of a wide-spreading sycamore, which protected me from the scorching rays of the midday sun; lying quite motionless, I heard a little rustle in the hedgerow behind me. Presently out trotted three stoats, two old ones and a young one. They were in a quite playful mood, chasing each other about; two of them ran over my legs, mistaking them, no doubt, for the tree's roots. I was anxious to keep quiet, but I must have made some slight move, perhaps winked my eye, for they were off like a shot—before I could wink again. Hitherto I had always looked upon these creatures as the most bloodthirsty little wretches in existence, and had rarely seen them but in pursuit or riding on the back and gorging the blood of a rabbit. I had never thought of them as capable of fun and amusement.

These are the little incidents, and such as these, commonplace enough, doubtless, that give zest to my amateur angling and country rambling. It is not alone to catch fish that I go a-fishing.

My last day's fishing in July was not so bad. I hooked many good fish, but only two brace came to grass; the reason of my failure was that the river was chock full of weeds, which, owing to the warmth of the water, were unusually prolific. The fish, and I had hold of some big ones, almost invariably broke loose in these weeds. Added to this growth in the water was the fact that they had just been cutting above, and we had the full benefit of the floating weeds. To add to our discomfort some confounded gardener up yonder had this morning been mowing a

VIEW ON THE LUGG.

lawn and thrown the short grass into the water, so that for an hour or two the surface of our water was like a green meadow.

I heard the cuckoo again, but she has now changed her note. Now she only utters a single sound, her voice is broken and harsh. The Rev. C. Swainson quotes the following from Heywood :

> "In Aprill the koocoo can sing her song by rote,
> In June, of tune, she cannot sing a note :
> At first, koo-coo, koo-coo, sing still can she do,
> At last, kooke, kooke, kooke, six kookes to one koo."

The following lines of good advice to farmers, quoted from the Welsh by the same author will bear quoting again :

> "If the cuckoo sings when the hedge is brown,
> Sell thy horse and buy thy corn.
> If the cuckoo sings when the hedge is green,
> Keep thy horse and sell thy corn."

August Bank Holiday time set me at liberty for a few days.

On this occasion I paid a visit to the Lugg in Herefordshire. Friday, the 3rd, was a thundery day—alternate heavy showers and bright sunshine. Trout will not rise in thunder weather ; that was the conclusion we came to, for we saw scarcely any. Grayling were not so shy ; we caught between us six brace, of not large dimensions, but passable in these parts, where a ½lb. fish is quite respectable.

But what a lovely bit of scenery we had dropped into. Far away from the haunts and habitations of men the river wanders in and out amongst the hills. A

picturesque old stone bridge of two arches spans it in the middle of the narrow valley, and through it the river winds its way—now in rippling stream, and now deep and slowly flowing. The hillsides come down to the valley in a garment of green velvet. Everything is bright and green. A most remarkable object—one might almost call it a phenomenon, owing to its singularity—suddenly presented itself at the farther end of our valley, which here forms a very perfect V shape, formed by the sides of two hills. In the very centre of this V-shaped opening a most lovely rainbow had set its foot straight down upon the green foliage of the valley; from this valley it shot up, casting a very perfect halo of all its glorious colours over the conical hill, its right limb falling in the centre of another similar valley.

Its coruscations and gradations of colour were absolutely perfect in the whole semi-circle, lighting up the green hill with wonderful effect.

The next day found me and a gipsying party on the banks of the Teme, where we fished, and the ladies boiled their kettle, and laid out a pleasant "tea" under a greenwood tree.

It was a lovely day, and the river in good order, and towards evening, after our tea, grayling began to rise freely, and we captured a satisfactory number of them. I refrain from describing the capture of each fish, or the fly which did most execution. I can only say that on one occasion two flies of a totally different style and character, viz., a "Wickham's Fancy" and a very small light blue gnat brought me in at one cast each of them a nice grayling. During the time of drought I

travelled through Surrey and a good part of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, when it was painful to see the brown meadows, and hungering sheep and cattle. My late wanderings have taken me through a large portion of Shropshire and Herefordshire, where the contrast is wonderful. The farms here seem to have suffered very little from the drought. Everywhere crops, grass, and turnips appear to be abundant. Apples and hops abounding. Even on the top of high hills, where I accompanied a farmer, and where naturally, if anywhere, I expected to find the worst effects of the drought, crops of wheat, barley, and oats were splendid. There was one field of oats on the very top of the hill with straw over my head, and so splendidly headed that my friend expects at least seventy bushels to the acre from it. Turnips and mangolds equally prolific. Those who are despondent about the harvest may comfort themselves with the expectation that it will not be so disastrous as was once expected, at least, Herefordshire and Shropshire are quite up to the usual average.

CHAPTER IV.

A WEEK WITH HAMPSHIRE GRAYLING.

September 15th, 1893.

Drought—Herons—Stoat and mouse—Hawk attacked by two rooks—An interesting fight—Success with the grayling.

SURELY these grayling are not as other grayling are in other waters—they are not dull and stupid. Here they "laugh and grow fat" on these chalky beds. Here they are deep, cunning, wise; know how in a measure to take care of themselves; they are playful, gamesome, and full of humour; nothing pleases them better than to rollick on the top of the water, now with their heads and now with their tails in the air. In such moods they are not much good for fishing purposes. You may by chance hook one by fin or tail, but never will he take your fly, he is only playing—his stomach already full, he can afford to laugh at you.

It was on Friday, September 15th, that the Major and I set forth for change of air and scene, and made

for the banks of our favourite stream. We arrived at 2.15, on one of the hottest afternoons we have had all through this droughty summer. Too hot for me to fish in these bright and shiny waters, but the Major went immediately to work, and I followed, with an eye on his movements, keeping mostly in the shade. The grand May-tree overhanging the hut before spoken of, which in early June was one mass of white bloom is now a mass of red berries. I sat on the bench underneath this pleasant tree and lazily watched the Major labouring in the fierce sun. What a quiet scene it was, far away from the stirring, madding noises of Babylon, that great wilderness of bricks and mortar—not a breath of wind, not a sound to be heard but a starling sometimes crooning overhead amongst the berries, or the occasional flop of a ripe acorn from an overhanging oak into the deep water, startling one like the rise of a big fish; it is surprising with what *aplomb* a sound acorn comes down and goes straight to the bottom, whilst an unsound one falls lightly and floats away. Yonder, away up in the hot sun, are a couple of herons croaking and flapping their great wings, waiting to come down to our water-meadows; a stoat runs across from the water to the wood with a mouse in his mouth. Now comes a great chattering of rooks overhead, two rooks in savage pursuit of a light-coloured hawk, darting at him by turns, and pecking him at every chance—he was evidently in for a bad time. One of the rooks soon gave up the chase, but the other pursued his enemy steadily on till both disappeared in the far-off woods. One would have thought that one hawk was more than a match for

one rook ; probably the hawk in his headlong flight was not aware that he had only one pursuer. Ten minutes later, sitting still in the same place, again came over the clatter of many voices, and overhead flew that same unhappy hawk still pursued by that same revengeful rook ; they kept up the fight with equal flight, but both seemingly almost exhausted, for they must have travelled many miles since last I saw them. Now the heroic rook had a body-guard away up above him in the sky, but these were only there to back up their champion and to see fair play, they in no way interfered in the fight.

I watched them till, away across two meadows, hawk and rook seemed to drop exhausted with their long fight into an ash tree. I ran up to the tree expecting to find one or both of them dead in the branches or on the ground, but they had both disappeared in the woods, where I heard a great caw-cawing.

I did not meanwhile lose sight of the Major. His first cast brought to land what I should have regarded as a nice grayling, about half a pound, but he contemptuously threw him back that he might grow bigger and give better sport next year. I would certainly have bagged him. I lazily followed him up stream till we came to the "pub."—there I sat me down in the shade, the stiles and gates touched by the sun being far too hot to sit on with any degree of satisfaction. Be it understood that the place we affectionately call "the pub." is a half-way resting place between the bridge and the hut, and is not a "pub." at all, it is only a name—a wide-spreading

oak, underneath whose sheltering branches it is sweet to recline and smoke the pipe of peace and contentment after thrashing the river up from the hut, or thrashing it down from the bridge. The Major, however, is not given to exhaust his strength in vain thrashing; he does not care for the "chuck-and-chance-it" method; he prefers to wait on the bank and watch for a *rise;* and the more awkward the place, the more it exercises his mind and his skill to get over that rising fish; thus it is that with untiring patience, a quick eye, and steady hand, he gets his fly into holes, round corners, and under banks, where I invariably get hung up.

The sort of thing that pleases him and tries me, is to see a big fish rise in deep slow water just under the bank on one's own side, say twenty yards up stream—and with a strong wind blowing dead against that bank—the fish only a foot or two from the bank, and against wind and tide your fly must ride steadily over him, or it is no go. In nine cases out of ten the wind carries my fly into the bank and fixes it there in root or weed, and, of course, my grayling is put down. Now, in nineteen cases out of twenty the Major's fly goes merrily singing and cutting through the wind, and drops just into that grayling's mouth, and the grayling is put into the Major's basket: that is just the difference between us; in ordinary circumstances, wind and weather being agreeable, I can throw very well. Now I hear a splash. The Major gives a low whistle. I look up, his rod is gracefully bending, and a grayling comes fighting along till he rides peacefully to grass, this time over a pound, so he

is thought big enough to satisfy the Major's fastidious taste ; and now another, and another, of equal if not greater girth, follow in the same wake. Then we rest for half an hour, with our eyes mostly on the water. The Major caught sight of one of those quiet lumping-up and circling-round rises a long way up stream, which indicates the motion of a big fish ; a trout, he said it was, and a trout it proved to be ; it is your small fry, half-pounders and under, that make the splashes. A long line is switched out, the fly dropped gently on the outer swirl of the ring, and this big trout came at it. He was fairly hooked, leaped a yard out of the water, then came along almost to the bank. I was ready with the net, he made another big splash—and was off. The Major sighed and said, "It's trying to one's nerves to lose such a fish as that ; he was a big one." After dinner we sauntered forth again to look at the river under the young moon. The Major's afternoon and evening catch was three brace of grayling and one trout.

Saturday, Sept. 16th.—I find that I have devoted so much space to our first evening's sport, in which I only shared as a spectator, that I must cut short the days that follow. This day was dull—heavy—misty —no sunshine whatever—besides being cool. It could hardly have presented a greater contrast to yesterday's scorching heat. It was not a bad day for the grayling—or perhaps it is truer to say it *was* a bad day for some of 'em. I caught five fine grayling, one of them just a 2 lb., and the Major three brace—nothing to make a boast of, but this be it remembered is only a record. This was a day of triumph for me—

for I had beaten the Major, my biggest fish weighing 2 oz. more than his biggest. He rose in a deep pool on my side. I knew I could not throw up stream on account of the wind, which would have tied me up at once. I got above him and threw down in his face, but keeping as much out of sight as possible. I had a long throw, and came down upon him nicely; he took my fly, and, after a long struggle, Davis landed him neatly, a good two-pounder. I was very proud, but the Major humbled me by saying *he* would never have had the cheek to make such a cast as mine. I attribute that remark to envy.

Monday, 18*th*.—A dull day; heavy rain in afternoon. Major caught three and a half brace of grayling. The present writer could only show one brace of small fish. In the evening the Major was obliged to return to the London Fetters, and for the remainder of this week I shall miss his pleasant company and have to look after my own hooks and lines and flies.

Tuesday, 19*th*.—I deserted the river and took a stroll through the ancient city of Winchester. I wanted specially to see the Walton monument in the cathedral, and was gratified to see it occupying so honourable a niche on that grand screen which carries the statues of so many worthies of the olden time.

How this statue of Izaak Walton came to be erected may be of some interest to my angling friends. Dean Kitchin had already suggested that a niche on the great screen hould be occupied by "the Father of Angling," and Mr. H. T. Jenkins, of the Portsmouth Waltonian Club, in a letter to "The Times," September 23rd, 1886, was the first to make the sugges-

tion that such a statue should be erected by subscriptions from anglers. It was in consequence of this suggestion that the editor of "The Fishing Gazette," Mr. R. B. Marston, opened the columns of his paper, and, after much perseverance, was enabled to raise a fund sufficient for the purpose. In a letter addressed to him, Dr. Kitchin, on October 2nd, 1886, says:

"My suggestion that the Dean and Chapter should find a place on the great screen for Izaak Walton has attracted so much attention that I hope you will allow me to assure the lovers of the gentle craft that we will gladly reserve a niche for 'the Father of Angling,' should anglers be kindly inclined to present us with his statue. We should set him over against his brother-in-law, Bishop Ken."

This statue was charmingly executed by Miss Mary Grant, and was placed on the great screen in the autumn of 1890. I have pleasure in appending a reproduction from a photograph of this statue.

On April 5th, 1895, the same energetic editor, and the same enthusiastic body of anglers, celebrated the tercentenary of Walton's birth by erecting a memorial window to him in St. Dunstan's Church, Fleet Street.

Wednesday, 20th.—I fished alone, yet not alone, for had I not my old friend, Davis, to carry my net and basket? Come Monday he will be eighty-three, and still is strong and hearty in spite of aches and pains in back and stomach; he has a quick eye for a rising fish.

We were sitting on our bench under the old May-tree.

"See yonder," says Davis, "away up stream, there

STATUE OF IZAAK WALTON IN WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL.

are two big 'uns, one on this side and t' other ath'urt the river." "Let's have a go at 'em!" says I. "I'll try them with an 'Artful Dodger.'" I wish I had tried that fly before, for hitherto I had been working with small success amongst the small fish with the three Duns, olive, yellow, and blue, and several others. "Wickham's Fancy" brought me one big grayling. I got above the fish on this side, and allowed the "artful" one to drop down quietly and unostentatiously into the grayling's mouth. He came at it splendidly, and I had him. Ah, how that grayling fought. "What a fool I am!" he seemed to say. "I *won't* be caught this way; I am far too old a fish for this sort of thing." And he *wouldn't;* he fought to the last gasp. Davis had almost got the net under him, when he tried his last dodge. Whilst the line was tight, and I thought I had him safe, he suddenly sprang into the air, and his enormous weight snapped the gristle of his lip—a piece of which came away with the hook fast in it—and he was free. Certainly it was a pretty battle, and one to be remembered. "It is better," I cried (improving Tennyson for the occasion)—

> "'Tis better to have *hooked* and lost
> Than never to have hooked at all,"

such a beauty as that. "A three-pounder, if an ounce; he was long as that," exclaimed Davis, showing me two-thirds of his walking-stick. "I *am* sorry."

