



**DRY-FLY FISHING
IN BORDER WATERS**

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AN ANGLER'S SEASON

By W. EARL HODGSON

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DEUCHAR'S BRIDGE, YARROW.

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DRY-FLY FISHING IN BORDER WATERS

BY

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
J. CUTHBERT HADDEN



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FOREWORD

PERHAPS some explanation is needed for adding another to the long list of books on angling, since all that can be said would seem to have been said over and over again. Yet Izaak Walton in his "Address to the Reader" observes: "For Angling may be said to be so much like the Mathematicks that it can ne'er be fully learnt." For myself the next best thing to being by the river is to read of other people's experiences in catching trout, and of what they have deduced from those experiences.

I still see so many fly fishers on the Border fishing down stream with wet flies under nearly hopeless conditions, in June, July, and August, that I believe a great many mistaken ideas still prevail as to the difficulties of dry-fly fishing and the special tackle necessary for it; hence some account embodying an experience of nearly ten years of exclusively dry-fly fishing on Border waters may be of interest.

Again, I am often asked by friends in England as to the chances of getting any dry-fly fishing in Scotland. Many who make the inquiry seem to imagine that the Border streams and lochs can only be fished with wet flies.

A dry fly is extensively used on the Tweed and by many city anglers in Scotland, but I feel sure that its more extensive adoption would tend to improve the rivers; for whilst more fish would

be caught in the middle of the season, it would give anglers a higher standard in respect to the size of fish killed and tend to prevent the capture of the many hundreds of under-sized fish which now goes on.

The great stretches of free fishing in Scotland, like the public golf courses, form one of the most valuable assets of the people, providing as they do a non-spectacular sport for thousands under the most favourable conditions, *i.e.* in the open country.

It may be thought that none but a master hand should write on a difficult subject like fly fishing. I put forth no pretensions to be anything of the sort; I only claim to be able sometimes to catch fish with a dry fly in bright weather and clear water when the average wet-fly fisherman cannot.

For these and other reasons I hope the book may be of interest to :

(1) Border fly fishers, who still fish exclusively with a wet or sunk fly.

(2) Fly fishers generally who, like myself, find every one's experiences of trout fishing interesting.

(3) Anglers in England, and elsewhere, with very restricted local opportunities of fly fishing.

(4) Beginners, who may just as well begin to fish in the most delightful as in some less interesting way.

Readers who wish to go more deeply into the subject of dry-fly fishing than this elementary account will enable them to do should read Mr.

Halford's books, which are the standard works on the subject. Ronalds' "Fly Fisher's Entomology" is still an authoritative work on flies, and Sir Edward Grey's "Fly Fishing" is one of the most delightful books ever written on Angling.

For some years a rather bitter controversy was engaged in by adherents of the dry- and wet-fly methods, but controversy is now largely a thing of the past, owing to the conversion of many wet-fly men to the dry-fly side. Even the remaining wet-fly enthusiasts now admit that on some waters, and under certain conditions, fish are more easily caught with a dry than with a wet fly; and of course the opposite of this has never been denied by anybody. One argument used by the wet-fly school was that since fish admittedly feed much more extensively on subaqueous food than on floating food, therefore a subaqueous lure must be the best. Probably this would be generally admitted if no other considerations came into the question; but the fact remains that wet flies are not so good an imitation of subaqueous insects as dry flies are of floating insects; and until they are, fish in clear calm water will continue to be more readily deceived by the floating lure than by the sunk one.

In conclusion I hope that no one will be disappointed at finding no infallible recipe in this book for "filling a basket"; indeed, I trust it may tend to reduce the numbers of fish brought home, while perhaps compensating for this by increasing their average weight.

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DRY-FLY FISHING IN BORDER WATERS

INTRODUCTION

Good wine needs no bush, and any book about angling written in the keenly enthusiastic spirit of the following pages needs really no Introduction. "We anglers all love one another," said Izaak Walton, truly. Like Freemasons, we are brothers the world over; as ready to listen to each other's notions and experiences of the craft as we are to cast our flies upon the waters—the bread being in our baskets for the time. With anglers, talking "shop" is as dear as are the waterside pleasures of memory when the rod is resting and the season of retrospect has set in.

Most sporting talk, as Mr. Andrew Lang (himself a "brother of the angle") remarks, is dull to every one but the votaries of the particular amusement under discussion. Few things can be drearier to the outsider than the conversation of cricketers and golfers, unless it be the recondite lore which whist players bring forth from the depths of their phenomenal

memories. But angling talk has a variety, recounts an amount of incident and adventure, and wakens a feeling of free air in a way which the records of no other sport, except perhaps deer-stalking, can rival.

True, the angler's talk has served to brand him in unsympathetic quarters as "of the tribe of Ananias." But if he must own up to occasionally drawing the long bow, there is this to be said about his tall stories, that they are at least picturesque. A painter of the Dutch school could not be more microscopic in detail. Nothing is ever wanting. Who does not remember Washington Irving's old devotee who came into the inn after angling all day, "and gave me a history of his sport with as much minuteness as a general would talk over a campaign; being particularly animated in relating the manner in which he had taken a large trout which had completely tasked all his skill and wariness"? Doubtless the devotee exaggerated, but who would have the heart to quarrel with him on that account?

After all, if the angler boasts of his grand "takes," he is as ready to tell of the big fish that broke away from his line, leaving his heart desolate and empty. Whatever the sceptics may think, such accidents do befall him who

loves "to be quiet and go a-angling." They constitute, in fact, his only bitter memories, recalling experiences to which, at the moment, he felt that even inarticulate speech was wholly inadequate to do justice. Time but the impression deeper makes to the angler who has loved and lost a monster trout. Imagination increases his bulk, and fond recollection paints him as he was not. But it is all very harmless. There is nothing mendacious in these "steep" yarns of gigantic denizens of the dancing streams, hooked and basketed, and—missed; and he is but a sorry churl who would hint, even jestingly, that David had the angler in his mind when, in his haste, he declared that "all men are liars."

Generally speaking, it is, of course, the uninitiated who is the scoffer—the man who proclaims that he "would never have patience to be an angler." He may have tried it, only to hook himself instead of the fish, to tangle his line in every tree, to lose his "flies," to break his rod, and finally to give up the attempt in despair. There is nothing that baffles the understanding of this type of being more than the zeal of the angler who devotes all his leisure (in season) to "taking fysshe." It is with a feeling akin to pity that he looks on while lines are being cast above the trout that decline to "rise," or listens

to the cheerful tale of a day by the water when the lightest of baskets has been shouldered home. Such persons do not comprehend the situation. They belong to the prosaic class represented by Dr. Johnson, who, when asked for a definition of angling, grunted out: "A stick and a string: a fly at one end and a fool at the other."

Still is it true what Walton said: "Angling is something like poetry: men are born so." The man who has not been "born so" can never realise how the catching of trout, while an agreeable and even a desirable incident in its way, is by no means essential to the true angler's enjoyment. Hope "springs eternal" in the angler's breast. One little nibble will keep him "casting" in an ecstatic state of suspended animation for hours; and some have found the longest summer day too short, even when "takes" were few and far between.

Talk about the virtue of patience! Who exercises it to more effect than the angler? A captious writer has indeed suggested that the angler's patience is a mythical quality. "Anglers," says he, "are amongst the most impatient of men, and their patience is a condition of imperfectly suppressed fury." Here speaks again the man who was not "born so."

Even if we were to admit his contention, we should yet have to claim moral good for an art which exercises such a beneficent influence on the temper.

But the truth is that the essence of the angler's art lies in other directions than the mere basketing of fish. If he does not find trout, he finds health, and content, and appetite, and a great many more things. An early "Tretyse of Fishing with the Angle" commends "this forsayd craft" because that it ministers "principally for your solace, and to cause the helth of your body and especialy of your soule." Two centuries have still left that true for the angler. His are the healing charms of meadows, and pure streams, and fresh country breezes. A fragrance of rare tenderness, of mild, restful, soothing peace assails him while he courts the serenity of nature, the companionship of the rippling water and the silent pools.

"If I might be judge," wrote Walton, "God never did make a more calm, quiet, innocent recreation than angling." The angler is satisfied with simple joys. The half-sedative watchfulness of his sport, the lulling cadence of the water, invite to pleasant moods of musing, induce a mild and gentle disposition and a reflective habit of mind. There is something

of romance about it, too—a romance sweet, delicate, and exquisite. In spite of its underlying guile, there is in it, again, a touch of high and subtle pleasure ; so entirely is the malice of the baited hook and the fateful fly vanished and forgotten under the fascination of the tranquillising temper bred by the waters' edge.

We are all apt to take favourable views of our pet diversions, and perhaps the alleged "cruelty" of angling need not be discussed here. Everybody knows how Byron, in his cavalier fashion, pilloried the author of "The Compleat Angler," founding largely, it may be supposed, on the writer's instructions in regard to live bait :

*And angling, too, that solitary vice,
Whatever Izaak Walton sings or says ;
The quaint old cruel coxcomb, in his gullet,
Should have a hook, and a small trout to pull it.*

We are not told that Byron was a vegetarian who declined trout when presented at table ! Fishing, as Mr. Lang caustically observes, " may be dreadfully cruel, as cruel as nature and human life ; but those who eat salmon or butcher's meat cannot justly protest, for they, desiring the end, have willed the means." Fish, if they are to be taken at all and not left to devour each other, must be taken either by

nets or by hook and line, and no more suffering is involved by the one method than by the other. The angler's conscience, at any rate, does not prick him uncomfortably, as a rule. He is content to assume that trout do not feel pain, an easily arguable assumption ; or he gives the matter no concern, which is the better way.

As for angling being a "solitary vice," if we allow the "vice" we shall not dispute the adjective. It may not have been good for Adam to be alone, but it is assuredly good for the angler. "When ye purpose to go on your disportes in fishynge, ye will not desyre greatlye many persons with you." Not likely ! Cynics have asked why there are so few lady anglers. The explanation is obvious : a woman prefers somebody to talk to, and trout are but too readily "shied" by human speech. The male angler does not want to talk, unless to himself, and even then *sotto voce*. And women have plenty of angling to do elsewhere than at the waterside !

A hundred pens and more have tried to express the allurements of the angler's craft. It is, for the most part, by the inward eye that these allurements are to be read—a page from, let us say, *As You Like It*, carrying with it, even amid the smoke and din of the city, the spell that

opens the way to the sunlit glades of Arden. For it is with the angler, if with any one in these hustling days, that the tradition of Arden survives. He has the humour of this picturesque outlawry, and is never happier (as the present volume attests) than when he can shake the dust of the pavements from his feet, seek "the skirts of the wildwood," and

*Under the shade of melancholy boughs,
Lose and neglect the creeping hours of time.*

Fishing streams are not so accessible as they were when Walton lived, to say nothing of the fact that trout are now more shy and artful. But there are still miles of river within easy reach of our large northern cities where a man may bury himself and "see no enemy but winter and rough weather." A wall of hill and moor, a hedge of kindly trees, an occupation that combines the energy of chase with the calm of observation and contemplation, the silence that the mind finds amid the prattle of waters—all this, and never a thought of the "momentous issues," political or other, that vex the mind of the assiduous newspaper reader.

It was charged against Walton that he fished right through the Civil Wars. While his fellow-countrymen were cracking each other's crowns

at Naseby or Marston Moor, he was wandering, rod in hand, along the river bank, drinking a bowl of milk from the hand of the singing milk maid, sleeping o' nights in country inns between sheets that smelt of lavender, and teaching his pupil how to dap for chavender or chub with a grasshopper. This is the spell that the magic wand weaves for the angler ; and it is no small mercy to be set free, even for a day, from the worry of income-making, from the itch of civilising and getting civilised. The world would wag none the worse for a little more of world-forgetfulness on the part of all of us in the green depths of Arden, where the angler's heart lies, where his treasure-book of happy, wistful memory reposes.

Mr. Fernie's pages will speak for themselves, though (indirectly) I am presumed to have been speaking for them. The author has, like Walton, made " a recreation of a recreation." He has written out of pure love for the " gentle art "—to please himself ; to please and instruct (if that may be) his brothers of the rod. No more than Walton does he pretend that an angler can be turned out by the reading of a book. But angling is like mathematics. It can never be fully learnt ; and there must still be some experiments, some propositions arising out of

personal practice, that may be worth putting in type for other votaries to test and try.

The technical part of Mr. Fernie's work will interest many an ardent disciple of the art. Even more interesting to some will be the suggestions and the memories which he calls up by hints of his various fishing "grounds." His district is pretty well covered by what Richard Franck, an angler of old Izaak's time, termed "the glittering and resolute streams of Tweed." In reading him, one thinks of Thomas Tod Stoddart's lines in celebration of the trouting delights of

*The lanesome Talla and the Lyne,
 And Manor wi' its mountain rills,
 An' Etterick, whose waters twine
 Wi' Yarrow frae the forest hills ;
 An' Gala, too, and Teviot bright,
 An' mony a stream o' playfu' speed,
 Their kindred valleys a' unite
 Among the braes o' bonnie Tweed.*

And what a district that is, both for fish and philosophising ! Cicero remarks of Athens that in every stone you tread on a history. So on the storied stream that lulled Sir Walter to his last sleep, and indeed over all the Border-land, in every nook and valley, on every hillside,

you find the place of a ballad, or a story, or a legend. These tributaries of silvery Tweed, what a breath of "pastoral melancholy" they exhale! Yarrow, not forgotten in succeeding pages, still keeps its ancient quiet as it flows through the ballad-haunted "dowie dens." Ettrick, too, remains remote and undefiled, as when the tinkle of the Tushielaw burn was heard by the fairies who flitted about in its bosky glen. The Leader courses by Earlston as it did when Thomas the Rhymer had his home on its banks, looking up, on its way, at the "bonnie, bonnie broom" of the Cowdenknowes. The Gala is no longer to the angler what it was in the times when Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, as recorded in his "Rivers of Scotland," had thirty-six dozen trout from one day's fishing.

But what modern angler wants such a "fill" ? Enough for him the single basket, or no basket at all, so that he enjoys the quiet and refreshing scenes where rod and line have taken him. The romance of the past is in his craft; and if he fishes where Mr. Fernie would lead him, far from the stir and strife of the World-Never-At-Rest, there also, surely, will the romance of the ages find him.

J. CUTHBERT HADDEN

CHAPTER I

DRY FLY AND WET FLY

MANY attempts have been made to define the difference between a dry-fly river and a wet-fly river. Generally the typical dry-fly stream is described as a crystal-clear, slow-running water, such as the chalk streams of Hampshire ; whilst a wet-fly stream is often referred to as a "brawling beck" of the North Country.

One writer on dry-fly fishing (Mr. Dewar) goes so far as to speak of "the eccentric who carries his dry-fly principles to the length of fishing the rise on the Tweed," and yet I venture to say that no successful fly angler in the town of Peebles, in the months of May and June, would use anything else on the Tweed except a floating fly, at any rate up to dark. The reason is, not that he would necessarily consider dry-fly fishing a more sporting or a more interesting method, but that it is the only successful method of fly fishing. Probably if a wet fly were more successful on the Test or Itchen than a dry fly, there would be very few dry-fly fishermen on

those streams; and perhaps therefore a good working definition of dry-fly water is: that water where fish cannot as a rule be taken with a wet or sunk fly. Similarly, that a wet-fly water is: that water where fish *may* readily be caught with a sunk fly.

If these definitions be accepted, it follows that practically all the Border streams larger than burns are dry-fly streams during certain months, or at any rate during most days in certain months. Of course the fishing on Border streams is not so good as on the Southern chalk streams, in the sense that the average weight of fish is not nearly so great, yet the fish, not having so much food as their Southern brethren, take longer to grow, and are therefore every bit as wise, and certainly "gamer." Indeed, one shudders to think of what would happen if one attempted to deal with a one-pound Leader trout, using fine drawn gut, in the summary manner some of the dry-fly writers speak of in connection with a two-pound or three-pound Hampshire fish.

In Tweed, Teviot, Clyde, Gala, Ettrick, Yarrow, and Leader, in bright sunshine and gin-clear water, the dry fly is far more deadly than the sunk fly in June and July, although it must be remembered that huge baskets of trout are

collected with natural baits, such as worms, dock grub, and stone-fly.