Let us have a try at that fellow over yonder. He was still rising under the opposite bank in open water,

away over a big bed of reeds that were lying flat nearly on the top of the stream. "You'll never get him across them weeds," said Davis. I tried my best; with a fair wind, my fly landed just above him, and sailed cockily down over his lair. He came, he saw, he was conquered! What a tug I had with him to keep him from getting under the weeds instead of over them; at last, over he came, like a lamb, till he caught sight of Davis and that awful net; then he made a final struggle, but he was too exhausted to fight well, we got him to the side, and, bravo! to land; he tried the same dodge as the other, but I had been taught a lesson, and slackened up in time. He scaled 2 lb. 2 oz. He was our biggest fish this outing. So I triumphantly packed him up and sent him off to the Major the same evening, to make his mouth water.[1]

Friday, 22nd (my last day).—I will say nothing of the smaller fry I caught. I came to a pool which I call "the *Doctor's*," where his wily "patients" live. Several of them were paddling about on the top of the water, with their maws full no doubt, and not caring a rap for any flies that float, but I observed one fellow close to the bank—too close for my hopes—that seemed to be more in earnest; he was greedily taking every insect that came sailing by, so I thought I would give him a taste of mine. He evidently liked the look of the "artful" one, but only nosed it on the first throw. I threw again, and he could not resist the temptation. I carried him home this

[1] He was such a handsome fish I have sent him to be set up. —THE MAJOR.

Saturday evening, and we have just had him nicely cooked for dinner. He was big enough to give four of us a snack, and we all, with one consent, said he was delicious; he *only* weighed 2 lb. So ends my little holiday.

CHAPTER V.

CHUB.

December 16th, 1893.

Have never eaten chub—Walton's appreciation of chub—An irreverent disciple says it tastes like "cotton wool and hair-pins"—Walton gives chub to milkmaid—Meadow placards—Beecham's Pills, Little Liver Pills, etc.

IF any further proof were wanted than those which I have persistently given from time to time in these pages that I am but a mere amateur, or, as the chairman at the Annual Fly Fishers' Dinner last week calls himself, a mere novice in the angling art—a nibbler off and on for many years—that proof may be found in the fact that I *have never eaten chub.* I never caught one. Here, you may be sure, is the distinguishing line which separates every true-born Izaak Waltonian from the mere peddler at angling. *Nascitur non fit* is as true of piscators as of poets—if one is not born so, one can never be made an angler of the true breed. Is it possible that there can be any degenerate son of

Izaak Walton who has not tasted and revelled in the delicious meat to be found amongst the bones of a good, handsome chub? And yet an irreverent disciple, who spoke at that dinner with becoming veneration for his beloved master, had the audacity to question the reality of his benevolence in the matter of the milkmaid when he rewarded her for singing so sweetly that pretty song of Kit Marlow's:

"Come live with me, and be my love,"

by presenting her with a lovely chub! This gentleman had himself tasted chub, and vowed that it was "like cotton wool and hairpins; it is like the shad, which is so much eaten across the Atlantic, and of which a well-known American writer said, 'You should fry it lightly, eat it carefully, and then you should strip off all your clothing and rub yourself down with sandpaper to remove any of the bones projecting through the skin.'"

We are all aware that there is as great variety amongst trout as there is amongst sheep, which "differ from one another in their shape and bigness, and in the fineness of their wool," and it may be added, in the delicacy or toughness of their flesh; but undoubtedly there is this to be said of every kind of *trout*, that he is a "generous fish," and, as Walton says, "the most dainty palates have allowed precedency to him." There are varieties of bass. I have eaten black bass in New York which, for delicate tenderness and yet firmness of flesh and sweetness of flavour, would compete for precedency even with the "admirable trout" of "The Dove," which "are

reputed by those who live upon its banks as the best of any," a statement by Izaak Walton which is quite confirmed by my own limited experience. I have also heard of black bass caught somewhere in the Southern States, which, as articles for human food, are about on a par with the sole of a boot and a blacking brush combined. Might one not then reasonably argue that the particular chub mentioned in the interesting speech above referred to is one of a baser sort than that which Izaak Walton so lovingly presented to the milkmaid? Or it may be, as I have already hinted, that the proper cooking of chub in these degenerate days has become a lost art. I admit that, even in those good old times, the chub had an unsavoury reputation; but what says the master?

Pisc. "I doubt not but at yonder tree I shall catch a chub; and then we'll turn to an honest, cleanly hostess, that I know right well, rest ourselves there, and dress it for our dinner."

Ven. (evidently alarmed at the prospect) replies: "Oh, sir, a chub is the worst of fish that swims; I hoped for a trout for my dinner."

Pisc. "Trust me, there is not a likely place for a trout hereabouts. . . . The sun is got so high and shines so clear that I will not undertake the catching of a trout till evening; and, though a chub be by you and many others reckoned the worst of fish, *yet you shall see I'll make it a good fish by dressing it.*"

Ven. "Why, how will you dress him?"

Pisc. "I'll tell you, by-and-by, when I have caught him."

Needless it is for me to tell how he was caught, or

THE MILKMAID'S SONG.

how he was cooked. Every true Waltonian possesses the "Compleat Angler;" if he wants to learn how to catch and how to cook this maligned fish, let him turn to Chapter III.: "How to fish for and to dress the Chavender or Chub."

It is frankly admitted by the master that the chub as he is usually dressed does not eat well. He is objected against, not only for being full of small forked bones dispersed through all his body, but that he eats waterish, and that the flesh of him is not firm, but short and tasteless; the French think so meanly of him as to call him *un vilain;* all of which goes to confirm the "cotton wool and hairpins" theory—but then so much depends upon the cooking.

Again, what says the master?

Pisc. "Come, hostess, how do you? Will you first give us a cup of your best drink, and then dress this chub as you dressed my last, when I and my friend were here about eight or ten days ago? But you must do me one courtesy—it must be done instantly."

Hostess. "I will do it, Mr. Piscator, and with all the speed I can."

Pisc. "Now, sir, has not my hostess made haste? and does not the fish look lovely?"

Ven. "Both, upon my word, sir; and therefore let's say grace and fall to eating it."

Pisc. "Well, sir, how do you like it?"

Ven. "*Trust me, 'tis as good meat as ever I tasted. Now let me thank you for it,* drink to you, and beg a courtesy of you; but it must not be denied me."

Pisc. "What is it I pray, sir? You are so modest

that methinks I may promise to grant it before it is asked."

Ven. "Why, sir, it is, that from henceforth you would allow me to call you *master*, and that really I may be your scholar; for you are such a companion, and have so quickly caught, and *so excellently cooked this fish*, as making me ambitious to be your scholar."

Pisc. "Give me your hand, from this time forward I will be your master . . . ."

What better testimony than this supreme act of friendship could we possibly have that the chub of the olden time was not merely an edible animal, but, when properly cooked, a dainty dish?

After all, perhaps, about as much may be said against the *villain chub*, as the French call him, as in favour of "the poor despised chub," as the master calls him. I am bound to confess that my little study of him has not inspired me with the least desire either to catch or eat him; but the master's character for kindly benevolence must not be assailed with impunity.

True it is, and it must be owned, that the particular chub he was generously about to present to the milkmaid was the one which he had just before spoken of disrespectfully, but that was only because he thought he had got hold of a trout! "Sir, o' my word," he cries, "I have hold of him. *Oh! it is a great logger-headed chub; come, hang him upon that willow twig, and let's be going.*" Evidently he thought better of it, and consigned the chub to his basket. Shortly afterwards he encountered the milkmaid and her mother. "Look yonder! On my word, yonder

they both be a-milking again. I will give her the chub, and persuade them to sing those two songs to us."

"God speed you, good woman! I have been a-fishing, and am going to Bleak Hall to my bed, and, having caught more fish than will sup myself and my friend, I will bestow this upon you and your daughter; for I use to sell none."

(Surely one can excuse that little outburst about hanging him upon a willow twig!) "Marry! God requite you, sir, and we'll eat it cheerfully," said the milkwoman. Evidently she knew how to appreciate the gift, and how to cook it.

I am quite sure the dear old boy thought he was doing a real kindness in giving this "logger-headed chub" to the pretty milkmaid's mother—and it was on that account so thankfully and gracefully received by her. It was not the value of the gift but the warm-hearted geniality of the giver that won the hearts of the milkmaid and her mother, and caused the latter to promise him "a syllabub of a new verjuice in a new made haycock" when he came that way again, and another song from Maudlin—for they both "love all anglers." No doubt he was fonder of giving away chub than trout. When he had educated Venator up to catch a chub, and was asked by him, "What shall I do with my chub or chevin that I have caught?" his reply was, "Marry, sir, it shall be given away to some poor body, for I'll warrant you I'll give you a trout for your supper; and it is a good beginning of your art to offer your first fruits to the poor, who will both thank God and you for it.'

Possibly the irreverent scoffer might retort that the good old master would only eat chub when he couldn't catch trout.

Meadow Placards.

The Hon. Treasurer of the Fly Fishers' Club drew attention, at their annual dinner, to these flaunting advertisements, which, as he said, "blot the scenery." I confess that I approach this subject with an open mind; doubtless there is much to be said against them, and I suppose not much in their favour. Let us imagine our good friends *Piscator* and *Venator* taking shelter from the passing showers which "fell gently upon the teeming earth, giving a sweeter smell to the lovely flowers that adorn these verdant meadows," and then finding themselves suddenly confronted by a large square red placard informing them that *Beecham's pills were worth a guinea a box!* In those good old times advertisements in this attractive style were quite unheard of. Surely such an apparition would have been to them what a red cloak is to a bull, and yet at this end of the nineteenth century I have seen a bull rubbing his shoulders against the supports of such a glaring red show board with calmness and indifference. Surely a bull of the seventeenth century would have madly dashed it to pieces; that was the age for contemplation, this the age for advertisement; the times are changed, and we are changed with them. Why strain at these gnats in our fields, and swallow the camels that adorn every brick wall in our cities? What are Beecham's pills compared with that flaming picture of a seductive nymph light

ing a cigarette at the mouth of an equally attractive masher? Our dead walls are now alive with the fine arts; the ends of houses are picture galleries; our omnibuses are covered with alluring announcements. We seemingly enjoy and applaud all these things, whilst Beecham occupying a quiet nook in the country, and brightening the green landscape with a dash of vermilion, excites us to taurine frenzy. Surely now Beecham is a benefactor to his race and his country—does he not sell for a shilling what is worth a guinea? And if it costs him only a penny he does not himself pocket the profit; he bestows a large portion of it on an ungrateful public. Does he not spend £50,000, or perhaps £100,000, a year in advertising? See the profit that accrues to the farmers who expose his pills, and the innumerable newspapers, magazines, and periodicals that grow rich on his expenditure, to say nothing of the benefit which his invaluable pills afford to weak humanity. Happy the farmer, in these deplorable times, whose fields encompass a railway—*Beecham's Pills* will go a long way to help him pay his rent; *Carter's Little Liver Pills* will add to his impoverished income if they do not present so attractive an object in the landscape; to an unbiassed mind a little patch of *red* in a green field, a red-roofed cottage or a sand-red cow, for example, has a picturesque effect, and Beecham's board is *red.* I am not aware that *Pears' Soap*, or *Sapolio*, or *Keen's Mustard* have yet invaded the green fields, but I fancy I have seen them here and there (if not everywhere) at railway stations, in railway carriages, and all along the line—soap and pills, Keen's Mustard,

and the Waverley Pen, are they not all a boon and a blessing to men? In past days it was said that "good wine needed no bush," but in these days good pills and good soap need a deal of PUSH. Bold advertisement they must have—they must make a noise in the world, or humanity will suffer. When a rosy-faced maiden in the far away Devonshire lanes bids him good morning, and modestly asks your hon. treasurer if he has used *Pears' Soap*, you may be sure that the sweet lassie has used it herself. If Pears has not yet invaded our meadows, he has gone much further. He has invaded the hearts and the cheeks of our Devonshire lasses and helped to make them rosy. Personally I am not much interested in these things. I have used Pears' soap, and found it good. I have never taken a Beecham pill, nor bathed in the sea from a Beecham machine, nor floated in the air in a Liver Pill balloon; but I am happy in feeling that I can bear the infliction of their country advertisements with an equal mind. This is the age of "bold advertisement," but it is nothing to that which looms in the future; for is not the time approaching when the very clouds that lower above our houses will be made radiant and gorgeous with awful signs and wonderful advertisements? Like influenza, it is a disease of the age, and cannot be suppressed—*the people will have it so*. Nothing will be bought in the future until it has first been hung up in the sky for all men to gaze at.

CHAPTER VI.

SOME MARCH JOTTINGS.

March 17th, 1894.

A promising schoolboy—Cleopatra—"Give me mine angle"—Enthusiastic angler who takes note of nothing but his float—Wood ants—A globular sack of spiders—Frogs—Shakespeare's flowers—A visit to Ann Hathaway's cottage—A posy of spring flowers from her garden—Amusing questions—Signs of foul weather.

PASSING through Lincoln's-inn-fields this evening, I heard one schoolboy shout to another across the road, "I say, Jack, have you written your essay yet?" "No; have you?" "Well, I've done two or three pages of *rot*; something like what the old muff talked about this morning, so I hope it will pass."

The frank but disrespectful remarks of this promising boy served to remind me that the editor of "The Fishing Gazette" had insisted on my supplying him with bricks, but leaving me to furnish straw.

It is difficult to steer clear of the tedium which the ingenuous youth called *rot* when one is asked to write

something for "The Fishing Gazette" with no other fund to draw upon than the weather. Nothing but angling for the angler! and no angling experiences have befallen me; not a stream have I visited, not a fly have I cast on the water, since that pleasant day in the month of September last when I hooked and brought home that big grayling which now smiles upon me from a glass case on yonder wall. "Hackneyed in business" for six months or more without intermission, the spirit rebels, and now that

> "Sturdy March, with brows full sternly bent,
> And armed strongly, riding on a ram,"

is again upon us, one begins, like the spring itself, to feel the stirring of nature within one, and to lament the fate which ties one to a stool when longing once more to be off to the woods and the fields.

Up to the time of this writing the March of 1894 has been rather gentle and lamblike than leonine and blustering, still,

> "The west wind loud,
> Rising in vigorous and sonorous play,"

has helped to rouse the teeming earth, and made us feel that *spring* has come! We have had none of those icy blasts from the frigid plains of Siberia, which, however, may yet come to remind us that *winter* has not quite gone. Better that those cold easterly winds should come now than in the merry month of May, as they not unfrequently do. This is truly the month of "strength and life and hope." Hitherto we have had sunny mornings, westerly winds, and rainy evenings, and very little of the

golden dust, "worth a king's ransom," has yet been seen. "A dry March never begs its bread," is a proverb not yet in the way of being carried out.

Vegetation is pushing forward, perhaps too rapidly, the little green pinheads of the hawthorn hedges are quickly expanding into leaf—even in our smoke-bespattered suburban gardens it is pleasant to watch the young flowers peeping through the brown earth. Snowdrops have already come, lived their little day, and are now quickly fading. Crocuses and bulbous squills, hyacinths and daffodils are beginning to smile upon us, and stray cats and dogs, and sparrows (a murrain on them !) never miss a chance of scratching up our beds, and tearing the fragile flowers to bits. A thousand welcomes to spring ! Though she cannot restore to us who are growing or have grown old the flowers of our youth, she still clothes the earth with glory, and rejoices the hearts of all those happy anglers who can go forth with their rods and their tackle, their baskets and nets, and all the paraphernalia needed to betray the cunning trout, the frisky roach, or the villainous pike. In some waters the trout is already in good condition; in others the wisdom of conservators, taught by experience, will extend his liberty of action for another month. These jolly Piscators can now cry, with Cleopatra:

> "Give me mine angle, we'll to the river there,
> My music playing far off. I will betray
> Tawny-finned fishes; my bended hook shall pierce
> Their slimy jaws; and as I draw them up,
> I'll think them every one an Antony,
> And say, Ah, ha ! you're caught."