Let us now see what are the essential differences between dry- and wet-fly fishing. The wet-fly Border fisherman, of whom I have seen some hundreds in the last few years, is nearly always equipped with waders (which he generally puts on in the train) and, stepping into the water, fishes down the centre of the stream, casting over every scrap of water as he works down, only leaving the stream when he comes to water too deep to wade in. He uses three or more flies (nearly always one with a woodcock wing) and casts to right and left, allowing the flies to swing round with the current until immediately below him, when they are lifted and re-cast. He has the most graceful, easy action, and casts almost without effort; he seems to lift the flies off the water, and to push them out rather than cast them. Being in the water, he has not to trouble about what is behind him to catch his flies in. The flies are sunk two or three inches below the surface of the water, and do not, to the human eye at any rate, much resemble natural flies. Generally they float down part of their course naturally with the current, and for the remainder are pulled across the current and finally hang in the stream. In the early part of the season

particularly, trout take them at all parts of their journey, but most often when they are travelling naturally down stream. Nevertheless on some days the most deadly moment is that in which they are hanging unnaturally in the stream, just before being lifted for a fresh cast.

This method is most effective in rough rippling streams between pools, and in the rough water at the heads of pools. In such water a feeding trout probably has to make a grab at anything he supposes to be food almost at the very moment in which he catches sight of it; otherwise it is swept past him. He has no time to make a critical examination of each morsel, as a trout feeding in smooth water has. Perhaps trout feeding in rapid water get into the habit of seizing everything that comes within range, and rejecting what is not to their taste. Certainly one must hook one's fish much more quickly when using a wet fly in strong running water than is necessary with a floating fly in still water; and this appears to confirm the view that a trout in a strong stream is always prepared instantly to reject what he dislikes, as though in fact he were in the *habit* of rejecting things. In still, or smooth-flowing clear water the ordinary wet flies quite fail to deceive the fish, and, indeed, Border fishermen using a sunk

fly recognise this so well that they often do not fish such places at all, or pass very lightly over them.

The food of trout consists principally of the larvæ and nymphs of flies, all kinds of small creatures living under water, such as fresh-water shrimps and snails, minnows and other small fish, including young trout, very occasional worms and grubs, and finally flies floating on the surface of the water, whether as duns or the perfect insect.

Now water-flies, as we shall see later on, spend the greater part of their existence as nymphs or larvæ at the bottom of the river, until there comes a day when the nymphal skin splits open and the fly wriggles up to the surface of the water as a dun, the last stage in its existence but one. Perhaps many of these duns are swept down stream by a strong current before they can reach the surface of the water and arrange themselves for flight. It is these half-drowned duns, or other flies, that the fish assume the wet-fly fisher's lure to be, and as has been said, in strong water they have no great opportunity of detecting the fraud, until the fly is in their mouth. Wet flies may also be mistaken for female flies, which descend into the water to deposit their eggs, and are probably

often carried away by a strong current. This applies to the winged patterns of artificial flies ; very likely some of the hackle flies, and particularly those dressed with hackle, not all tied on at the head, but partly down the hook also, are taken by the fish for nymphs. Fish feeding in rapid water can form only an impressionistic view of the fly, without any nice detail of colour, shade, or outline.

If these views are correct, it follows that to fish quieter water successfully with a wet or sunk fly, a closer imitation of nature must be made. This is borne out by my own experience, for I have found that for wet-fly fishing the most successful " fly " to use is an imitation of a nymph rather than a fly.

Coming now to smooth-flowing, clear streams and dead water : the fish have a much clearer view of objects in such water, and have ample time to make a detailed examination of their food before taking it, if they want to ; indeed, trout may frequently be seen following a floating fly and apparently examining it. Sometimes the examination ends in the fish seizing the fly, but often enough they appear to be dissatisfied and leave it untouched. Usually the very finest gut and the most perfect imitations will not deceive the fish in such water if the fly is

sunk or wet, and the only method available is to use a fly floating on the surface of the water. Hence the art of dry-fly fishing consists in deceiving a fish feeding in clear, smooth water by a close imitation of a natural fly floating on the surface. This is an exceedingly delicate and often very difficult problem, but its very delicacy and difficulty have attracted to the art crowds of devotees, to whom it is liable to become, like golf, not merely a pastime but a passion.

In the past much has been written in derision of the "art" and "science" of dry-fly fishing, and much of the literature of the dry fly has been regarded as an affectation and a pose. Nevertheless, any angler who once achieves some success in crystal-clear water with a dry fly, stalking and catching particular fish that he sees feeding, is likely to look upon every other style of fishing as inferior. One effect in particular that dry-fly fishing produces is entirely to destroy the desire for mere numbers of fish, and to give the angler a love for the art of fishing quite independent of the success obtained as measured by the number of fish caught. Thus one fish, marked down, stalked, hooked, and landed from a difficult place, representing a tricky problem solved, would give more pleasure

to a dry-fly man than the capture of a dozen fish obtained by casting at hazard into a loch from a boat, or into some rough mill cauld.

After all, the pleasure obtained from a full basket of trout is largely derived from exhibiting the fish to one's friends and fellow anglers. It is thus an effect obtained at the end of the day, tending to make the actual fishing so much necessary work to be done in order to obtain the anticipated pleasure. To get the maximum amount of enjoyment from fishing, one's pleasure should be as independent as possible of the number of fish caught.

Of course this is the point of view of more or less leisured people, who because they get a lot of fishing can afford to view with equanimity a number of blank days ; just as no batsman takes an occasional " duck " to heart if he gets runs in between.

On the other hand, there are amongst Border anglers many who can only get away for a single day's fishing now and again in each season, often on public holidays. It might easily happen that all these days were bad dry-fly days, with no fish rising ; consequently the angler who confined himself strictly to rising fish would have a blank season. It is idle to pretend that such a one would enjoy it. In the

circumstances he will probably use a dry fly on suitable days—when fish are rising—and a wet fly or other methods on other days, and if he is a real enthusiast he will hope that all his days may be dry-fly days.

Certainly one's non-fishing friends and relations are a great trial after what may have been a thoroughly enjoyable yet blank day, and, if for no other reason, one likes to bring home some fish to avoid their sympathy, and their suggestions and anecdotes concerning friends of theirs who catch fabulous numbers.

Of course the charm of dry-fly fishing lies in the fact not that the fly is floating, but that one catches particular individual fish rather than any fish that may happen to bite. It appeals to the hunting instinct.

The reason why a wet-fly fisherman with three or more flies—"a stream raker"—would be considerably barred on club water in the South of England is that he would spoil the water for every one else; a reason that does not apply on the Borders, where one generally gets any amount of water to oneself.

Some years ago there appeared in the *Field* an amusing caricature of Southern dry-fly fishermen. The writer (W. Quilliam) divided such fishermen into seven classes: first the absolute

earner, content with small results, who carries many hundreds of flies and "asks his masters to let him see the fishes that they say they have caught."

Next the ordinary angler, who kills fish when things are going right and "feels a certain reluctance to kill fish not in the pink of condition." He generally uses only a few patterns of flies and is met everywhere.

Above this man comes the three-fly expert, who uses only two shades of olive and a black gnat. So supreme is his skill that he casts each pattern but once. "He calls trout 'fario.'"

Fourth comes the man "who sits down before none but the oldest and most circumspect of fish, which are the despair of other, of lesser anglers." He is polluted by no taint of blood, and "is moved by no wish to see his prey . . . gasping upon the bank."

The man of the fifth class takes his pleasure through a pair of field-glasses. "He sits by the stream purged of every thought save the acquirement of knowledge."

He of the sixth class has nothing to do with fish, but studies the food of fish. "He catches flies."

Last of all comes "the all-knowing fisherman, who, abandoning rod, creel, waders, trout, flies,

and river . . . occupies his angling hours in loving study of the habits of the birds.”

Any angler who confined himself to artificial-fly fishing would probably use wet flies in the early part of the season—April and part of May—and in stained or flooded waters, and a dry fly during May, June, July, and August. An exclusively wet-fly fisherman rarely does much good in the larger streams after May, except in coloured water and at night. All the most successful Border anglers use worm, stone-fly, minnows, and other natural baits after May, but I hold that a dry fly may often be nearly as effective, and that the reasons why wet flies cease to be effective are that the water becomes clearer and lower, so that the fish see things in the water much more clearly, and also that they are not so hungry as earlier in the season, and pick and choose their food more. Most fish feeding in shallow water that will take a worm or a dock grub will take a dry fly just as readily, provided it is a close enough imitation of nature. Of course the worm and minnow fisher sometimes takes from deep holes trout that probably never rise at a fly at all, but what is known as “clear-water worm fishing” is essentially carried out in thin shallow water, and exceedingly delicate work it is.