Debarred as I am, poor wretch, from the country rambles I so much desire, I will take a ramble through old books, and pick out such jottings as may not be uninteresting to some, at least, of your readers. Some others there may be who despise all reference to anything on earth but tackle, flies, ground-bait, how to make snares, and how to cook and eat the snared. There is one enthusiastic angler whom I know who, intent as a heron fishing in the water-meadow, would not be diverted from the nibbling of a roach and the wobbling of his float even if an eagle flew over his head with a screaming baby in his clutches.

Here is a bit about wood ants—doubtless many of your readers have at this time of year noticed these wood ants beginning to run across the path. "The nest of the wood ant looks like a large heap of litter, where dead leaves and short withered grass have been thrown lightly down upon the earth; perhaps at the moment there is no sign of life about it beyond a straggler or two at the base of the mound. Thrust in the point of your stick, and all the ground will be alive in a moment; nothing but a mass of moving ants will be seen where you have probed; nor will it do to stay too long, for they will be under your trousers and up your boots, and you will soon feel as if scores of redhot needles were run into you, for they wound sharply. If you want the clean skeleton of a mouse, bird, or any other small animal, throw it on the nest of the wood ant, and on the following day you will find every bone as bare as if it had been scraped."

The foregoing swarm of ants reminds me of a small

globular sack, like a lady's net veil, dotted with minute pinhead spots, which I found suspended amongst some leaves against my garden wall. I just touched the globe, when lo! a transformation scene —the thing collapsed as if by a magic touch. Hundreds of the tiniest little spiders hung suspended by as many filmy ropes. I was startled by the absolute suddenness of the change; the spiders were not larger than a turnip seed, and the gossamer rope was all but invisible. This rude though slight touch of mine seemed to have given them their first start in life (or it may be in death); these baby marauders thus prematurely cast adrift from their mother's care, were thrown upon their own resources, and, like the young ducklings that would venture into the torrent in spite of the old hen's cackling, were carried off to destruction; at all events, they never again, so far as I could discover, gathered themselves into a similar bundle. Probably this spider's nest is a very common object in our gardens, but I had not observed one before.

This is the season for the beginning of frogs. "In ponds and ditches may be seen thousands of round-headed, long-tailed tadpoles, which, if not devoured, will soon become nimble young frogs, when they have a better chance of escaping the jaws of fishes and wildfowl; for no end of birds, fishes, reptiles, and quadrupeds feed on them. Only a few weeks ago they were in a torpid state and sunk like stones beneath the mud. Since then they left their black spots, which may be seen floating in a jellied mass on the water, and soon from this spawn the myriads of

lively tadpoles spring into life. Experienced gardeners never drive frogs out of their grounds, as they are great destroyers of slugs."

"Violets, which Shakespeare says are 'sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,' impregnate the March winds with their fragrance, and it is amazing what a distance the perfume is borne on the air from the spot where they grow. Through the frequent mention made of it by Shakespeare, it must have been one of his favourite flowers, and as it still grows abundantly in the neighbourhood of Stratford-on-Avon, it may perhaps yet be found scenting the March air and standing in the very same spots by which he paused to look at it."

Last Easter (1895) I paid a short visit to Stratford-on-Avon Of course I walked over to Shottery, and in Ann Hathaway's garden I gathered a posy of spring flowers, composed of violets, rosemary, and rue, alison (or march-may as the old lady, Mrs. Baker, a lineal descendant of the Hathaways, called it), pansies, lavender, lads'-love, or southernwood, daffodils, and cowslips, or cuckoo bud.

Here are some quaint bits, culled from a book entitled "Demands Joyous" (which may be rendered "Amusing Questions"), which was printed in English by Wynkyn de Worde in 1511:

Dem. "How many cows' tails would it take to reach from earth to sky?

Res. "No more than one if it be long enough.

Dem. "What is the distance from the surface of the sea to the deepest part thereof?

Res. "Only a stone's throw.

Dem. "Which was first, the hen or the egg?

Res. "The hen at the creation.

Dem. "What is the age of a field mouse?

Res. "A year; and the age of a hedgehog is three times that of a mouse; and the life of a dog is three times that of a hedgehog; and the life of a horse is three times that of a dog; and the life of a man is three times that of a horse; and the life of a goose is three times that of a man; and the life of a swan is three times that of a goose; and the life of a swallow is three times that of a swan; and the life of an eagle is three times that of a swallow; and the life of a serpent three times that of an eagle; and the life of a raven is three times that of a serpent, and the life of a hart is three times that of a raven; and an oak groweth 500 years, and fadeth 500 years."

The old printer or his author could hardly have calculated the age of some of these wonderful animals —thus, according to the rules of the multiplication table, a *goose* would give up the ghost in her 243rd year; a *swan* in his 729th year, a *swallow* in his 2187th year; an *eagle* would be 6561; a *serpent* may live 19,683 years; the *raven* 59,049 years; and a *hart* would reach 177,147 years. O! Wynkyn!

Here is a bit of sound (if rather brutal) advice to lady authors (and others):

"A lady sent a manuscript poem to Dr. Johnson, and told him she had other irons in the fire. 'I advise you to put your poem with the irons.'"

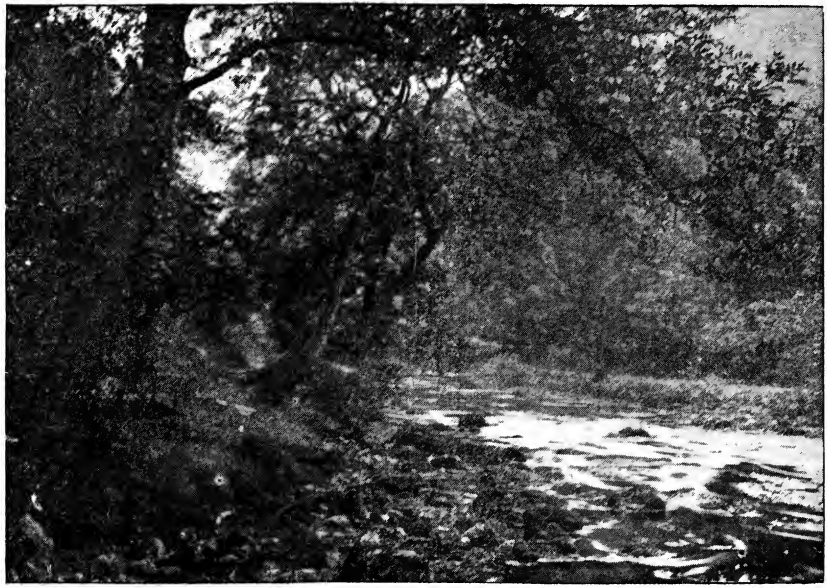
Perhaps some of my readers may like to be reminded that this 17th day of March is the *fourteenth centenary* of the death of St. Patrick.

"No doubt St. Patrick was an angler
Of credit and renown, Sir,
And many shining trout he caught
Ere he built Dublin town, Sir."

Have Bees the Sense of Hearing?

We were sitting at breakfast one morning at the farm on the Itchin not long ago, quietly eating our toast, when, hark! there's a row outside like a call to arms? Fifes, clarions, and kettle-drums all rolled into one most awful clatter. We rushed outside and shouted "What's the matter?" Have the perfidious French bored their hole under the Channel, and are they now pouring up from the bowels of the earth in Mid Kent? Or have a million Germans landed on the Essex Marshes? Worse than all this. The Bees are in rebellion, and the clatter arises from the beating of pots and pans to keep them from all swarming away. The row made, I suppose, is meant to drown the guiding buzz of the leader of the rebellion. At all events in this case the bees were so far controlled as to cluster in an apple tree close by. Piscator photographed them as they clung in masses round a big branch of the tree, and the farmer, face and hands covered, went up to them and scraped them off the branch into a hive. He was not stung much—a mere trifle—only three bees had got up his sleeve—they stung him, and he crunched them.

If, however, it is true, as Sir John Lubbock seems to imply, that bees have no sense of hearing, and he tested them over and over again with the loudest and shrillest noises he could make, then, unless as he observes, their range of hearing is very different from



VIEW IN DOVE DALE.

ours, the use of the clanking of these pans and pots could have no effect, and the bees settling in the apple tree instead of flying off, as they sometimes do to a long distance, was due to some other cause. Possibly the sound waves caused by this clatter vibrating on the air in some way affected the nervous organization of the bees. I remember some years ago reading of a flight of bees settling upon a man's head and neck in Regent Street.

I will finish these rambling notes by quoting a few lines on the weather, at all seasons.

SIGNS OF FOUL WEATHER.

(*From Dr. Jenner. Quoted by R. Chambers.*)

"Loud quack the ducks, the sea-fowl cry,
The distant hills are looking nigh;
How restless are the snorting swine,
The busy flies disturb the kine;
Low o'er the grass the swallow wings;
The cricket, too, how sharp he sings?
Puss on the hearth with velvet paws
Sits wiping o'er her whisker'd jaws;
The smoke from chimneys right ascends,
Then spreading back to earth it bends;
The wind unsteady veers around,
Or settling in the south is found;
Through the clear stream the fishes rise
And nimbly catch the incautious flies."

CHAPTER VII.

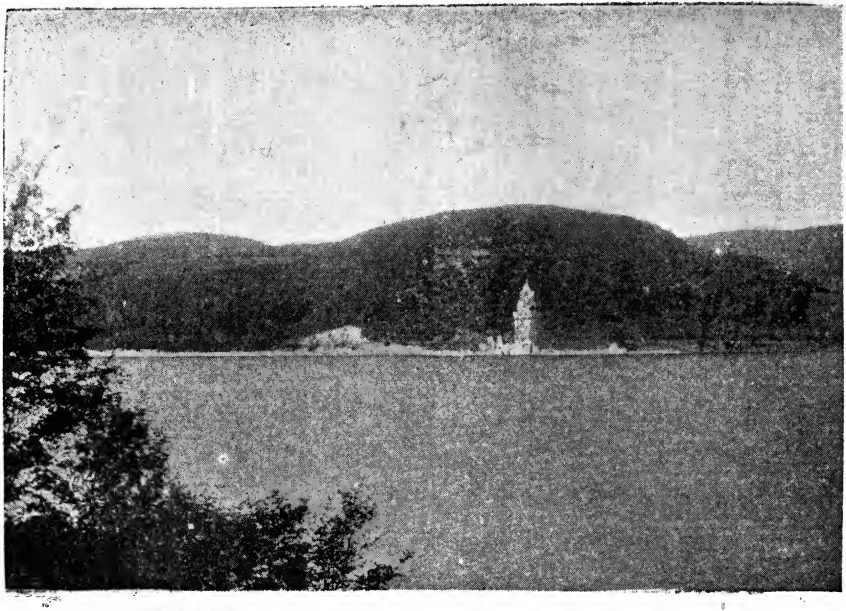
OUR HOLIDAY IN WILD WALES.

The happy valley—Men of the great city visit it—They covet the water of the river—Carry the water away in tubes and aqueducts—Villages and churches drowned in the lake—View of lake from hotel—We go a-fishing—Caught five and a half brace—Tom Parry the boatman and bard—Drive round the lake—Extraordinary catch of over 2,000 chub—Tumble into the source of the river—Our first catch of chub—Sandpipers and chicks.

"'Sir,' said the old man, 'if you had seen the miseries of the world you would know how to value your present state.' 'Now,' said the prince, 'you have given me something to desire, I shall long to see the miseries of the world, since the sight of them is necessary to happiness."—*Rasselas.*

LAKE VYRNWY.

ONCE upon a time there dwelt in a peaceful valley all surrounded by lofty hills, a wise and contented race of people, whose ambition never led them to surmount the mountains which were the limit of their little world. Generation after generation had lived in this secluded spot, happy and careless of what may be going on in the outside world. At length an ambitious youth,



VIEW ON LAKE VYRNWY.

like the Abyssinian Rasselas, rose up amongst them, who would not be confined within the limits of these hills. He was cautioned by the sages of the valley that beyond those mountains were "regions of calamity, where discord was always raging, and where man preyed upon man," but he would not be persuaded. He set forth on his travels till he came to a great city, whose inhabitants were in danger of perishing for lack of water; there he saw "the miseries of the world" which he had gone forth in search of, and he told those unhappy people all about his own native valley, through which a pleasant river ran, perpetually supplied from the everlasting hills, pure and sweet. And the men of that great city arose and went to see this happy valley, and they coveted it. They said, we will dam up one end of the valley and make a great lake, which shall climb a hundred feet up the sides of the hills, and this water shall be a perpetual source of supply to our great city; we will bore holes through mountains, lay down great pipes and aqueducts across valleys, and pour into the reservoirs of our city, and our people shall no longer be in danger of perishing for want of water. This great deed was done, the water gradually rose up and filled the valley, and the people who had lived there all their lives were driven out to find for themselves new homes elsewhere; but some of the very old people loved the place of their birth, and would not move out of their houses till the rising waters poured in at their windows, then they went away and died of broken hearts. Still the waters rose, till farms and villages, churches, chapels, and

homesteads were overwhelmed and now lie beneath the great lake. Tombstones and coffins with their contents had been removed, and planted afresh in sacred ground on the mountain side; the churchyards were laid down with cement, and the waters which now flow over these engulfed villages and churchyards, and pour for many miles through tunnels and tanks, is pellucid and pure, and the people of the great city derive health and vigour from the waters of these mountains of Wales. And so it was that the happy valley of the Vyrnwy became a great lake, filled with big trout and other gamesome fishes; happy anglers sail upon its surface, and return to the hotel laden with spoil, naturalists find endless occupation amongst the birds and ferns and rocks on the hills all round, and the great city of Liverpool is grateful to the young Rasselas who first hinted to them that here, lying in the bosom of North Wales, was the water supply they so sadly needed.

It was to visit this wonderful lake, and, if haply we could, to catch some of the trout which were said to swarm in its waters, that we travelled from London (I, my daughter R., and her husband) on the last day of June, 1894—a glorious day. This happy valley (now a small sea five miles in length) lies high up in the Welsh mountains, far away from railways and "madding crowds." The twelve or fifteen mile drive through lovely mountain scenery already inspires one with glowing hope, and we reach the Lake Vyrnwy Hotel with a warm welcome from the cheerful hostess.

Looking on Lake Vyrnwy from the hotel window

on the glorious summer evening of our arrival, one's first impression of it is that of its vast antiquity. Surrounded as it is by the everlasting hills, its rugged time-worn shores surely prove that its existence is coeval with the hoary mountains that encompass it. Yonder, standing out in the lake, is an ancient Italian tower, which in the gloaming looks as old and weather-beaten as the "prison of Chillon," to which, indeed, it bears a marked resemblance, not, one may presume, undesigned. Another first impression is the perfect peace which reigns around this ancient lake. There is a gentle silent simmer on the surface of the water, and nothing is heard but the singing of many birds in the woods beneath us.

When I read the very interesting description of this lake which appeared in "The Fishing Gazette" a long time ago, written by C. W. Gedney, I decided to take the first chance of coming and seeing it for myself. He seems to have described every part of it in so thorough and practical a way, and always with an angler's eye to its fishing capabilities, that I hardly see an opening for a mere amateur to find anything new to say about it; but, as a truthful narrator, I must tell of things as I find them.

July 1st.—Sitting in one of the summer-houses which the hotel provides for its guests on a rugged brow, looking down upon the lake over the top of a fringe of green oak foliage, who shall tell me that yonder expanse of blue water lying in a great basin, formed by a circle of Welsh hills a thousand feet above the sea, has not reflected the wood-crowned heights, brown heather-clad mountains, cultivated

fields and green meadows, which on all sides slope down to its very margin, ever since they began to stand as they stand yonder now?

Just above where I am now sitting is an obelisk, which, at this distance, I take to be at least of the same antiquity as Cleopatra's Needle, which for a thousand years lay prone in Alexandria's sands, and now stands erect on the banks of the Thames. It seems at a short distance to bear hieroglyphics partly obliterated by venerable age. But what is it that I read on closer inspection? What is the truth about this tall monument which as seen from a distance "lifts its bold head and lies?" It now reveals a truthful and melancholy story.

After all, then, this wonderful lake is probably the youngest in the world; it is not yet five years old, with all the calm dignity of a thousand years. Art has intentionally assisted Nature in producing this air of antiquity. The monument, which is most substantially built of rough dark blue granite, was erected "*To the memory of men who have died while employed in the works of Lake Vyrnwy*, 1880 *to* 1890. *Erected by their fellow workmen.*" It also bears the names of the men, ten of whom were killed, and thirty-four who died during that period.

Monday, July 2nd.—Full of the grand exploits which the eloquent Mr. G. had led us to anticipate, we start for the lake. I took one boat and R. and her husband another, and that nothing should be wanting, G.'s boatman became mine. Now, Tom is a poet, a descendant of the bards of old. He it was who celebrated, no doubt in touching strains, the

HOTEL VYRNWY IN DISTANCE. SUPERINTENDENT'S HOUSE.

opening of this lake; he is a frequent prize winner, and constantly finds a welcome corner in the weekly newspaper; but Tom is very modest, and I have not yet prevailed on him to give me only a few verses for "The Fishing Gazette," which, being in Welsh, I am sure would be highly appreciated. He plays the harp "a little." My boatman poet is a giant in strength, and he smiles gently when I sometimes promise to throw him overboard for not bringing me over rising fish.

Tom is not enthusiastic, indeed rather pessimistic, he does not think the water propitious for fishing, gleams of sunshine, he says, thrown on troubled waters through white clouds cause a glaring shimmer not good for fishing, which I am sure is bosh; however, it soon came on to rain heavily, and then between us, for it would be invidious to say which boat was most successful, Tom or David's, we captured five and a half brace of fine trout.

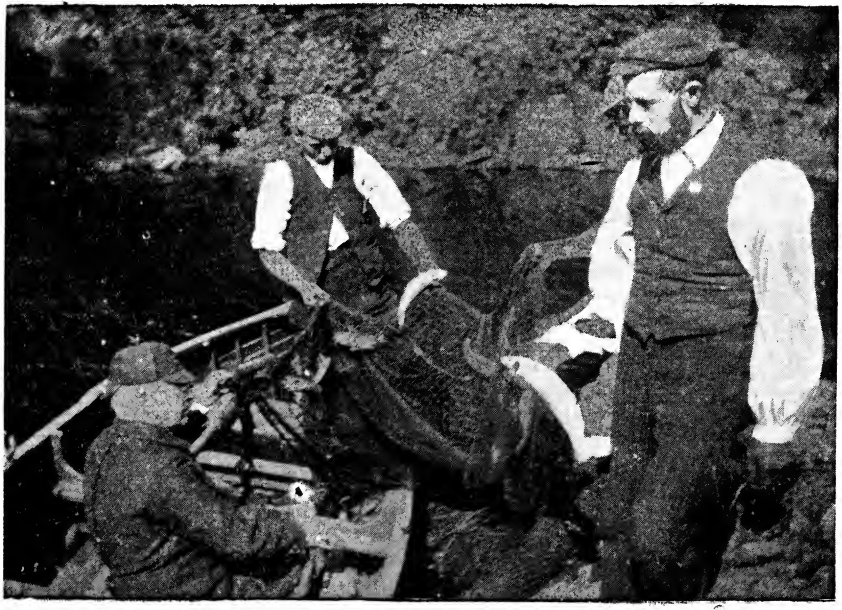
We did not regard this as much to brag about, knowing what has been done here, but we were moderately content, looking for better doings to-morrow.

Tuesday, July 3rd.—Attracted by the lovely scenery below the embankment bridge, I employed this morning in an attempt to rise a trout from the bright shallow water of the River Vyrnwy, for, notwithstanding the divergence of its waters to Liverpool, the Corporation is bound to maintain the river's normal supply as a tributary of the Severn, but I only rose and caught one trout. Meanwhile David had taken his pair of enthusiasts on the lake. R. throws the fly with skill

and precision, and her husband is rapidly becoming an expert under her tuition ; but like myself they failed on this occasion. The good and beautiful lake refused to yield up its treasures of fish, but not the less were they pleased with their experience, paddling around the lake. This new lake, like the old ones, has already learnt to be capricious, and is not always to be successfully wooed. We are getting accustomed to finish up one day by hopefully looking for better luck on the morrow.

Wednesday, July 4th.—Fishing, according to our two melancholy prophets, being out of the question, on account of the brilliancy and heat of the sun, we drove up to the far end of the lake to assist in netting three of the creeks for our ancient enemy, the villainous chub. Here we had good hope of an exciting scene, for it was only last week that our netsmen (under the able superintendence of our hostess, Miss Davies, hauled out over 2,000 chub from their spawning grounds. During the past few weeks over 4,000 of these lovely but despised monsters have been caught about here, and the atmosphere is still not sweet over the spot where these tons of chub lie buried. Our catch altogether amounted to *two* chub.

Thursday, July 5th.—Miss Davies—perhaps a little too confident on account of the success which generally attends her expeditions on the lake—volunteered to accompany us for another attack on the chub in the same quarters ; and so it happened that on this most lovely day we had another drive round the lake, gathering oak ferns on our way. We drove right up into the mountains, and beyond where our horses



OUR FIRST CATCH OF CHUB.

could go I walked to explore the source of the Vyrnwy; for miles I plodded on through the wild mountain pass, till at last, caught in a bog, I fell slap into the very beginning of this water. Muddy and rather slimy I returned to the carriage.

We then drove on to the creek and netted thirteen chub, and so ended our chubbing.

On the road we found another bard, for they seem to be as plentiful as bilberries in these parts. He was a fine old chap, who goes by the name of Tom Richards, he was engaged in painting the Corporation rails which surround the lake. Thos. Richards is endowed with a splendid baritone voice, old man though he is. He made the welkin ring with that spirited song, "Hyfaen y cwrw melen," which being interpreted means, "The cream of good beer;" then he gave us "Dyffryn Clwyd," "The Vale of Clwyd," and the "Men of Harlech" (of course in Welsh). He finished by giving a carol in a very touching strain —for Thos. R. is known throughout the whole country as an exquisite carol-singer.

Friday, July 6th.—Another bright day. We started off with lunch in our boats and hope in our hearts to spend a happy day at the far end of the lake. There was a pleasant ripple on the water, like the silvery scales on the sides of a chub, as we trolled lazily up the north shore, drawing each of us a poor little spinning minnow behind us, but drawing no trout thereby. I tried my celebrated spinner, known as "the Derby Killer," and he brought me in one fine trout, a small triumph over the natural minnow the others were trying. When we reached the centre

of the lake, marked by white posts on each side, we put up our spinners and took to our flies as in duty bound—but first we made our way to an old ruined chapel which stands on the very edge of the lake, and only just failed of being swallowed up when the great flood came. Just below us as we row up to this old chapel lie, a hundred feet deep, the remains of the church, the chapel, the "Powys Arms," and the village of Llanwddyn. This chapel now serves as a resting-place for anglers—*piscatoribus sacrum*—and here we rested and partook of our luncheon.

Then we proceeded to Eunant Bay, and fished from the shore, but with small success, for time and season are against us. Last month we should have done wonders, and so should we do next month if we could but stay, but this month the attempt is useless—thus are we comforted by Tom the sad poet, and David the desponding. The most interesting thing that happened to us, and it was really a novel and a pretty sight, was Rose's encounter with the sandpipers on the Eunant beach, which shall be given in her own words.

"As I was casting my flies from the beach of Eunant, a pretty sandpiper flew backwards and forwards, scolding around me. I was not aware that the little mother bird was speaking to me, but it gradually dawned upon me that I was the object of her displeasure, that her maternal instincts were aroused, and that somehow I was keeping her from her nest. Still the trout were rising, and all my thought was, 'Silly bird, go to your home, and leave me a chance for yonder two-pounder,' but she wouldn't

go, and presently flew to a rock a yard from my feet, seemingly in the utmost distress. I could stand it no longer. Throwing down my rod, I called David to come and search for the nest; we heard a wee cry from the young ones, but although it seemed to come from the ground at our feet, we could not find the nest, so gave it up. But the bird was not happy, nor was I, for I felt I was doing a cruel thing in keeping that woebegone little mother from her chicks. It was quite pitiful the way she begged me to go away. I looked about again, and I found that had I taken another step backwards I should have hurried a wee fluffy baby sandpiper out of the world; then I found two more, and last, out of a hole in the bank, came forth another. I gathered them up gently and made a nest on the beach with grass; they closed their eyes and looked so resigned and sad, as if they thought it was all up with them, and my heart ached, for I felt that I was the innocent cause of all this lamentation, and mourning, and woe. But baby sandpipers are dear little humbugs; the instant I left the nest, and their mother called them, those half dead and frightened little pipers ran as fast as their legs would carry them to the secure shelter of their mother's wings, which she spread over them just as a hen does over her chickens. Sandpipers nest on the ground,[1] they lay four eggs, and as soon as the young birds can walk they

[1] The nest, if it was a nest, where we found these little unfledged birds was just under a bit of overhanging turf, resting on the ground, leaving a hollow space behind. The birds ran in and out at both ends, but there was no appearance of lining of any kind.

wander away from home, and the affectionate mother has an anxious time in keeping an eye, one after another, on the whole brood. The maternal instincts in the hen were so strong that we could have caught her easily as she came boldly up almost to our feet to cuddle and croon over her brood of unruly chicks; and her gentle cooing tone towards them curiously contrasted with the shrill, nagging tone she had used to warn me off." David vowed he never saw such a pretty scene in all his life, and I am sure Tom Parry is meditating a poem to be called "The Piper's Nest" (in Welsh), which, if it reaches fruition, I shall hope to include in this book for the special edification of my readers, particularly of that large portion of them who are acquainted with the Welsh language.

Saturday, July 7th.—Not quite so pleasant a day as usual. A cold wind blew over the lake, which had a boisterous and unfishable look. Rose and Arthur, accompanied by the faithful David, ventured out, and came back with two and a half brace in the morning, and three and a half brace in the evening—six brace of fine trout, which made a pretty display on the hall table.

Up to last night and during the whole week Hotel Vyrnwy has been almost in our sole possession. Last night the Water Committee of the Corporation of Liverpool came down upon us in a body to examine their property and enjoy a pleasant holiday, and they could hardly come to a pleasanter place.

I will finish up my record of this week by saying that the accommodation to be found in Hotel Vyrnwy is such as should satisfy any reasonable being; it is

MORE CHUB.

very tastefully furnished throughout, the table is exceptionally liberal, and the cooking is perfect. I should like emphatically to endeavour to dispel what I find to be a very general impression, that this beautiful little inland sea is a mere reservoir and nothing more. Its constantly changing panorama is always in front of us, and the varying tints of the surrounding hills as sunshine and shade alternate are delightful to gaze upon. Painters of nature may find a happy resting-place in this health-giving retreat. I am myself a living proof of the bracing atmosphere, having come here a week ago in a somewhat dyspeptic tone of body and mind. I can now eat the trout I have caught with proper zest, and at the present moment am prepared to challenge any member of the Liverpool Corporation to a foot race from here down to yonder bridge.

Not being an all-round sportsman, I have found nothing to say about the many thousands of acres of grouse moors connected with this hotel, or of the abundance of wildfowl to be had for the shooting.

There is an excellent tennis lawn for those who enjoy that health-giving game, and a superb billiard room for indoor amusement. There is room enough and to spare on the hillsides for a tough golf-link, and a club will soon be formed for this sport.

I should be very ungrateful were I to close this rambling article without making some acknowledgment to our most kind and cheerful hostess, Miss Davies, who possesses the happy faculty of inspiring her guests with the assurance that life is worth living at Lake Vyrnwy.

CHAPTER VIII.

A RIDE OVER THE MOUNTAINS.

A twenty-two mile ride over the mountains to Bala—Lovely scenery—Jenny Jones—Plascoch Hotel—A charming ancient hostelry—Ancient furniture—Oliver Cromwell's bed—The Vale of Edeirion—Queen's visit to Palé—Bala whisky—Bala water to supply London—A charming ride back to hotel—Forty miles in all.

UESDAY, July 10th.—Yesterday (the 9th) we fished the lake all day, lazily roaming over its surface, rather careless whether we caught fish or did not catch them, the total result being six brace of elegant trout.

To-day we abandon the lake and are off in a waggonette and pair of horses, with Miss Davis as our guide, for a twenty-two mile drive over these wild Welsh mountains to Bala. I wish no worse luck to my readers than that they should, in their turn (with Miss D. as their guide), have such a glorious ride as we had, for although we set forth early in the day in a downpour of rain which threatened to be continuous, it lasted only an hour.

The nearest way to Bala is fifteen miles, but we

took the longest, the wildest, and most rugged, over the Eunant and Moel y gadfa mountains (I am not sure about the names of my mountains), a ride which made our hearts rejoice, for the air was delicious and the scenery superb. I am sure there is nothing finer in Wales than the grand view one gets of the vale of Dinas Mawddwy from the junction road, on the top of the pass of Bwlchygroes, where we halted to rest our horses, and be refreshed ourselves from the generous basket which Miss D. had thoughtfully provided.

Turning northwards at the junction, with our backs on the beautiful valley, and frequently enjoying long walks up the steep ascents, we, after many miles of winding, downward ways, found ourselves at the village of Llanuwchllyn. Here it was that we met old Jenny Jones, who, in her youthful days, "when George the Fourth was King," must have rivalled her namesake of "The Vale of Llangollen" for grace and beauty. She wore the national costume (now rapidly disappearing) and stood a snap-shot from A.'s "Kodak" with graceful dignity.