It may then be claimed for dry-fly fishing :

(1) That it is effective in the very best time of the year, and on the most pleasant days.

(2) That it is far more interesting than wet-fly fishing. A dry-fly angler may be compared to a "googly" bowler, who must learn to bowl "bad" balls "on purpose," so a dry-fly fisher must learn to cast sometimes with a slack line; but the bowler knows before he delivers it which ball in the over is intended to get the batsman out. The wet-fly man, on the other hand, is like the fast good-length bowler, who pegs away all the afternoon over after over: any ball before he delivers it is as likely to get a wicket as any other.

This bowler may be unplayable on a difficult wicket, or early in the season, just as a wet-fly angler may catch his dozens; but on a hard plumb wicket on a hot sunny day the slow bowler is likely to be more successful, just as the dry fly will beat the wet fly in very clear water.

(3) That it kills on the average bigger fish. This is admitted by nearly all Border fishermen, and the reason is that the dry-fly angler fishes chiefly the pools and still water where the best fish generally are, especially when the streams are low; besides the fact that the dry fly deceives the fish better than a wet fly.

(4) The capture of fish with a dry fly is all through the result of applied skill, whereas the capture of fish with wet flies, and particularly the hooking of them, is often a fluke.

Border fishermen talk of fish collectively as "*they* are not taking," "*they're* no doin'," whilst dry-fly fishermen speak rather of fish individually.

To be successful with either wet or dry fly requires considerable skill and knowledge, and one would not care to give an opinion as to which requires the greater skill.

There is another method of wet-fly fishing, which consists in using one or more flies and fishing up stream. It is very nearly akin to dry-fly fishing, but is perhaps more difficult than the dry-fly or the ordinary down-stream wet-fly method, because it is hard to tell when to strike. It is very fully described in "The Practical Angler" by Mr. Stewart, who from that book might almost be shown to have been a dry-fly fisher in theory. For example :

"The moment the flies alight . . . being the only one in which trout take the artificial fly for a live one."

"The moment the fly alights, being the most deadly of the whole cast."

Two examples showing his appreciation of the fly floating.

Mr. Stewart is here speaking of the *angler's* lure "alighting" on the water. It is not necessary to suppose, as some have done, that he thought all the flies that fish feed on alight on the water, instead of rising from the bottom of the river, as, of course, the greater number do.

"To make the flies light in a soft and natural manner."

"Take care that neither they [flies] nor the line ripple the surface."

"The angler must endeavour to keep his line out of the main current, or his flies will come down too fast."

Two examples of Mr. Stewart's appreciation of "drag" (*see* chap. ii).

"To throw them with certainty to any spot desired."

"The advantages of fishing up are in nothing more apparent than in the superior size of trout captured."

Of course any student of "The Practical Angler" will remember that Mr. Stewart negatives the above theory by saying in another place that the flies are equally effective sunk, a statement difficult to reconcile with the first two

quotations given above. It is curious that on the English side of the Border, up-stream wet-fly fishing is far more practised than on the Scottish side, although Mr. Stewart, the great exponent of the art, fished chiefly on Scottish streams.

Although I have often been beaten by wet-fly fishers, I may perhaps relate one or two experiences illustrating the advantages of a dry fly compared with wet flies.

I once met a man fishing the Leader in August, who told me that during a single week in the previous April he had caught over 190 trout ; on the strength of that he had arranged to spend his August holidays there. He had passed a week of his time when I met him, and had so far caught five baby fish. I had in my creel two and a half brace of fish all over half a pound.

On another occasion, on the Yarrow in June, I met an angler who had fished hard all morning, had tried nearly every fly in his book, but had had no success. He fished in some water below me for a bit, and, as I heard afterwards, declared that he had met a man who by some presumably supernatural means was pulling out "pounders" as hard as he could, of course a great exaggeration.

Probably all Yarrow anglers will remember

the pool near Yarrow church, under Deuchars bridge, before the dam below was swept away. I was once sitting by this pool hoping for "a rise" to begin, when a Selkirk angler joined me. He assured me that it was useless fishing there, as although the pool held a lot of good trout, they were proof against fly, minnow, worm, or anything else except a net. About an hour afterwards I took seven fish from the pool, weighing rather over five pounds, all on an olive quill, floated a few inches from the bank on the road side of the water below the bridge. I was also broken by a bigger fish than any I took. This pool is still good dry-fly water, but not nearly so good as it was when the dam was intact.

There are still a number of fly fishermen to be met who will tell you that no doubt a dry fly is often very successful, but that personally they have never experienced the need of it, and are confident that none of their bad days would have been improved by its use. I am always inclined to think that these arguments are mainly deduced from experiences on Highland lochs.

A recent writer on fly fishing, who tilts at many commonly accepted angling beliefs, makes a statement somewhat like the above, and yet,

as it seems to me, gives his case away by observing in another place that wind is *essential* on a loch. If he used a dry fly he would find that trout can sometimes be taken on a loch in a dead calm.

CHAPTER II

DRY-FLY FISHING

THE dry-fly purist does not think of casting, or even wetting his line, except to straighten the gut, until he sees a fish rising. But on Border streams there are many days on which trout are feeding on anything that the stream brings down, but owing to the absence of natural flies, very few fish are seen to rise. To have much sport on such days it is necessary to "fish the stream," that is, to cast into likely places where fish may be supposed to be lying. The dry-fly angler then, keeping low down and as much out of sight as possible, prowls about until he discovers a fish rising, frequently in April and May the signal for a general rise to begin. Having found his fish and marked the position of the rise by noting some tuft of grass or stone on the bank, or weed, or swirl of water in the river, his next business is to get within casting range without being seen. In order to do this he may have to crawl, but often he can take advantage of some kind of cover; he must

choose a place where he can get his line out behind him, and he should preferably kneel. It is here assumed that the angler has not got waders on ; they are quite unnecessary in most Border streams except in the lower reaches of Tweed, Teviot, and Clyde, and their use is (unconsciously no doubt) very selfish. A man wading down a small stream like Gala or Leader ruins the fishing for any one coming after him. Having got into position, or stalked his fish, without frightening it, the angler has now to float his fly as nearly as possible over the fish, or the spot where the rise occurred. The fly must float quite naturally without being in any way dragged or retarded by the gut or line, and it must float well below the fish before being lifted off the water (in the event of its not having been taken), otherwise the sudden withdrawal of the fly will alarm the fish, technically "put him down." To make the fly float it is anointed with odourless paraffin oil. Now to accomplish all this successfully is a problem in itself, and a different problem is presented by every place one wants to cast to, owing to the currents being different. In general, one must be below and behind the fish, cast up stream and allow the fly to float down towards one, carefully lifting the point of the rod as it comes. If one is casting

straight up stream the fly must alight only a few inches above the fish, otherwise he will see too much gut and be frightened. As a rule, casting straight up stream is the least successful cast, and it is better to cast diagonally to a fish if it can be done without the fly dragging. But the more one deviates from straight up, the more the "drag" difficulty comes in, until when one casts straight across stream—generally, if done successfully, the most deadly cast of all, because the fish sees a minimum of gut—the drag difficulty becomes greatest. "Drag" results from two causes. First, from the gut or line being carried by the stream at a pace different from the fly's, which causes the fly to be either pulled too quickly, or else retarded by the line. An obvious instance of this is an eddy or backwash; if the fly be cast into such a place and part of the line is in the main stream, the current carrying the line down will immediately drag the fly out into the stream after it, and probably also drag it under water. The other cause of "drag" is the wind, which if at all strong will belly out the line like a sail, and hasten or retard the pace of the fly, in either case a fatal result. If there is no wind, the line should be kept out of the water as much as possible; if there is a troublesome wind, the line must be kept in, or rather on, the

water. Nearly every kind of wind is a nuisance rather than a help. It will probably occur to the reader that these two causes of drag might be used to counteract each other, the result being regulated by more or less line being kept in the water, and this is sometimes possible. If the line is cast dead straight (unless one is throwing perfectly *straight up* stream) there will be almost certainly an immediate drag, and to avoid this the line should be thrown with enough slack to get the fly well past the fish before the drag begins. The fly must alight as lightly as possible on the water, and it must be dry and float well cocked up.