On the roadside which runs along the beautiful lake of Bala is a remarkable object called "The Trinity Tree." Out of a stem of oak spring a mountain ash and a birch tree, all three now in full foliage.[1]

[1] REMARKABLE GROWTH ON OAK TREES.—"A correspondent writes to us from Viking es, Hardanger: 'In my rambles through the woods I have been much struck with the luxuriance of vegetation. The oak is not a common tree in this latitude in Norway, but here are some really wonderful oaks. They must be of very great age indeed, considering how slowly the oak grows in Norway. We measured one of them and found it to

Bala Lake, the whole length of which we passed along on the western side, is not by two hundred acres so large as Lake Vyrnwy, nor is the scenery which immediately surrounds it so imposing. The fishing there is said to be good, and would be better but for the numerous pike, which want thinning out.

That was a stout pair of horses that drew four of us and a weighty, steady coachman (always addressed as "Johnny" by Miss D.) up and down those mountain sides, and landed us safely at the Plascoch Hotel Bala. This is one of the quaintest hotels imaginable, combining all the good features of an ancient hostelry with all the last modern appliances. Here are fine old Chippendale tables, ancient carved oak chests and bedsteads, and priceless old china. Here, in the hall, a venerable harpist, said to be one of the best in Wales, delighted our ears with the most charming melodies.

We could not stay the night, or I might have been

be just twenty feet in circumference. Another tree forms with a bough a beautiful natural arch over a path in the woods. But the strangest thing is to see on some of these oaks, tall well grown mountain ashes, growing on the parent oak, and now forming a part of the tree. I do not know if this is a common occurrence with the oak or other trees, but I have never seen such a growth before. More than a dozen trees have mountain ashes growing out of them. In one or two of the older trees, the ash has grown up the hollow stem, its fine polished bark looking like a pipe in the hollow trunk, and half way up the tree, you can see the leaves and berries appearing through a hole in the old oak tree. I would be glad if some of your botanical readers would say if such growths are common in other places.'"—*From Beyer's Weekly News for Travellers in Norway.*

haunted by the ghost of Oliver Cromwell, who once slept on one of these bedsteads on the occasion of a memorable visit to a neighbouring mansion. This hotel belongs to, and is well looked after by, our own hostess of "The Vyrnwy," the indefatigable Miss D.

It may be incidentally mentioned that wild Wales is now about to enter into serious rivalry with Scotland and Ireland in the matter of *whisky;* the new Welsh whisky is to surpass old Irish and old Scotch in purity, strength, delicacy of flavour, and any other good qualities there may be that go to make most excellent toddy. This is, of course, bold assertion without proof. I do not pretend to be an adequate judge. I will only say that the sample I tasted was very good, but being only a thimbleful, was not enough to inspire me with proper eloquence. Here it was, in a cellar, that we were permitted to have a private view of a puncheon of the new liquor, oak-polished and silver-hooped, which the Freemasons of Bala are about to present to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, their Grand Master, on the occasion of his approaching visit to Rhyl.

As a curious coincidence, this old town of Bala, so soon to become celebrated for its *whisky*, is also destined to become more celebrated for its *water*. We are told here that London, bitterly disappointed at the loss of our Vyrnwy, has now decided to seize upon Bala Lake and carry its water as well as its whisky to Babylon. A great dam, like the one I look down upon now from Hotel Vyrnwy, is to be formed below the old town, and the water will rise mountains high, and that charming old town, its

curious hotels, churches, and chapels, will disappear "like the baseless fabric of a vision," just as yonder village of Llanwyddan lies hidden in this lake. But a new Bala will arise on the mountain sides, and its whisky and its water will flourish for ever.

It was nearly seven o'clock before we could tear ourselves away from Bala, and then, by the toss of a penny, we were destined to return by an equally circuitous route, which led us over the Berwyn Mountains by, if possible, a still more picturesque route than the one by which we had arrived.

Passing up the mountain side we had glorious views of many other mountains—Cader Idris, towering highest away off westward, and Arran Mawddwy, the second highest in Wales, which lifts its cloud-capped head above the hills surrounding Lake Vyrnwy. Then down yonder at our feet we trace the river Dee winding its way through the Vale of Edeirion, said to be the most lovely in the Principality. Yonder is the noble castle of Palé nestling in the woods and looking down the vale. Here it was that Her Majesty spent some days in the year 1889, and pronounced the surrounding scenery to be the most charming she had ever seen, which gracious words have made the inhabitants very proud.

And so our horses plodded steadily up steeps and down inclines and across undulating moors, and the night came slowly on, till twilight deepened into darkness, and nothing could be seen, and nothing heard but the steady tramp of our horses, the clatter of our own tongues, the occasional bark of a sheep-dog, and the bleating of a mountain sheep in the

distance, the clucking cries of grouse in the bilberry bushes away up on the mountain sides. An occasional star twinkled through the clouds, but the moon on its downward course failed to cast a glimmer of light through its curtain of blackness till it rested on the distant mountain tops, over which for a few minutes it threw a grand display of fireworks, and then sank down, leaving us in darkness still more visible.

Our steady horses knew every step of the road, and they trotted down steep inclines where a swerve of a foot or two to right or left would have sent us all whirling into space.

At the foot of Berwyn we came down upon the important mining village of Llangynog, where we gave our trusty steeds a refreshing meal of bran mash.

Somewhere up yonder in the darkness above this village lies Penant Melangell, the "City of Refuge."

"'Tis a church in a vale,
Whereby hangs a tale
How a hare being pressed by the dogs was much distressed,
The huntsman coming nigh,
And the dogs in full cry,
Looked about for someone to defend her;
And saw just in time,
As it now comes pat in rhyme,
A saint of the feminine gender."

SOUTHEY.

The poor hare found refuge under the saint's petticoats. This good saint was called *Monacella.* The princely huntsman, it is said, was so impressed, that he endowed an abbey, of which she became the abbess.

The darkness of our way was here and there brilliantly lighted up by innumerable glow-worms shining forth to attract their mates, and they really served as lights to our feet and lamps to our path in the deepening darkness.

We reached Hotel Vyrnwy at eleven o'clock, our single pair of horses having carried us over hill and dale for more than forty miles, a most pleasant excursion, which none of us will ever forget.

Thursday, July 12th.—A showery morning, with alternate sunshine and a continuous cold wind. We visited the trout breeding ponds which the late proprietor of this hotel, Mr. Ward, has established up yonder on the hill side. The young fry and yearlings in the smaller ponds are in flourishing condition. There is one small pond containing about 3,500 yearling trout which presented a most lively appearance; they are exclusively of the good old Vyrnwy breed, playful and frisky, taking the food thrown in to them, and following the man in charge round the side with the utmost apparent glee; these are the sort of fish that will know how to rise to the fly when they take their turn next February to go out into the lake.

In the larger pond and other tanks there are some thousands of yearlings, two-year-olds, and smaller, which will also go to increase the swarm in Lake Vyrnwy. These native trout grow faster, and thrive better, than the fish imported from Loch Leven. Unfortunately, on account of their pluck, they are the very fish that first get into trouble in the lake. The keeper is of opinion that nearly all of them that were put in a year ago have fallen victims to the rod

and line and imitation flies, while the Loch Leven trout mostly come to the minnow, and do not rise well. Nor are they to be compared in plumpness to the natives, and generally arrive lanky and listless, as if life in Lake Vyrnwy was not good for them. The cross-bred fish are better fighters; and, doubtless, in course of a short time the old stock will come to the front as a survival of the fittest. It may be added that the yearly turn-out from these hatcheries amounts to about sixty thousand fry.

Friday, July 13th.—As I sit basking in the sun facing the lake on this bright morning, three merry maidens come tripping down the road with rakes on their shoulders—they are going a-haymaking up yonder on the hillside—and now I hear their pleasant laughter as they flit about the hayfield now raking up the fragments that remain after the cocks have been loaded on the sleighs, and now flirting with the swains who are pitching and loading. A. and R. are off on the lake for the last time on the look-out for a last dish of trout, which they fortunately succeeded in getting. They brought in six brace of trout, which will accompany them home to-morrow. I meanwhile take a last stroll over the hills for a chat with the birds. I fancy that nearly all English birds are to be found round this lake. I made acquaintance with all my old friends and some new ones—the Mountain Brummar, locally so called, among others.

Our wild Welsh visit is now drawing to a close, and I can but hope that the random notes of my own very pleasant experiences may induce many others to try a like experiment. I have no motive for belaud-

ing this place, and certainly not the faintest ground for decrying it. I can only hope that all who may come here may derive as much pleasure from their visit as we have done who are now regretfully leaving it.

Tom Parry, not feeling quite equal to a poem on the sandpiper's nest, has just sent the following lines, which speak for themselves :

"LLYN Y VYRNWY

(LAKE VYRNWY).

"Hardd groew loew fawr Lyn—a welir
Ar waelod Llanwddyn
Roedd yn bod i ddod i ddyn
Yn barod yn y Berwyn.

'Gwrthglawdd y Vyrnwy'
('The dam of the Vyrnwy').

"Ceir urddas gwmpas y gwych gampwaith-hwn
Ac ynddo orchestwaith ;
A gwir enwog gywrainwaith
Beri'n gryf heb yr un graith."

Lake Vyrnwy TOM PARRY.

CHAPTER IX.

A DAY IN ELYSIAN FIELDS.

A wet day on the Ver—Fishing a failure—Trout tailing—In a shed not waterproof—Lark's nest—A lecture on cruelty to birds—A solitary trout—A run to catch train—Too late—A pleasant pub. and a good supper.

THAT wild enthusiast about everything of a fishy nature who, over the pseudonym of "Dragnet," drags into his net all those interesting and amusing scraps in "The Fishing Gazette" which constitute its "lighter vein," has insisted, on behalf of the editor, on my writing a story of some sort for this Christmas number. But, bless him, I have no story to tell! When I happen to have any reminiscences to fall back upon I record them truthfully, and without the garnish of a vivid imagination. I leave the imaginative to the poetic "Dragnet;" in his column truth is rarely found, and fiction doth abound.

There are many men so happily fixed in the world as to be able to devote all the time they want to the delightful pleasures of angling. Others there are who, like myself, can but rarely indulge in waterside

amusements, and have therefore not even the most commonplace incidents to furbish up into readable material.

The French used to say that *November* is the month in which Englishmen hang themselves. We have now reached that depressing period, without, let us hope, the suicidal tendencies which the French attribute to us, but which a visit to the Morgue at any time would probably show to be more applicable to themselves, only they generally drown themselves. If, as saith the poet,

> "November's sky is chill and drear,
> November's leaf is red and sere,"

it hath its compensations. We have already made a considerable dip into the dark and dismal days of December, and can we not sit in our armchairs, those of us who are still young:

> "And anxious ask—will spring return,
> And birds and lambs again be gay,
> And blossoms clothe the hawthorn spray?"

while those of us who are old are apt to take backward glances, and beguile the weary time by trying to fight our pleasant angling battles o'er again. In this way, I, being too old to look forward, as some of you can, with the bounding hope of youth, will hark back to days gone by.

It was in the leafy month of June that we started for a charming stretch of water on the pretty Hertfordshire Ver.

Our party consisted only of two rods—the Major and that well-known sporting writer "Sarcelle." I

had promised to meet them at West Drayton, and we were all to drive over together to our water, about five miles away. I missed the train, and so had, later on, to hire another trap and follow them.

It was a blithe morning, not, however, quite free from suspicious clouds; a morning of doubtful augury, whether for sun or rain. The Major had equipped himself in a thin summer suit and thin boots to match, and the "Sarcelle" was still more lightly clad; whilst I, who had only come to look on, was prepared for any weather—mackintosh, umbrella, gaiters, and thick boots. I was weather-wise, they were weather-foolish.

When I came up to them about noon it was in a drizzling rain, which came on thicker and thicker, till at length we were all compelled by a heavy downpour to adjourn to a neighbouring shed.

They had fished for hours, of course with their usual consummate skill, but had caught nothing. If their clothing was damp, not to say saturated with wet, their thin shoes full of water, and flabby trousers clinging to their gaiterless legs, their spirits were not damped in the least; they were ready at any moment to sally forth again at the first sign of the storm abating, but it did not abate. The aggravating part of it was that the little deep-running stream was bubbling over with big trout, but not a fly would they look at, natural or imitation. There they were with their broad, fan-like tails waggling out of the water and their heads down in the mud, some close under the banks, others having nice little gambols amid stream, playing about like big babies; for you may be quite

sure that trout have their play time like the big bipeds who love to play with them.

These trout were not a bit shy, as most trout are. Of course, with their heads in the mud, they could not see us, and their sense of hearing must be very slight. I all but caught a whopper by slyly putting the net under his body, but he was not to be caught in that improper way.

We stood or squatted in that shed till its apparently waterproof covering of old rat-hole thatch became a a sieve, and the rain came through with as much freedom as it came down outside.

They had sent us from the railway hotel a basket of provisions and a big jar of beer, and as lunch time had arrived we tried, each of us, to find a dry corner in which to consume it, but a dry spot could not be found. My umbrella served me well, but the others had to eat their food soaked with rain-water. Our provisions had been brought down by a farm labourer, and the Major, with his usual magnificent but rather thoughtless liberality, had told him and a companion who had joined him to help themselves to some beer while we were away fishing—and they did. When we came to our jar we found it necessary to tilt it to an angle of about 75 degrees from the perpendicular before a drop of beer would come out. Our share amounted to about half a tumbler each out of this half-gallon jar.

Presently, when we had finished our repast, these two youths turned up, and, seeing the plight we were in, politely invited us to take shelter in a neighbouring barn. This refuge was at least quite dry, and

there we were weatherbound for nearly three hours; the rain came pouring down, thunder rolling, and lightning flashing all the time. We smoked and told tales, and did what we could *pour passer le temps*. A game of marbles would have been a relief, but taws were wanting. By way of a little diversion one of these chaps came sidling up to us, with a leary look on his face and a twinkle in his eye, and said, in a low tone, as if he did not want all the world to know, "Would erra one o' you gents like to take 'ome to your famblies a pair o' nice young singing larks? I knows to a nest down in yander bushes."

"Well," I said, "I should like to see a lark's nest; come and show it to me."

So we trudged off through the rain and the long wet grass, and, as we reached the spot, two hundred yards off, the mother bird flew out of the bush, and flitted round in sore trouble. There across a deep ditch, and hidden away among the brambles, I saw the nest, and in it a couple of young nearly flush larks, with their mouths wide open.

"Pretty little innocents!" I cried, sentimentally, "I would not touch them for all the world, and I strongly advise you, my friend, to keep your hands off them."

"Why?" said this young ruffian.

"Why," said I, "did you never hear of an Act of Parliament called the 'Wild Birds Protection Act?' Touch those birds, and you render yourself liable to twelve months' imprisonment, bread and water, hard labour, and a cat-o'-nine tails to finish you up with."

"I dunno nothink about that," said he. "I don't see no more 'arm nor cruelty in me taking them young birds than there is in you taking young fishes."

This was a floorer for me for a moment, but I replied, with virtuous indignation.

"You are quite mistaken, my friend; when by chance we catch young fish we immediately return them to the bosom of their family. It is only the old big sinners that go about marauding all day and all night seeking some living thing to devour that are sometimes willing to be caught by us. They are just as pleased to swallow flies with hooks in 'em as any other flies, and they quite enjoy being pulled out of the water, as you may easily see by the way they wriggle about. Besides, are you who have lived all your lifetime by the waterside ignorant of the well-known fact that cold-blooded fish have no sensory nerves, and therefore cannot feel any pain at all? It is not so with birds. Again, don't you know that fish is a most wholesome, delicate, and necessary food for human beings? What would become of us all without fish? It would be a sin not to catch them."

"Well," said he, "ain't young larks good for human food? Tell me anything that is nicer than plump young larks, 'specially on toast."

He had me again, "on toast." My speech was quite lost upon him, he meant to have those young larks in spite of the law, and as many more as he could find a market for, and so we trudged back to the barn.

At the first glimpse of a small scrap of hazy blue,

enough to make a Chinaman a pair of breeches, struggling out of the heavy black clouds just over the tree tops in the west, and although drizzling rain was falling, and another storm of lightning, thunder, and rain was coming up from the east, the Major and "Sarcelle" determined to risk another wetting, and they got it. Profane outsiders would have called them cranks, but you, my readers, know something of the afflatus that inspires an angler's soul, and converts, for him, splashy puddles, long, wet grass, and pouring rain, into veritable Elysian fields.

"Sarcelle," as you know, is the French for teal, and teal is the smallest of the *Duck* tribe—hence his imperviousness to water—but the Major has no such excuse.

They fished again, "Sarcelle" using the wet-fly—not at all difficult in such weather—and the "chuck-and-chance-it" system. The Major adhered to the scientific "dry-fly" plan, wherein he is a well-known adept; keeping his eye always wide awake for a rise, and never casting till he saw one; but the trout were still a-tailing. After long and patient waiting the Major's quick eye caught sight of an almost imperceptible bubble under the opposite bank; he placed his fly exactly on that spot, a big trout seized it, and a long and pretty battle ensued. There was a long and broad belt of cut and live weeds lying in the middle of the stream, and after a desperate struggle to get under these weeds, the Major brought him to the top of them, and then the hook came away, but the astonished trout knew it not, he thought he was caught, and lay there dreaming of the frying-pan for the space of about one

minute; he weighed just 1 lb. 13½ oz. I could not reach him with the net; he was too far away, and the water was deep. The Major touched him with the point of his rod; he awoke from his pleasant dream, and was off like a dart.

If my memory is not at fault, that was the only fish that was caught on that delightful day, and he, as we have seen, was *not* caught. I weighed him accurately with my eye as he rested sweetly on that bed of weeds.

I had found it necessary repeatedly to warn this brace of enthusiasts that time was flying, and that trains would not wait. I got them away at last; we returned to our hovel, gathered up our traps, and then we had considerably more than a mile to go, and just about twelve minutes to catch our train. We walked fast, and then ran fast. I, the elder, came in first, panting and breathless, and was charmed, as you may suppose, to see the red light at the end of the train pass out of the station as I reached the platform.

We adjourned to the pleasant "pub.," and took counsel with the landlord as to the best way of getting home. We wanted to drive over to West Drayton, but the landlord vowed he had neither horse nor trap nor man to spare, but our good "Sarcelle" so overcame him with blarney that he at last agreed not only to find a horse and trap, but he declared he would drive us over himself. He started off at once to get the trap, but by the time he was ready we had found our quarters so pleasant, that we decided to stay there two hours for the next train. It was a wise decision, for the rain came down again in

torrents. Our landlord was not a bit huffed at the changeableness of our minds. We ordered supper of ham and eggs and tea, and we were presently ushered into a very cosy private sitting-room where three charming young ladies were reading and sewing; but, unhappily for us, no sooner had we entered their symposium, than they gathered up their books and fancy work, and flitted away like frightened fawns; and no wonder, for on surveying ourselves in the glass on the mantelshelf, we discovered that we looked like three half-drowned poachers who had just been rescued from the river.

There was a blazing fire in the room, at which we dried our draggled habiliments, and we consoled ourselves for the loss of the fairies by consuming a supper more fit for the heroes we were than the brigands we looked like.

We caught the nine o'clock train, and so ended my only visit to the Ver. I need not say that, despite our disasters, we all longed to revisit that pleasant stream and to make acquaintance with those splendid trout under circumstances less favourable for them, when their tails would be where they ought to be, lying horizontally with their heads up-stream, and keeping a keen look-out for the flies floating above them.

Now, my angling friends, as Christmas is coming, I bid you all farewell, with this parting benediction: May your homes be happy, may your wives be ministering angels, may there be no domestic jars (except for pickles and such like), no frettings and wranglings and naggings, which are like the crackling of thorns

under a pot. May your daughters be as the tender vines clinging round your hearts; may your sons be stalwart, affectionate, honest, and truthful; may you all eat your Christmas pudding with moderation and thankfulness; and, finally, may you sometimes have tight lines and full creels when you go a-fishing. I say *sometimes* advisedly; if you were sure your creels would always be filled the excitement and pleasure would pall upon you, and you would be deprived of such Elysian delights as those which befell the accomplished Major and the famous "Sarcelle" on the occasion I have endeavoured to describe.

I write these lines from my solitary eyrie on the top of the northern heights of London.

CHAPTER X.

GRAYLING.

A good day with "Red Spinner" and the Major—The Professor—"Red Spinner" spins yarns—Professor instructs us on the virtues of black pepper and West India sugar—"Red Spinner" clings to "the Shoulder of Mutton" and makes a full bag of big grayling—The Major becomes a rover, but captures seven brace of splendid grayling—The Professor instructs the A. A., who is fairly successful.

"O, blessed drums of Aldershot!
O, blest South-Western train!
O, blessed, blessed Speaker's clock!
All prophesying rain.
* * * * *
O, blest south wind, which toots his horn
Through every hole and crack!
I'm off at eight to-morrow morn
To bring such fishes back!"

CHARLES KINGSLEY.

RIDAY, Oct. 18th, 1895, Waterloo Station: "Good morning to you, Professor. I am very glad to meet you this fine October morning, and happy to have your company on our little fishing excursion, on which my thoughts have been turned for many a long and weary day.

What think you of our prospects?" The Professor is not usually given to be optimistic, but he was constrained to allow that the weather was not altogether unpromising. "The wind last week," said he, "blew a gale down stream, the pools were boiling cauldrons, and the natural insects on the water were swept clean away; not a grayling rose for six days, and fishing was nowhere." "You will admit," I said, "that it looks more promising to-day; there is but little wind stirring, so far as one can judge from the window, and that north-easterly, which suits our river exactly; the sky is bright, with a few dull clouds hanging about; the air is crisp—a fair-looking day for the grayling." "That's all very well," said the cynic; "but if there is any rise to-day it will all be over before we can get to the water at three o'clock."

We reached the river about that time, when the last "*rise*" had already happened, for we saw no more. Notwithstanding, I did manage to bag a nice brace of grayling with the "Iron Blue," and was satisfied.

Saturday, Oct. 19th, was glorious, a day to be remembered, for it possessed all the essential qualities of a perfect grayling day.

We started for the river filled with the hope, amounting almost to certainty, of soon having our baskets weighed down by the big grayling only waiting to be caught.

Alas! when we got to the river, what had happened to it? It was one field of floating greenery; hundreds and hundreds of tons of newly-cut weeds, and old, suspended weeds had been let down upon us from some demon holds above; on, on they came, an end-

less procession as far as the eye could reach, the water hardly visible beneath its floating burthen. To add to the chagrin we naturally felt, the fish were rising freely amongst the weeds, but it was quite impossible to cast over them.

By an early train we expected two doughty champions, the Major and "Red Spinner" (probably so called on account of the sanguine yarns he spins). We had vainly thought to open their eyes and water their mouths by the baskets we youngsters had hoped to have exhibited. It was a galling disappointment; happily, by lunch time the demons above had done their worst, the weeds began to thin out, and by the time the first champion, "R. S.," arrived, our river was as innocent of weeds as if it had never borne any; and, better still, for a short time, in a well-known corner, called "the Shoulder of Mutton," the rise was fast and furious. We gave up this place of honour to our distinguished visitor. The Major did not arrive till two or three hours later, almost too late for the feast. Our Professor, the most unselfish of men, did not fish, but he accompanied me down stream, where, in the many grayling beds below, that we knew well, we expected to find an equal uprising of the fish to rejoice in bright sunshine and swallow insects, after the heavy canopy of green weeds which had for so many hours obscured their daylight. We were not so favoured; we saw only three rising fish the whole length of our tether. I had captured one 1½ lb. grayling, and hooked and lost another, and, with my rod, the Professor brought a third into the basket.

We returned rather disconsolately to where we had left "Red Spinner." There he was, still plying at "the Shoulder of Mutton," and the Major was not far off. Between two and four o'clock the "R. S." had bagged five brace of splendid grayling, without moving from the enchanted corner. The Major, who only arrived on the scene when the rise for the day was almost over, bagged three brace of the biggest sort. Of course, I allow something for skill to these accomplished craftsmen, but in this particular instance I attribute quite as much to luck. I have the presumption to think that had the "A. A." taken "Red Spinner's" place, and sent him down to those other good places, our baskets would have been more equally weighted. I have constantly averred that there is pleasure in fishing, quite apart from catching fish, and not the least of it is to see that your friends have, by luck or skill, been satisfied with their afternoon's work.

We dine at our old farmhouse in a primitive fashion, but luxuriously enough, and then we sit round a bright logwood fire, which our Professor allows no one to touch but himself, for he has a notion that no one but he can place the logs in the exact position they ought to be in. The "Spinner" spins many a yarn of his early and varied experiences, and the Professor causes mirth by his drolleries and his self-assertive, dogmatic, and pessimistic views about the country in general, which he vows is going rapidly to the dogs. He imports his own whisky in cask direct from the distillery of Glenlivet, and maintains that he makes a clear profit of twenty per cent. on every glass he drinks. On being

asked to explain how the consumption of whisky, which costs him money, could possibly be a source of revenue to him, "I will tell you," says he. "Man must have whisky, must he not? Very well. I pay 17*s.* 6*d.* a gallon for mine, and you cannot get similar stuff for less than 21*s.* or more. There is a difference of twenty per cent. gained by me by buying direct from the distillery. Isn't it as plain as a pike-staff that I make a profit by every glass I drink?" We were at the time partaking of his old over-proof "Glenlivet," and we found it good and commendable.

As moderate men, we partook of this insinuating drink quite sparingly and hot, with a half-inch square of the thin outer rind of a lemon, which gives it that pleasant aroma. We were obliged to admit that his logic was unassailable on the assumption that his major premise was sound, viz., that every man *must* take whisky! A proposition capable of being questioned.

At breakfast our Professor is great on the question of sugar. "Here," says he, "you go and import a lot of bounty-fed beetroot rubbish which has no sweetening power in it, and leave our colonies and sugar merchants to starve. Go into any shop you like, and ask for West Indian cane-grown sugar, and you'll find none from one end of the town to the other—they don't keep it. No, they will try and palm off on you that nasty gritty German stuff, because it can be bought for less money, and they make a fraction more profit; and yet we call ourselves patriotic. No! thank you, none of that turnipy stuff

for me! Here, try some of this honest, old-fashioned brown Demerara, and insist on getting it wherever you go, that's the way to get that dyspeptic foreign stuff out of this market—I was only able to get this by a fluke."

And so at dinner our genial cynic is equally hot on pepper. "Please pass the *white* pepper." "White pepper!" he exclaims; "my dear sir, there's no such thing as *white* pepper in existence; that is simply a vile concoction of hellebore and poisonous chemicals manufactured at a fourth of the cost of the true pepper, which of course is *black*. Never catch me using white pepper!"

No man can discourse more eloquently and convincingly on flies, imitation and natural. He knows them all, and you cannot deceive him by the shadow of a shade of tint on hackle, or wing, or body.

Sunday, Oct. 20th, was a very pleasant day, a day of rest for the grayling. We took our walks abroad across the meadows and through the woods, now delightfully "hung with tapestry of all glorious colours," acorns, brown and yellow, strewed in profusion under the wide-spreading oaks; the copper-leaved guelder rose, with its bunches of red berries, as pretty now as it is in its summer dress of white roses; but what has become of the swallows? They have departed from this neighbourhood. Starlings have taken their places in groups of hundreds; flocks of wild geese are seen far away up in the sky, sailing southwards in triangular form, like a floating pyramid. Small birds twittered in the hedgerows. Our country walk was very pleasant. The grayling in the river

enjoyed their short reprieve, and "rose" with freedom in blessed ignorance of the fate awaiting many of them to-morrow. Big hip berries were plentiful in the hedgerows, but haws were scarce, and did not promise much bird food for the winter.

Monday, Oct. 21st.—Another glorious morning, precursor of another ideal day for the grayling. Wind, very slight, north-easterly, but hardly perceptible; sky, heavy and leaden, admitting of no sunshine, but refraining from sending down rain We, piscators, were out early, but our Professor, while making allowance for our juvenile enthusiasm, assured us there would be no rise till about twelve o'clock, and that the fish would all be down by four. "Red Spinner," with a too scrupulous conscience, insisted on keeping up his acquaintance with "the Shoulder of Mutton" region, which he had so punished and depleted on Saturday. He might, with his extraordinary skill, have done much better lower down, but he did not do badly, having at the end of the day accounted for several brace of fine grayling, besides several large trout, which had to be returned.

The Major became a rover, but clung to the most promising spots, and easily captured seven brace of lovely grayling, two only of which weighed less than 1 lb.—most of them nearer 2 lb.—besides two brace of fine trout returned.

The "A. A." fished with his usual skill and his usual want of luck, but he finished up with two and a half brace of really big grayling—one of them 2 lb., and the others of quite passable and respectable dimensions.

After a careful examination of the water, and catching innumerable floating flies, in the morning, the Professor came to the decision that the Iron Blue was the proper imitation to tempt the grayling. "Red Spinner" began and ended his successful outing with a Red Tag, an imitation which has no prototype on land or water, but which seemed to have a natural attraction for the grayling quite remarkable. I have seen them repeatedly allow the true natural Iron Blue to pass over their noses, and go for the Red Tag—to their destruction.

The Major, I think, varied his flies, but did best with Iron Blue.

I placed myself under the wing of our good Professor, who rendered me all sorts of kindnesses, not only selecting my flies, but tying them on for me—for my eyes are not what they were. He kept a sharp look-out for rises. "There you are, just over that clump of weeds. Now cast a couple of yards above him, and let your fly float down over him, and you'll have that fish to a dead certainty. Ah, you've got him! Hold on, keep the point of your rod up, and don't let him get below you. Oh! he's off; I told you so, you held him too tight, you should have given him more line, and not let him get below you. Why, man, he was a two-pounder, and no gut could stand the strain of pulling hard against fish and stream; never mind, better luck next time."

That important question of casting over a fish is one upon which these experts differ. Our Professor waxes quite wroth if you put your fly just over, or a few inches above your fish.