If there is no other way of reaching a fish, one must cast down stream to him, and then the line must be thrown with plenty of slack, so that the fly in floating down will straighten out the line. This is a very delicate business, and probably, if the first cast is unsuccessful, the fish will be "put down," because dragging the fly back over the fish, to pick it off the water, is very liable to frighten him. Always get below the fish if possible and try to make a good shot of the first cast, for if this be faulty it may arouse the suspicions of the fish, and in that case he will not look at any casts afterwards, however perfect, at any rate not without a rest. Another

great matter is to avoid all hurry. When casting, aim at a point in the air above the spot on which you want the fly to alight, and after the stroke ease the fly delicately on to the water by slightly lowering the rod-point.

It is nearly impossible to teach any one to cast by means of written directions. The whole thing is done with the wrist, and the old advice is very good—to bind the beginner's elbow to his side. In the forward and backward cast the point of the rod should describe a semicircle, that is, the rod in the forward cast should come forward in a different plane from that in which the back cast was made, otherwise the line, particularly with a following wind, will strike the rod—an especially annoying thing.

Frequently, instead of making the usual overhead cast, it is better, or sometimes imperative, to make a "sideways" cast, that is, to bring the rod round in a horizontal plane instead of a vertical one. This is not easy to describe, but when the angler has to cast under trees he will find the method come to him intuitively. It is a good cast because the rod is not so visible to the fish, but is seldom really necessary on the bare banks of Border streams.

Another cast to avoid trees behind one consists in trying to extend the line straight up in

the air instead of behind one, and then—I know of no better way to describe it—to shake the line out.

Having got the fly floating over the fish, the next thing to do is to hook him when he rises. To do this one must *strike*, and the exact time to do it is another problem. If the fish is in rough water, probably all the angler will see will be the disturbance of the water made by the fish in turning to go down. In such a case—when the angler sees nothing of the actual fish—he should strike at once, the moment he becomes conscious of the rise. But if he sees the fish, the case is different; probably he sees it before it takes the fly and he is then very liable to strike too soon. There is an old rule that tells one to count six before striking, but I prefer to watch the fly closely and wait until the fish seems to turn to go down and then strike.

In any case the strike is made with the wrist and not with the arm. With fine-drawn gut it must not be too hard, but one should strike definitely, and not merely tighten the line. The harder one strikes the more certain one is of eventually getting the fish if one does hook him.

I generally keep a finger lightly pressed on the line, and have no check in the reel, but the orthodox method is to have a check, and to

strike from the reel, that is, not to touch the line with the hand at all.

To make hand and eye work together, that is, to impart to the hook the "striking motion" at the same moment that one decides to strike, the rod must be fairly stiff and the line nearly straight. Also the rod should be inclined at an angle of not less than 40° to the surface of the water. The reason for this will be apparent from the diagram Fig. 1.

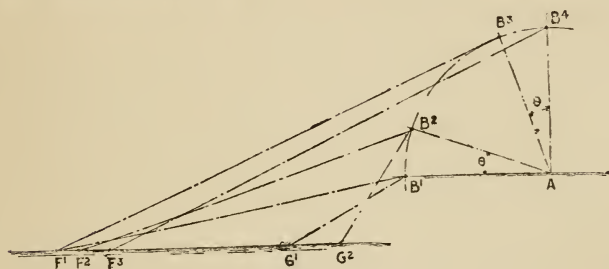


FIG. 1

If AB^1 represents the rod held horizontally, and B^1F^1 the line, the fly being at F^1 , a given angular displacement of the rod θ , bringing the rod to the position AB^2 , moves the fly to the position F^2 , a distance of F^1F^2 . Now suppose the rod is held in the position AB^3 , the same angular displacement θ , bringing the rod to the position AB^4 , moves the fly from F^1 to F^3 , which is more than twice the distance F^1F^2 which the

fly traversed in the first case. Hence the more vertical the rod is held, so much the more quickly will any slack line be picked up, and the strike take effect.

It will be seen from this that any one who finds that he strikes either too hard or too quickly should try to keep his rod-point lower ; and on the other hand, if he has a tendency to be slow in striking he should keep his rod-point well up. As a general rule the more rapid the water, the quicker must the strike be made, and, as previously mentioned, this is perhaps because the fish get into the habit of instantly rejecting things when feeding in fast water. It will also be seen from the diagram that the effect of the strike is greater if a shorter line be used, as B¹G¹.

When casting into a wind, in order to get the line out straight the rod must be brought forward with considerable force, and the stroke continued until the rod is parallel with the surface of the water, but the line must not be smacked on the water ; rather must it be cut into the wind with a turn of the wrist. With this shot one is at a considerable disadvantage if the fish rises immediately. If the angler finds he is " rising " fish but missing them, he should endeavour to use a shorter line, and to keep the

point of his rod well up. One finds in fishing, as in golf, that on some days one is in much better form than others. I remember some red-letter days in which I have hooked every fish I saw rising, and other days in which nothing would go right, and if I "rose" fish I could not hook them. Every golfer has probably felt inclined at some time or other to smash his clubs, and I once saw a man deliberately attempt to drive half a dozen new balls into the sea, and then, having fozzled all his shots, kick his bag of clubs in the same direction. To miss fish after fish produces just the same feeling of despair in the angler.

When choosing a place from which to cast over a fish, the angler should take into consideration the sun, and endeavour to arrange that the shadow of his rod is not thrown over the fish—the sun should not be immediately behind one. Before casting, one must be sure of having the right amount of line out, and it is necessary to make trial casts either in the air, or down stream, away from the fish. I usually make a cast well short of the fish and then estimate the extra amount of line required.

In clear water the gut cannot be too fine, and it is better stained—a blue or green is probably best. The beginner will continually break his

gut point, but if he wants to catch good fish and to catch fish when other people cannot, he must persevere with fine gut, and he should examine it frequently to see that it is sound, particularly just above the fly knot. Always soak the gut well before tying, and carry a spare point in a flat metal box between wet white flannel ready for use. Particular care must be taken in casting when there are stones behind one; a mere flick of fine-drawn gut against a stone may chafe it half through, and the fly will be left in the mouth of the next fish one hooks.

It is generally said (probably it has descended from Mr. Stewart's "Practical Angler") that one advantage of fishing up stream is that in striking from behind the fish one is more likely to hook him than if one is in front of him, as in the latter case the hook is liable to be pulled out of his mouth. This must largely depend on the exact moment when one strikes. The only moment it could make any difference is when the fish's mouth is open and just about to seize the fly, and this is always too early to strike. After his mouth is shut it cannot make any difference whether one is above or below him. The moment after a fish has taken a fly in a fairly strong stream, he is frequently facing down stream, and as this is the moment when he

is probably trying to expel an artificial fly, the down-stream angler has sometimes a better chance of hooking him than the up-stream man. A fish feeding in a gentle stream is often poised about a foot below the surface, and when a fly floats over him he seems to give himself just sufficient impetus to project his mouth above the surface. After he has taken the fly, the current carries him down a foot or two, and at the same time, especially if he comes up fairly vertically, it gives him a half turn. A couple of feet down he recovers himself and glides into his former position. The Water of Leith below Canonmills Bridge, Edinburgh, is separated from the road by a low wall, and by stooping a little and keeping very still one may often watch trout feeding there. On two occasions in this place I have seen an angler throw a cast of wet flies over a fish I have been watching, and each time the fish has slowly drifted away down stream.

It is important, particularly when fishing dead water, that the line should float as well as the fly, otherwise it slowly sinks and " drags " the fly towards the angler. The line may be anointed with oil, mutton or deer fat, vaseline, or vaseline and beeswax, and must be dried by " swishing " it backwards and forwards in the air between

casts, or by making false casts ; this dries the fly also. Having hooked the fish, try to lead him down stream to a convenient place for using the net ; this should be in as deep water as you can conveniently reach, since many fish get unhooked when splashing in the shallows.

If fish are not rising and the angler wants to fish, he should pay particular attention to eddies and backwashes just off the main current ; in such places there are generally feeding fish. Beside the strong rush of water into a pool there is always an eddy or backwash found, sometimes only a square foot or so in area ; if one can only keep the fly floating on this without " drag " for a few seconds, it means an almost certain rise.