"There now, my good sir, you've put him down at once. You should have cast two yards above him."

Now, that other great authority, the "R. S.," distinctly lays it down that you must make your cast just from six inches to one foot above your fish, and he comes at you straight. If you cast farther away, you give him time to think and examine and suspect, and by the time you are on him he has found you out and gives you the cold shoulder.

The Major is silent on this question, he only smiles and takes his own course, which rarely fails to bring in the unfortunate unsuspecting victim over which he casts. Thus we talked and fished, and discussed everything all through the brief time of our outing. It was a time of mirth and pleasure, and was over all too soon.

CHAPTER XI.

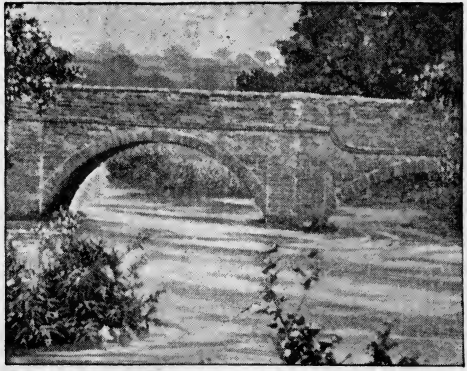
"LITTLE RIVERS."

What is the test of a river? "The power to drown a man," says the author of "Lorna Doone"—A lovely afternoon—The "milking bridge"—A vision—May-fly fishing in the olden time—A rambling review of "Little Rivers," a charming book by Mr. Van Dyke—Do hornets bite?

"The west wind wafts the scent of May
Adown the verdant valleys;
The friendly sun with tempered ray
Peers forth from cloudy alleys;
And in his gleam the duns and browns
In joy of life are winging,
While I, afar from noisy towns,
Go forth to angle singing."

Lyra Piscatoria by COTSWOLD ISYS.

WHO does not love little rivers? Breathes there the angler with soul so dead within him that he never to himself hath said, "I love to wander and linger on the banks of a pretty stream, even if it fails to yield to me its store of trout and grayling at my bidding?" I envy not the spirit of the man, angler though he calls himself, who can sit hour after hour on his basket, his eye so



THE LUGG IN FLOOD.

intently watching his float that he can find no time to gaze around him, or listen to

"The small birds warbling to their paramours."

"But what is the test of a river?" asks the author of "Lorna Doone." "The power to drown a man," replies the river darkly. "But rudeness is not argument. Rather shall we say that the power to work a good undershot wheel without being dammed up all night, is a fair certificate of Riverhood."

I, indeed, have been a lover of little streams ever since I can remember. None of them without the power, if occasion offered, "to drown a man."

When I was young (ah, woful when!) by many a pretty stream did I fish and wander, but one bright day stands out from all others in my memory. A lovely afternoon, in the leafy month of June, I strolled down, across the daisy-decked meadows, to as sweet a little river as ever was seen. I began to fish at the Old Stone Bridge, hard by a dilapidated paper mill. Down that stream I wandered, casting my flies rapidly as I hurried on, not much minding whether a fish came at me or not, till a mile down I came to "the Milking Bridge," a picturesque but shaky old wooden, one-armed structure, which spanned the river where it runs deep and slow; here it was that I set to work in earnest, for the May-fly was "up," and the trout were rising splendidly. Now I cast carefully and with the greatest precision, and soon hooked and landed a fine trout. I was doubly triumphant; firstly, because it was my first May-fly capture; and, lastly, because I had seen a vision on

that dear old bridge. A pretty maiden stood there; she leaned against the wooden rail, and watched me with a laughing eye. Clad all in white was she, a light pink sash encircled her waist, a moss rose nestled in her bosom, and in one hand she held a basket of wild flowers. She wore a saucy sailor's hat, and her bonny brown hair flowed from beneath it in wavy ringlets over her shoulders. It was, I assure you, a pretty picture.

"Her looks as clear
As morning roses freshly wash'd with dew."

We had met before, in truth we were old friends, and probably our meeting was not altogether an "undesigned coincidence." She clapped her hands, and her bright brown eyes sparkled with delight as she came down to examine my catch; but when she saw me forcing the hook from the poor trout's mouth, and striking his head on the butt of my rod, she turned away with a shudder, and with a tear in her eye, and trembling lip, she cried, "How can you be so cruel?"

I soothed her with the most specious reasons I could think of, for on this subject I am not quite orthodox. I remember reading of an argument of two hours' duration on this question of *cruelty* between the Rev. John Brown (father of the author of "Rab and his Friends,") and his attached friend the Rev. Dr. Wardlaw (an ardent fisherman). At last the doctor was driven to exclaim, "Well! I cannot answer you, *but fish I must and shall!*" That is, perhaps, the best argument that can be adduced, and is certainly decisive if not conclusive.

It was a calm and balmy evening; the rooks overhead in the rookery just above were caw-cawing and feeding their young; song birds were making melody in the hedgerows, now pink with wild roses, now milk white with May bloom; the meadows were carpeted with daisies and gilded with cowslips, buttercups, and daffodils; great trout were flopping up in the river; rabbits flitted across our path as we loitered on through the woods and by the side of the stream, no longer fishing, but chatting pleasantly of things past, present, and to come—

> "It was the time of roses,
> We plucked them as we passed,"

till we came to the point where our roads diverged. Alas! it is fifty years ago and more. In our saunter through the wood we had met with a young man and maiden, then in the heyday of youth and happiness—they had wandered into this lovely solitude of wood and river not to angle, but clearly to settle preliminaries, for they were married soon afterwards. They had a large family, and have long since passed into the shadowy land. One of their sons is now an eminent physician.

As to the maiden of "the Milking Bridge," she, too, was married long, long ago. She had many sons and daughters; and alas! alas! she, too, has long since gone to the land of shadows. One of her sons, *piscator natus*, is now one of the most expert among anglers, and is therefore probably not unknown to many of my angling friends.

Surely this is a long digression from the book to which

I am wishful to draw the attention of my readers. "Little Rivers," by Henry Van Dyke (D. Nutt), its very title sent me off into this garrulous reminiscence of a bygone time. I have no thought of reviewing it, that interesting work must be left to the critic, and I possess not the critical faculty. The work consists of eleven essays, and one has to read them to know what they are about; it has no long chapter headings, out of which an artful critic could construct a slashing or a brilliant review without the trouble of perusal.

I propose leisurely to read these essays one by one, and to cull therefrom such tit-bits as I think may interest or amuse my readers. As yet I have got no further than the *title page*. This is followed as a prelude by a little poem, "An Angler's Wish in Town," from which I take one verse for the sake of the last line:

> "Then weary is the street parade,
> And weary books, and weary trade;
> I'm only wishing to go a-fishing;
> For this the month of May was made."

"Little Rivers" is the title of the first essay, in praise of rivers in general. "For real company and friendship, there is nothing outside of the animal kingdom that is comparable to a river."

"It is by a river that I would choose to make love, and to revive old friendships, and to play with children, and to confess my faults, and to escape from vain, selfish desires, and to cleanse my mind from all the false and foolish things that mar the joy and peace of living.

"Every river that flows is good. But those that we

love most are always the ones that we have known best—the stream that ran before our father's door, the current on which we ventured our first boat or cast our first fly, the brook on whose bank we first picked the twin flower of young love."

Here is an exquisite little bit which our author quotes from Charles Darwin, in a letter to his wife. "At last," says he, "I fell asleep on the grass, and awoke with a chorus of birds singing around me, and squirrels running up the tree, and some woodpeckers laughing, and it was as pleasant and rural a scene as ever I saw; and I *did not care one penny how any of the birds or beasts had been formed.*"

At the end of this chapter the author describes very fairly, but as I think too modestly, what the book is.

"You shall not be deceived in this book. It is nothing but a handful of rustic variations on the old tune of 'Rest and be thankful,' a record of unconventional travel, a pilgrim's scrip with a few bits of blue sky philosophy in it. There is, so far as I know, very little useful information, and absolutely no criticism of the universe to be found in this volume, so if you are what Isaak Walton calls 'a severe, sour-complexioned man,' you would better carry it back to the bookseller and get your money again, if he will give it to you, and go your way rejoicing after your own melancholy fashion."

The next essay is called "A Leaf of Spearmint." "The clear, spicy, unmistakable smell of a bed of spearmint, that is the bed whereon memory loves to lie and dream." A leaf of mint plucked from between the pebbles, and rolled between his fingers, wafts him

backwards to a stream that runs through the country of "Auld Lang Syne," and fills his creel with the recollections of a boy and a rod. This delightful chapter is devoted mostly to his boyish exploits in the Catskills, the Adirondachs, and the Green Mountains, in the midst of which he lived and moved, and had his summer holidays; it tells how he caught his first trout, "longer than a new lead pencil," and another of less tremendous dimensions; how he met, and fell in love with, and adored the beautiful Annie V.; how that wonderful brace of trout was cooked for breakfast next morning; how he saw "the adored of his soul" sitting at the other end of the room and faring "on the common food of mortals!" and shall she not feast on his dainties? The waiter is sent for a hot plate, on which the largest trout is placed, and sent to the lovely Miss Annie V., and how his heart went pit-a-pat the while, repenting his rashness, doubting whether she would deign to accept his chivalrous offering or not. She seems to accept rather indifferently he thinks, and his heart sinks within him; but for an instant the corner of her eye catches the boy's sidelong glance, she nods perceptibly, and he is happy. Time passed, and all-day pic-nics gave place to a two weeks' camping trip, and wanderings with his father (now promoted to the title of "Governor"), amid many wild and rugged scenes in the Adirondachs and elsewhere bring us to the end of the chapter.

The next chapter is called "Ampersand," and gives a pleasant account of wanderings up and down this mountain, which stands in the heart of the Adirondach

country. I find little in it that I can steal, unless I steal the whole; but here is a quotable bit:

"Send your fly in under those cedar branches where the water swirls around by the old log. Now draw it towards the foam; there is a sudden gleam of dull gold in the white water. You strike too soon. Your line comes back to you. In a current like this a fish will almost always hook himself. Try it again. This time he takes the fly fairly, and you have him. It is a good fish, and he makes the slender rod bend to the strain. He sulks for a moment, as if uncertain what to do, and then with a rush darts into the swiftest part of the current. You can never stop him there. Let him go. Keep just enough pressure on him to hold the hook firm, and follow his lordship down the stream as if he were a salmon; he slides over a little fall, glancing through the foam, and swings around in the next pool. Here you can manage him more easily; and after a few minutes' brilliant play, a few mad dashes for the current, he comes to the net, and your skilful guide lands him with a quick steady sweep of the arm. The scales credit him with an even pound, and a better fish than this you will hardly take here in midsummer."

A pretty description of an every-day occurrence. Our southern anglers will smile at so much fuss over a 1 lb. trout. He might have been 3 lb. at least to justify so much type and paper. Of course size depends on locality, a 1 lb. trout in a mountain stream is comparatively as good as a three-pounder in the Test. By the way, one wonders what kind of hornets those may be which he met with on the Ampersand.

"Our trail led us at first through a natural meadow, overgrown with waist-high grass, and very spongy to the tread. Hornet haunted also was this meadow, and therefore no place for idle dalliance or unwary digression, for the bite of the hornet is one of the saddest and most humiliating surprises of this mortal life."

Do hornets bite? Our hornet (*Vespa crabro*) is a stinging insect, a sort of giant compared with *Vespa vulgaris*, the common wasp. It builds in decaying hollow trees, eaves of old barns, etc.; but this American meadow-haunting, biting hornet is new to me.[1]

The next essay transports us to Scotland and the Hebrides, under the title of "A Handful of Heather." Our author has a fancy for reading his fiction in the place where it was grown. Thus "Romola" accompanies him to Rome, "The Heart of Midlothian" to Edinburgh, and "Lorna Doone" to Exmoor; but, says he:

"I never expect to pass pleasanter days than those I spent with 'A Princess of Thule' among the Hebrides; for then . . . I was young . . . but even youth itself was not to be compared with the exquisite felicity of being deeply and desperately in love with Sheila, the clear-eyed heroine of the charming book. In this innocent passion my grey-haired comrades. the Chancellor of the University of New York and my father were ardent but generous rivals. . . . According to Tennyson, the most important element in a young knight's education is 'the maiden passion for a

[1] See "Fresh Woods and Pastures New." Letter XV. "An Evening with the Hornets."

maiden.' Surely the safest form in which the course may be taken is by falling in love with a girl in a book."

And so these lovers three sailed among the Western Islands. It was Sheila's dark blue dress and sailor hat they looked for in the streets of Stornoway. It was Sheila's soft sing-song Highland speech they heard on the balcony of the little inn. It was Sheila's low sweet brow, and long black eyelashes, and tender blue eyes that they saw as they loitered over the moorland. Were not these the peat cutters that Sheila loved to help? Was not this the spot where Sheila picked the bunch of wild flowers and gave it to her lover? In fact, Sheila is the most prominent person in this essay, and it is a pretty testimony to the charm of "A Princess of Thule" that it should have taken such a hold upon the affections of these three staid American clergymen.

Here is a description of our author's first salmon:

"The white water came singing down out of the moorland into a rocky valley, and there was a merry curl of air on the pools, and the silver fish were leaping from the stream. The gillie handled the big rod as if it had been a fairy's wand, but to me it was like a giant's spear. It was a different affair from fishing with five ounces of split bamboo on a Long Island trout pond. The monstrous fly, like an awkward bird, went fluttering everywhere but in the right direction. It was the mercy of Providence that preserved the gillie's life; but he was very patient and forbearing, leading me on from one pool to another, as I spoiled the water, and snatched the hook out of the very mouth of rising fish, until at last we found a

salmon that knew even less about the niceties of salmon fishing than I did. He seized the fly firmly before I could pull it away; and then in a moment I found myself attached to a creature with the strength of a whale and the agility of a flying fish. He led me rushing up and down the bank like a madman. He played on the surface like a whirlwind, and sulked at the bottom like a stone. He meditated, with ominous delay, in the middle of the deepest pool, and then, darting across the river, flung himself clean out of the water and landed far up on the green turf of the opposite shore. My heart melted like a snowflake in the sea, and I thought that I had lost him for ever. But he rolled quietly back into the water, with the hook still set in his nose. A few minutes afterwards I brought him within reach of the gaff, and my first salmon was glittering in the grass beside me. Then I remembered that Wm. Black had described this very fish in 'The Princess of Thule.' I pulled the book from my pocket, and, lighting a pipe, sat down to read that chapter over again. . . . His salmon, after leaping across the strram, got away, whereas mine was safe."

He spent a pleasant fortnight at Melvich, where he found "comfortaible lodgin' wi' the Weedow Macphairson." When the widow, by subtle cross-examination, discovered that he was a minister, she brought out the big Bible and a bottle of old Glenlivet, and asked him to conduct evening worship, and to "tak a glass o' speerits to guard against takkin' cauld."