Watch carefully for a rising fish just where the rough water finishes at the head of a pool, and where the water begins to get shallow at the tail of a pool, but in these latter places fish are more easily seen. In hot weather, in June and July, fish are often lying in quite shallow water, and they must be approached very cautiously in order that they may be seen before they see the angler. When there are weeds, a narrow channel between two weed beds, two or three feet deep, is often a likely place for a feeding trout, and with care feeding fish may sometimes be spotted

poised in mid-water, although not actually seen to rise.

If there is a high bank to the river it is worth while to climb up and prospect ; the higher up one is, the more clearly can one see the bottom of the river. Of course the angler must not show against the sky line, or no fish will be seen, and indeed the higher up he is, the more necessary it becomes for him to keep under cover. Generally in a wind look out under the bank towards which flies would be blown and in places where a number of currents converge.

The morning from ten to one, and the evening towards dusk, are the best parts of the day, but sometimes one may find a pool where fish are rising all through a hot afternoon. Such pools are those overhung by trees, and there, all through a July day, swarms of flies hover over the water, and perhaps half a dozen fish may be seen lazily picking up the stray ones that alight or drop on the surface. Fish in these pools are always in good condition, and I suggest that this is directly due to their food consisting largely of flies, which perhaps agree with trout better than anything else ; anyhow, old cannibals taken out of rocky holes—fish that notoriously never rise at floating flies—are nearly always in poor condition.

On a stretch of the Leader that I fished one July there was one pool, and only one, where the fish would rise in the afternoon. I spent most of my afternoons there, and generally got three or four fish. One had to wait for the space of about one and a half pipefuls of tobacco between each fish to allow the others to recover confidence. The king of this pool, a fish I judged to weigh nearly two pounds, I rose twice, but each time struck too soon.

In April there is often a general rise about midday, or later if there has been frost the night before. In May fish are frequently rising all morning casually, and there is often one general rise and sometimes more. In June, on the smaller streams, plenty of rising fish will be found all morning and again in the evening from six o'clock until dark and after. On some days in this month rising fish are hard to find in Tweed and Teviot, but on others they rise well, and there is frequently a general rise.

Grayling are often a nuisance in the Teviot and the Clyde during June; I believe some Yorkshire anglers made huge baskets of this fish near Jedburgh in the late autumn of 1910.

In July stray fish may be found basking or feeding at all times of the day, and particularly, as mentioned above, in shady places, but there

are more blank days in this month than the last. If the weather is hot in June and July immense baskets of fish are got by night fishermen, who generally begin about ten o'clock, when I myself prefer to be thinking of bed.

In August I never see many fish rising, and I think this is about the worst month for fly in the rivers. On the Clyde I have seen the water alive with fish in the evenings, but they are often "smutting,"* and will not look at a floating fly. In September fish begin to rise again, but in the rivers they are beginning to get out of condition at the end of this month.

In July and August the angler will often enough find it difficult to discover feeding fish, and he should then seek the more wooded places. In such pools one may have to resort to "dibbing" with the dry fly, which consists in lowering a fly with a short line on to the water from the thickness of some wood, or other cover, over a fish. The great difficulty in this style of fishing is to avoid striking too quickly. One has almost to hold the right hand still with the left, to prevent oneself from jerking the fly away from the expectantly open mouth of the trout. This is probably the most certain way of "rising" a trout.

* See page 92.

A dry fly is often very effective on lochs, and is generally the only method when there is no wind. If the fish cannot be reached from the bank, and very often they can, a boat must be used, and the fisherman must work it himself and stalk the fish. One must paddle the boat with a single scull, used like a paddle, without making any ripple, until within casting distance of the fish. The scull is then gently laid down and the rod taken up without rocking the boat, and the fly put over the fish.

A man I knew, who used to fish a mill pond in England, attained to a wonderful proficiency in stalking fish in a boat, and for him to spot a rising fish was nearly equivalent to the fish being in the boat; but instead of a fly, he used a small Devon minnow. *A propos* of this, there used to be a tradition amongst us when I was a boy that it was useless to cast over a rising fish with a worm, yet this is successfully done in some Border streams in still water, with very fine gut.

The scull should be used on one side of the boat only, and it must be dipped in without any splash. The angler should sit in the stern, and as he gets nearly within casting distance he should turn the boat, so as to bring its stern next to the fish, and stop it

before he puts down the scull and picks up the rod, or in approaching the fish make allowance for the "way" on the boat after he puts down the scull. Any rocking of the boat is generally fatal. If one has made a good cast with a straight line, the fly should be allowed to remain on the water as long as the fly and line will float, as the fish frequently waits half a minute or so to make up his mind to take it. On St. Mary's Loch, which holds heaps of trout—very big fish as well as small ones—I have frequently done well with this method on hot days in June and July, and I believe the fish rise well here in August also. The first trout I ever took from St. Mary's with a floating fly was on a dead calm morning in July, stalking with a boat, and he weighed $2\frac{1}{2}$ pounds. There are often good fish rising within reach of a long cast at the north-east end of the loch, where the Yarrow commences, and I have spent many hours sitting on the masonry work there.

In Gladhouse reservoir excellent sport can be had on calm, hot days, fishing from the embankment, and there are often good fish rising along the edge of the spinny near where the boats are kept, but the trees behind are a nuisance. Loch trout, however, have a bad habit of

“ smutting ” or “ bulging, ” * and an apparently glorious rise may prove blank. Gladhouse is particularly difficult in this respect, and I have unavailingly tried pattern after pattern over rising fish there. Although the trout in Loch Skene are small, the place is always a pleasure to visit, if only for the sake of the climb up by the Grey Mare’s Tail, and sometimes the fish will take a dry fly well. In loch fishing particular care should be taken to make the line float.

Loch trout feed to a less extent on flies than river trout, and thus they may be caught in a breeze with all kinds of artificial wet flies which do not resemble any natural insect. In my experience, excepting the black gnat, there is no great simultaneous hatch of flies in a loch as there is in a river, and the fish are accustomed to feed on a variety of flies that get blown over the loch and become exhausted. Yet on calm days and in clear water the fish will hardly look at wet flies, and a well-cocked floating fly is necessary to deceive them.

To use a dry fly for burn trout may seem an over-refinement, and certainly if the angler only keeps out of sight almost any wet fly, particularly if it has some tinsel on it, will rise

* *See* page 92.

a trout in every pool of a burn. Yet if one only sets oneself a sufficiently high standard, burn fishing may be difficult enough. All fish below $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. should be returned, and to take half a dozen $\frac{1}{2}$ -lb. fish from a good burn on a sunny afternoon with clear low water is a feat not to be despised. An angler accustomed to a wet fly will be surprised at the number of sizable fish a burn contains when he uses a dry fly. "Fishing the rise" of course is not possible, as burn trout get very few flies to rise at. The best fish in each pool is generally waiting at the head of the pool, and the fly should be cast just clear of the rush of water. I once saw an angler with two trout, each over a pound in weight, taken from the Glen Gaber burn, a tiny tributary of the Meggatt, most of whose pools are about the size of a decent bath. The Kirkstead burn, a feeder of St. Mary's Loch, is said in the "Sportsman's Guide to Scotland" to average $\frac{1}{2}$ -lb. fish, and I nearly attained this once or twice two or three years ago, but on my last visit (1910) it appeared to have been very thoroughly "wormed." Some of the best looking pools in a burn are often the most disappointing, and perhaps this may be attributed to the shepherd's worm, which is most effective where he can drop it in without being seen. Burns have a mar-

vellous power of recuperating, and a stream that appears to have been well cleared of decent fish one year will be found to hold plenty the next. The visitor should not be disappointed with the appearance of a burn at its mouth; generally the last half mile of its course is the worst, and this is because the bed of the stream near its mouth becomes choked with rocks and stones and the water flows out of sight. For example, it would be nearly impossible for any one walking round the shore of St. Mary's Loch in summer to find the Kirkstead burn, and an angler who did not know what it was like half a mile up would laugh at the idea of fishing in it.

CHAPTER III

FLIES : REAL AND ARTIFICIAL

MANY fly fishers think that to be successful with a dry fly an extensive knowledge of entomology is necessary. Certainly the more one can learn about the flies that fish feed on the better, but no one need be deterred from fishing by a want of knowledge on the subject. Although patterns of artificial flies are numerous, the angler will probably find three or four patterns sufficient for his needs throughout the season, on any particular water, or in any particular district. For instance, flies like the Red, Blue, and Olive Quills are probably taken by the fish for a number of different insects.

The advantage of a knowledge of water insects is of course that it enables the angler, when he finds the fish feeding on a particular kind of fly, to identify it, and to put on his cast the corresponding artificial insect ; for, when there is a general rise on, the fish will often take one kind and one kind only.

Artificial flies are mostly intended to imitate members of the following families : *

(1) *Ephemeridæ*—includes all the Duns and Spinners, as the March Brown.

(2) *Perlidæ*—includes Stone-fly, Yellow Sally, Willow-fly.

(3) *Sialidæ*—includes the Alder-fly.

(4) *Trichoptera*—includes the Granom, the Sand-fly, and all flies whose larvæ make cases.

(5) *Diptera*—includes the Black Gnat and the Bluebottle.

Of these the first, the *Ephemeridæ*, are far and away of most importance ; all the Duns and Spinners belong to this family.

The *Ephemeridæ* deposit their eggs in the water, and from the eggs emerge the larvæ, crawling and swimming animals without wings, living at the bottom of the river amongst the weeds and stones. At a later stage in their growth they are called nymphs, and now have wing cases. Later still, the skin or sheath in which they are enveloped splits open, when they come to the surface of the water ; the wings unfold and are set upright like sails, and the insect floats down with the stream, a “Dun” or scientifically a *sub-imago*. It is the simultaneous appearance on the water, perhaps

* F. M. Halford, ‘Dry-Fly Entomology.’

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brought about by some condition of temperature or barometric pressure, of hundreds of Duns that starts the fish on a general "rise." The last change eventually takes place in the life of the insect; an outer skin splits open and the Dun becomes the perfect fly, or *imago*, in much the same way as that in which the Dun was produced from the nymph. This operation may be very clearly seen if the angler brings home three or four March Browns alive, in any tin box, and transfers them to a glass pickle jar, containing a twig or two, with a piece of muslin tied over the mouth. They will sometimes live for a week or even ten days, and if they are carefully watched, one may be lucky enough to see the actual operation.

The Dun may be distinguished from the perfect fly by its dull opaque appearance, the wings being generally some neutral grey colour, well imitated by a "blae" feather. The perfect insect has a transparent appearance and its wings are clear. The imago or perfect fly is called by anglers a "Spinner."

The *Ephemeridæ* are the only family that assume the intermediate Dun condition. The other families proceed direct from the larval state to the perfect fly. Anglers commonly refer to the change from the larval to the winged

condition as a "hatch of flies." The expression is retained in this book, although it is, of course, incorrect.

The *Ephemeridæ* as a family are easily distinguished by :

(1) The upright position of the wings.

(2) The presence of two or three "tails" or *setæ*.

(3) The curve of the body.

(4) The apparent absence of horns or *antennæ* (these are so short as to be barely visible).

The position when at rest of the fore wings of the five families enumerated above will serve to distinguish them, and sketches are given in Fig. 2 to assist the angler in identifying them.

The wings of the *Ephemeridæ* rise vertically upwards, like the closed wings of a butterfly ; on the *Perlidæ* they are flat along the back and overlap ; on the *Diptera* they are flat, sometimes divergent and sometimes overlapping ; and on the *Trichoptera* and *Sialidæ* they lie along the sides, and meet above the back like a tent : the wings of the *Trichoptera* are carried higher than those of the *Sialidæ*, and the wings of the latter are not covered with hairs like those on the *Trichoptera*.

Below are some short notes on flies which I



1. OLIVE DUN
(*Ephemeriðæ*)



2. YELLOW SALLY
(*Perlida*)



3. ALDER
(*Sialida*)



4. SAND-FLY
(*Trichoptera*)



5. BLACK GNAT
(*Diptera*)



6. NYMPH OF
EPHEMERIDÆ

FIG. 2

have used, or which I have seen used, on the Borders. Nearly all tackle makers offer to dress flies to the specifications in Mr. Halford's "Dry-Fly Entomology" or to later patterns of his, and any of the flies mentioned below which are described by him I get tied to his specification, as they are probably the nearest imitations of the natural insect.

Olive Quill—This is the most generally useful fly of all, and represents an Olive Dun (*Ephemeroidea*). Unless I am certain the fish are taking something else, I always first try an Olive Quill over a fish. I have captured Olive Duns, or flies closely resembling them, all through the season both on rivers and lochs. They vary in colour a good deal, some being darker than others; and the artificials are sold as Medium, Dark, or Pale Olives. The Dark Olives are the male fly. They have two *setæ*. The description given by Mr. Halford* is as follows: Wings—dull grey; body and legs—an undefined olive tint, neither yellow, nor brown, nor grey, but partaking of all these colours. The wing of a large female measures about 0·4 inch. The artificials are killing patterns all through the season.

The Gold-ribbed Hare's Ear.—This is also

* "Dry-Fly Entomology."

intended to represent an Olive Dun. It is a good fly all through the season, particularly in the evening, and dressed on a No. 1 or No. 2 hook, on lochs.

Red Quill.—This fly is intended for a Red Spinner, by which name are known the *imagines* of a number of *Ephemeridæ*; thus the Red Quill may represent a number of flies. Its use is not recommended when there is a general rise on, but rather for isolated fish quietly feeding on anything that comes down. Dressed on a large hook, it may represent the *imago* of the March Brown, called the Great Red Spinner, the fly to be seen if one keeps some March Browns in captivity. It is good in June, July, and August, particularly in June. Some dry-fly men hardly ever use anything else but this pattern.

Blue Quill or Blue Dun.—These are names applied rather indefinitely to a number of artificial patterns. I like them dressed with a Quill body showing white and slate colour, and the hackle and wings of a slaty blue. Mr. Halford * is sceptical of the existence of the Blue Dun, and Mr. Dewar † says the Blue Dun is a variant of the Olive Dun, and Ronalds'

* "Dry-Fly Entomology."

† "The Book of the Dry Fly."

figure* resembles an Olive Dun. I think it is sometimes taken by the fish for Watery Duns, Iron Blues, and Olive Duns. On some streams I rarely use any other fly until evening. It is a good fly all the season, particularly in May.

Iron Blue Dun.—This is a small fly (*Ephemeridæ*) with iron blue wings and purplish body, possessing two *setæ*. I have seen trout rising well to it in Tweed; it comes floating down stream with the typical sail-like wings of the *Ephemeridæ*. It is said to appear generally on cold days. The artificial is very good when the natural fly is up.

Yellow Dun.—This is another of the *Ephemeridæ*, and the name probably includes several varieties of flies. One kind is often seen on the larger streams in June. The artificial insect is tied with starling wings, yellow hackle, and yellow silk body: a pale Olive Quill will generally do instead.

Yellow Sally.—This fly, a member of the *Perlidæ*, is often used by wet-fly anglers on the Borders, chiefly in June. The natural fly is rather a lemon-yellow colour and may be recognised by its “fluttering” flight and four long wings. Mr. Halford doubts if the real

* “The Fly Fisher’s Entomology.”

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insect is much relished by trout, and quotes Francis Francis to the same effect, yet Mr. J. H. Riddell * (“Border Rod”), writing principally of North of England streams, says: “Trout rise with avidity to it, and will look at nothing else while it is on.” Charles Kingsley, in one of his letters, speaks of finding the natural fly on the water and of using the artificial one with success. “Ephemera,” in his notes on Cotton in “The Compleat Angler,” describes a fly called “the little Mayfly, Yellow Sally, or Castle-fly,” which seems to be identical with the Little Yellow May Dun of Ronalds. This fly is a member of the *Ephemeridæ*, and should not be confused with the real Yellow Sally.

Willow-fly.—Like the last this is a member of the *Pertidæ*; imitations are used by Border wet-fly fishers, and it has been recommended to me also as a good loch fly. I have never caught a specimen. It is a yellow hackled fly with dark starling wings.

Black Gnat and Black Spider.—The Black Gnat is a member of the *Diptera*. Either in the larval or winged state it forms a large part of the food of loch trout. On Loch Tay, St. Mary’s, Gladhouse, and even Loch Skene, on calm, still days when the fish are feeding everywhere on this

* “All About Trout Fishing.”

fly, I have found either the winged or hackle form of the artificial to be very successful.

Probably there are several varieties of flies all classed as Black Gnats by the angler. One kind which I have found the fish taking well, and which I think passes its larval condition under water, has very short blunt antennæ, rather large black head, glossy black thorax, dull black segmented abdomen, legs black shading off to a brown or olive tint, wings silvery and folded over the back, with a small black spot on each. The real Black Gnat is a much smaller fly that hatches out in swarms on a hot June evening. Clouds of them sway about near the surface of the stream, but they are not often seen on the water. Nor do the larvæ of these flies live in the water. The loch variety described above I always find on the water and rarely flying.