Now we come to a delightful chapter called "The Restigouche from a Horse-boat." The names of the

chief tributaries of the Restigouche are curious; there is the headstrong Metapedia, the crooked Upsalquitch, the Patapedia, and the Quatamakedgwick. These are words at which the tongue balks, but you soon get used to them. Space forbids my telling what a Horse-boat is like, or to quote another splendid salmon fight, but I must quote our author's views on the subject of *cruelty*.

His companion, Favonius, being ill one summer, had been ordered by his physician to go into the woods, but on no account to go without fresh meat; so he set out into the wild country north of Georgian Bay, taking a live sheep with him, to be sure of fresh meat. But the innocent little beast would follow him about like a dog, it ate out of his hand, and rubbed its woolly head against his leggings, and he carried it in his arms over rough places. To his dismay he found that he was beginning to love it for its own sake, and not for the world would he have alluded to mutton in its presence, and so the little animal continued to lick the hand which was never "raised to shed his blood." On his return to civilization he parted with the sheep with sincere regret, and the consciousness that he had humoured his affection at the expense of his digestion.

"There is a great difference in animals in this respect. I certainly never heard of anyone falling in love with a salmon in such a way as to regard it as a fond companion. And this may be one reason why no sensible person who has tried fishing has ever been able to see any *cruelty* in it. Suppose the fish is not caught by an angler, what is his alternative fate? He

will either perish miserably in the struggles of the crowded net or die of old age and starvation, like the long, lean stragglers which are sometimes found in the shallow pools, or be devoured by a larger fish, or torn to pieces by a seal or an otter. Compared with any of these miserable deaths, the fate of a salmon that is hooked in a clear stream, and, after a glorious fight, receives the happy despatch at the moment when he touches the shore, is a sort of *Euthanasia.* And, since fish was made to be man's food, the angler who brings him to the table of destiny in the cleanest, quickest, kindest way is, in fact, his benefactor."

A specious bit of irony, which was evidently written with his tongue in his cheek.

The next essay is called "Apenrosen and Goat's Milk," and is devoted mostly to mountain climbing. I must refrain from large quotation—tempting though it be—but here are a couple of the inscriptions which he found on the heavy crosses with pointed roofs which lined the road to the Gross-Venediger; crosses which mark the place where a human life has been lost, or where some poor peasant has been delivered from some great peril. They tell of the danger that lurks on the steep slopes of grass, where the mowers had to go down with ropes round their waists; and in the forests, where the great trees fall and crush men like flies. Some of the inscriptions are humorous enough. Here is one translated from the quaint German:

> "Here lies Elias Queer,
> Killed in his sixtieth year;
> Scarce had he seen the light of day
> When a waggon wheel crushed his life away."

And there is another famous one, which says :

"Here perished the honoured and virtuous maiden,
G. V.
This tablet was erected by her only son."

"Au Large" is the title of the next essay, a Canadian idyll, as charming as any of its predecessors. Then comes "Trout Fishing in the Traun," which I must not touch.

The last is called "At the Sign of the Balsam Bough," about either of which if the reader wants to know anything let him buy the book.

The volume closes, as it begins, with a charming little poem, entitled "The Woodnotes of the Veery."

I confess myself ignorant of this bird, but I gather from the text that it is a native of New England. "On the top of a small sumach, not thirty feet away from me, sat a veery. I could see the pointed spots upon his breast, the swelling of his white throat, and the sparkle of his eyes as he poured his whole heart into a long liquid chant, the clear notes rising and falling, echoing and interlacing in endless curves of sound,

'Orb within orb, intricate, wonderful.'

Other bird songs can be translated into words—not this. There is no interpretation."

Here is the last verse.

"O far away, and far away the tawny thrush is singing,
New England woods at close of day with that clear chant are ringing;
And when my light of life is low, and heart and flesh are weary,
I fain would hear, before I go, the woodnotes of the veery."

And so I bid adieu to one of the most delightful books I have met with for many a day. A cheery, breezy book by a "blue sky" philosopher, which I trust many an angler, for his own delight, will possess himself of. I will only add that it is very prettily printed and bound, and illustrated with numerous beautiful reproductions from the author's own lens, for in his journeyings he always carried with him his photographic apparatus.

Do American Hornets Bite?

In reply to this question (*see ante*, p. 120) the author of "Little Rivers," Mr. Henry Van Dyke, of New York, has most kindly sent me the following very interesting remarks:

"Now, concerning the *bite* of the hornet, you must know that it was an error—not typographical, but autographical. It has disappeared in the third edition, which is now printing. But this is the way I came to make it. In this country we have a hornet of uncommon size, and all dressed in black and white like a clergyman. His attack is so fierce and astounding that we boys used to say, and think, that he executed it with both ends at once—biting like a serpent and stinging like an adder. In the carelessness of writing, I suppose this tradition of boyhood crept into my MS.

"This winged adversary is so much more terrible than any other creature that flies, that the boys invented a special name for him, and called him, by way of distinction, *the Hornick*. In England you

have nothing so ferocious, and just at present it is the hope of all good Americans you never will."

Most certainly we do not want that American "Hornick" here. Our own hornet is bad enough. If he does not bite, he knows how to sting most venomously; but there is this to be said of him, that nothing but the gravest provocation will induce him to put forth the power that is in him. He knows that the loss of his sting is the loss of his life—hence he is sometimes regarded as a coward and a bully. Many a time have I had him come right straight at me with lightning flight, and, when within an inch of my nose, divert his course. Was this magnanimity or cowardice? We used to think it was his way of saying "Go away, and let us alone, or you will catch it next time." It was his way of barking without biting.

Here is another poser for our friend! Do American adders *sting?* Do American boys study their Bible?

"Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that *biteth* the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward."—*Genesis*, chap. xlix. v. 17.

Do American Adders Sting?

On this question that accomplished angler and pleasant poet "Cotswold Isys" quotes Proverbs xxiii. 32: "At the last it *biteth* like a serpent, and *stingeth* like an adder"—and so justifies Mr. Van Dyke and proves my charge against American boys to be unfounded. I blush in acknowledging my error. The quotation from Proverbs is one of great poetic beauty; the fact remains, however, that adders do not sting, but *bite* with their poison-conveying fangs.

CHAPTER XII.

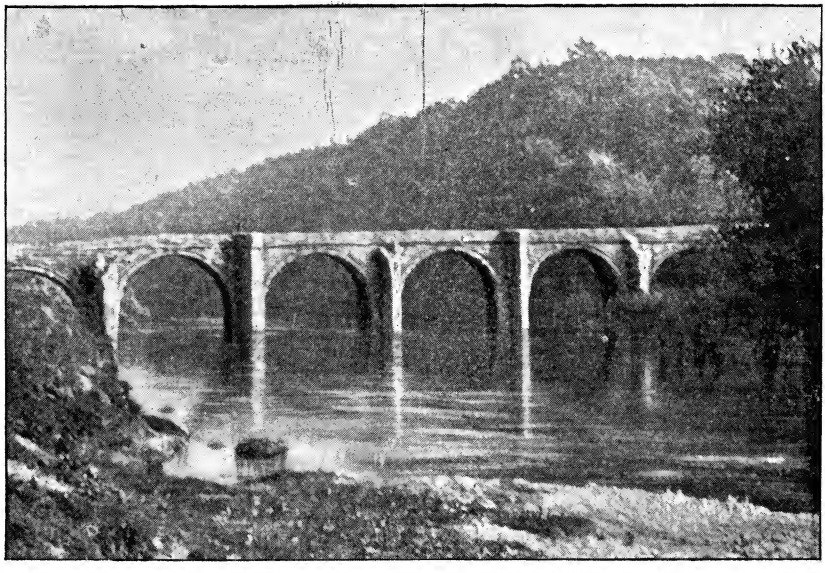
FOUR MEN IN A BOAT.

A trip down the Wye—River unusually low—Seven hours to do twenty miles—Difficulties overcome—A cow in the water—A calf ditto—Lovely scenery—Election day at Hereford.

WE were four men in a boat; our dog Rover was mad because we wouldn't have him along—we knew his tricks of old; he was too fond of jumping out for a swim, and then jumping in to shake himself, which was inconvenient.

We had to go down the Wye for twenty miles, a trip which seemed easy enough, and we expected to do it easily in four hours. We started early, as one of us had, but did not particularly wish, to catch a train at Hereford for London, and we counted on an hour or two to spare for a saunter about the old city before the train left. We were disappointed—our expectations were not realized.

It took us just seven hours of about the hardest work we ever had in our lives to reach Hereford Bridge—a mile from the station. I say *we*, but I did



THE WYE—VERY LOW WATER.

little more than encourage the young ones to work ; I sat at mine ease on a cushioned seat and shouted. The river was exceptionally low, and our boat very heavy. At every bend in the river we came upon a shallow, or a rapid and a fall—there must have been forty of them—and at every one our youngsters had to take off their boots and stockings, and, unprovided with water shoes, go in with their naked feet on the rocky bed of the river, to haul and crunch the boat over the stones and sunken rocks. How they shouted and screamed as they strained every nerve, and the sharp stones grazed their feet ! Constantly they got into a wrong current which led nowhere, or to fearful rocks ahead ; then they had to hark back to find another road, for neither of them knew anything whatever of the treacherous ways of this lovely river ; but they were all young and vigorous, and they had to perform by sheer pluck and strength what could have been performed far more easily by anyone well acquainted with the trend of the currents. No serious accident befell them, but they had many narrow escapes from a ducking, as the boat shot suddenly off a shallow into a ten or perhaps twenty feet pool. Before starting we were cautioned to beware of certain ticklish places, such as Monington Rocks. Here the stream is divided by a small island. On the left the main force of it rushes in a deep and narrow current over a sheer fall of about six feet into a deep pool. That side we were told to avoid, and follow the milder currents on the right. Here the river was wide, running over gravel in little rippling streams, not one of which could carry the boat. So here we

were in a nice fix. We must either tackle the fall and smash the boat to pieces, or get it somehow over these dribbling shallows for a distance of fifty yards at least; and then there were innumerable rocks just showing their points, or partly hidden by the water. After getting over these fifty yards of gravel by terribly hard work, my oarsmen had to look out for these nasty rocks, and to steer the boat between them was even more arduous than scraping her over the shallows. It occupied quite an hour to get over this one of our forty impediments. Then we floated along merrily in deep water for a mile or two with few obstacles. At a ford there were two men with a team of horses and a cart. They offered us some cider and the loan of a horse to pull the boat along, but we did not take advantage of either offer. We were told at the next ford, about eight miles from Hereford, by the ferryman that we had only to keep always to the right, close under the bank, and we should have plain sailing all the way; no more shallows to trouble us. We did keep to the right—there was no help for it—the strong current carried us down irresistibly right under some overhanging willows, carrying away one of our sculls, and scratching our skulls all round. We got out of this trouble in time, caught up our floating scull—which was making rapid way for Hereford—and on again. There was a fellow lying lazily on the bank smoking; he had fastened his boat, and was taking his ease. We asked him if there were any more shallows between us and Hereford. "Lots of 'em" was the only reply we got from him.

We found his laconic reply quite true, but after many a struggle we reached our port safely, with no other mishap than a broken boat-hook and the points of the sculls in splinters.

Our attention had been too completely taken up by the management of our unruly boat to admit of our taking much heed of the very lovely bits of scenery through which we passed. What a lovely picture a little yellow-painted cottage makes, nestling in green foliage, and overshadowed by giant elms just above the Scar Rocks! These bare red rocks—probably a hundred feet high, and surmounted by masses of green foliage—form a lovely boundary to the river, which flows in a graceful bend below.

It was, after all, a very pleasant little trip. The boatmaster at Hereford, who knows every stone in the river, told us we ought to have gone to the left at Monington, and shot that six feet fall! A most easy thing to do—so he said. I am rather glad we did not make the attempt. It would, perhaps, have been good for him, for we should have had a new boat to pay for, and maybe a doctor's bill. Had there been ten inches more water in the river, none of these troubles would have befallen us.

The only little incident worth mention on the trip was this:—Just as we were passing along a deep stretch of water some cattle came helter-skelter down a steep, slippery bank to drink. In their scramble one of them—a cow—tumbled head foremost into the stream, and disappeared for some time, but her horns soon came up above water, then her head, and, swimming round, she managed to scramble up the

slippery bank; it was quite amusing to watch her efforts, which were successful at last. Then a few yards below an unlucky calf tumbled in under an alder bush in a very deep hole. He, too, disappeared, but came up, and struggled hard for some minutes, repeatedly falling back into the deep water. At length he managed to get up on the slippery clay bank, and we thought he was safe, but his forefeet gave way, and somehow he got twisted round, and he again fell head foremost into the water—his hind feet still clinging in some way to the bank, whilst his head and half his body were under water. We thought he must soon be drowned, and we turned the boat round, and pulled up towards him in the hope of rendering him some kind of help, though he was in an almost unreachable place amongst the thick alder bushes; fortunately, after a last strong struggle, he sank wholly into the water, and reappeared a little lower down, swimming vigorously to a shallow bank, up which he managed to climb with difficulty but with safety. Such little incidents as these must be of daily occurrence on the banks of deep rivers, but it was novel and interesting to us to witness, though perhaps scarcely worth recording.

The Wye is, indeed, a most interesting river in its whole length—from its rise in gloomy Plinlimmon to the point where it swells the current of "the Severn Sea." Personally, I am only acquainted with the twenty miles I have just so jauntily floated down. It is a glorious river, passing through rich lands and ever-changing scenery. But there is no good fly-fishing in it. We tried for trout, but we caught chub, that much-

abused, disreputable fish! Notwithstanding his bad character, he is a comely fish, and a half pound chub will fight pluckily, and give as much sport at times as a gentlemanly trout. There are some grayling to be had for the catching. The river swarms with what they call last-springs, or fingerlings, or young salmon, and there ought to be good salmon fishing in those long, deep reaches. Occasionally one hears and sees a big splash, and a lordly salmon throws a somersault clear out of the water; but the sight is rare, for the river hereabouts is netted and poached in every conceivable way—and there is no one to prevent it. Even the riparian owners are constantly netting their water, and keep all they catch, big or little. Round about Hereford I suppose things are different, and some respect is paid to the written and unwritten laws of angling. Mr. Hatton, an occasional correspondent of the "F. G.," I think, has been in luck this season. I did not meet him, but I saw in his shop the model of a 40 lb. salmon, caught by him, with rod and line, some few miles below Hereford; a trophy of which he may well be proud.

We reached Hereford on Election Day. Our first sight on crossing the bridge was a curious one. We met a splendid carriage and pair, with a liveried coachman and footman and gaily bespangled horses, and inside, lolling with his head in one corner and his dirty feet and legs stretched aslant on the opposite delicate cushions, was a sweep with a black pipe in his month, as drunk and as dignified as any lord who ever rode in a carriage. He had been to the poll. His colours were true blue—cornflowers and ribbons.

Other specimens of the opposite colour in an equally glorious state came under our notice as we hurried through the town to seek refreshment after our seven hours' toil on the river; and as we all four drove out of the town in an open carriage on our return home (for our Londoner had missed his train), we were taken for "free and independents" returning from the poll, but we hoisted no colours, and, of course, were as sober as judges.

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