The winged artificial pattern I like best has a fat smooth body of black silk, scanty hackle of black shading to brown, and white short wings arranged flat instead of upright. The whole fly should have rather a battered appearance. The Black Spider is one of the most popular Border wet flies : used wet it may represent a nymph, or a battered female fly that has been laying eggs under water. I do not know what it represents when fished dry, unless a Black

Gnat, but it is a great favourite with some Border anglers who have been converted from the "wet" to the "dry" method.

There are many variations of the dressing ; a Quill body is very good, with black, starling, or brown hackle. Mr. W. C. Stewart regarded a Black Spider, made of the small feather of the cock starling, dressed with brown silk, as upon the whole the most killing imitation he knew.*

I do not suppose, however, that this imitation represented a Black Gnat, but rather some aquatic larva.

The Black Gnat is the best all-round dry fly for lochs, reservoirs, mill ponds, and similar places.

The March Brown.—The March Brown is a member of the *Ephemeridæ*, and will be familiar to all who have fished Border streams early in the season, when quantities may be seen floating down the stream. Trout take them greedily, but I have rarely found the artificial very successful on these occasions, and I think they are generally built with too much hackle ; the female pattern does better than the male. On lochs a March Brown is often good for casually rising fish at any time of the year. A better imitation of the real March Brown, I believe,

* "The Practical Angler."

would consist of a "Detached Badger" body (brown-red), furnace hackle, sparingly put on, and the usual wings. Once on Teviot I rose a number of fish, during a "hatch" of March Browns, with a single pattern tied in this way, but eventually left it in a fish. The wet pattern March Brown is a good all-round fly, and I used to know an angler in England who killed trout with it from April to September and never used any other. The natural March Brown is on the water up to the end of April and often into May.

Mayfly and Stone-fly.—The Border "Mayfly" is really the "Stone-fly," a member of the *Perlidae*, and will be familiar to all Borderers, especially on Tweed, Ettrick, Gala, and Yarrow. The larva of the Stone-fly is the Creeper, a black and yellow "beastie" living under stones in the water. In June he crawls out of the water and fixes himself to a stone at the edge, when his outer skin splits open, and the perfect fly emerges. The cast skins may be seen in great numbers at the water's edge. The insect appears to spend much of his time under the stones, but occasionally is seen flying, and odd specimens fall on the water, and are generally seized by the trout with a great commotion. They never appear *on* the water in great

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quantities, like the English Mayfly, though there is a tradition that the Ettrick trout once went mad over them. The natural fly is fished a good deal by many with poor results, but used by experts it is most deadly. The Creeper is used like a worm in rough water, and often with a shot on the line, to sink it, but the fly, to be used most successfully, should be fished upstream and *must* float. A distinct pause must be made before striking. The long-winged flies (females) float best, and they are mounted on a two-hook tackle, one hook passing through the thorax from above, and the second through the abdomen from below. The difference between these methods of using the Creeper and the fly is somewhat akin to the difference between wet- and dry-fly fishing. I am aware that Mr. Stewart, in "The Practical Angler," and more modern writers say that the fly is as effective when sunk as when floating, but Selkirk anglers, who are especially good at this style of fishing, are emphatic that the fly *must* float. I believe there is no very successful imitation of the Stone-fly, but if there were any demand for one, it could probably be made. Mr. R. B. Marston, in "Walton and the Early Fishing Writers," quotes a dressing given by Dame Juliana Berners, the earliest known

writer on angling. Ronalds' dressing* is : Body, fur of hare's ear, with yellow worsted, ribbed with yellow silk ; tail, a strand or two of brown mottled partridge feather ; wings, quill feather from a hen pheasant's wing ; legs, hackle stained greenish-brown.

Trout will nearly always take other floating flies during the Stone-fly season.

I have only once seen the Mayfly proper (*Ephemeridæ*) in Scotland, and that was on Loch Tay, and although the fish were not taking the fly where I was, I believe very good sport was had at the Killin end of the loch.

The artificial English Mayfly is sometimes useful. Just at dusk in July a small-sized Mayfly is often deadly ; dropped an inch or two from the bank on the deep side of the water, and in rough water at the foot of falls, and in deep rocky holes, it will often bring up some long black trout. It is probably taken for a moth.

Under Sundhope bridge on the Yarrow, there was once a trout that I judged to weigh about four pounds which had probably come down from the loch. Nearly every evening he could be seen from the bridge lying in the current gently waving his tail. I put all my collection

* "The Fly Fisher's Entomology."

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of flies over him, including Mayflies, without result, until the last evening but one of my stay, when, crossing the bridge at about eight o'clock, I stopped to have a look at him. He seemed to be more active than usual, and was cruising slowly about. I had determined not to waste time over him this night, but the temptation was too great. I hesitated for a moment to decide whether to take off the cobweb point of my cast, but regarding the attempt as hopeless anyhow, I tied a Mayfly on to it, and—have regretted it ever since. I threw the fly well up into the shadow under the bridge, and let it come down nearly to my feet. At the fifth or sixth cast it disappeared in the shadow, and I tightened the line, not certain if it was a "rise" or not. The line was pulled straight up under the bridge, and then I thought for a moment some one on the far side of the bridge had dropped a large rock into the water—and the line came back with about half the gut point left on it. I could not see what happened but I suppose he jumped and fell on the line.

Another curious experience with Mayfly was on a pond or mere in Sussex. I found a single rising fish, and after trying him with several flies, I put on a large cork-bodied Mayfly, not with any hope of rising the fish, but to see how it floated, as I had never before had an opportunity

of trying one. The fish took it immediately and was landed—a plump fish of three-quarters of a pound; the only one I saw that day. These cork-bodied Mayflies were the most perfect imitation, to the human eye, I ever saw. I only tried them on two other occasions, once in a little brook in Sussex when the water was thick with Mayflies, and I took seven fat trout, and the other time on a mill pond in Staffordshire when I dropped my last pattern over a trout, from the depths of a wood, and was broken.

The English Mayfly is a member of the *Ephemeridæ* and appears about the middle of June, in a good year in great quantities, and it is, after a day or two, greedily taken by trout.

Detached Badger.—This fly represents a Red Spinner, and being a hackle fly falls very lightly on the water; it will sometimes kill on hot days and in the evening. It is a useful loch fly on calm days, when stray fish are rising.

Wickham's Fancy.—This is, as its name implies, a “fancy” fly; that is, it is not restricted to the imitation of any particular insect. It is sometimes useful in hot weather, when fish are fastidious, and fished wet it is a very good fly for burns. A variety called the Pink Wickham is much used on the South of England chalk streams.

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Hofland's Fancy.—A good general fly for April and early May. It is, I believe, used all through the season on some waters. I once rose innumerable grayling with it on Teviot in June.

Greenwell's Glory.—This probably represents an Olive Dun or a nymph ; it is a very favourite wet fly all over Scotland, particularly early in the season. It is also tied by Edinburgh dressers to float. One very successful trout fisher on Loch Tay hardly uses anything else but different sizes of "Greenwell."

The Woodcock.—This is the Tweedside name for a small Dun something like an Olive, whose wing is well imitated by a Woodcock feather. A gold-ribbed Hare's Ear tied with a Woodcock wing is a fair imitation. I have seen it on Tweed early in June.

Bustard and Yellow.—A good wet fly on some waters ; probably taken for an Olive Dun. The rolled wing pattern is a good floating fly when oiled.

White Midge.—A hackle-pattern fly, of white shading to orange at the tip. It is sometimes good in July and August about dusk, and falls very softly on the water.

The Professor.—A fly tied with a teal wing, red hackle and yellow body. It is a good wet fly on some lochs.

The Alexandra.—This fly is said to be barred on some streams, but except in “hungry” burns, on a windy day in lochs, and perhaps at dusk, I should regard it as hopeless. It is probably taken for a small fish.

The Butcher.—This, too, is a loch fly, and, like all tinsel flies dressed on a small hook, is deadly in burns, fished wet. It is probably taken for a minnow.

Spent Spinners.—These are flies dressed to Mr. Halford’s patterns, representing the spent *imagines* of certain flies, such as the Sherry Spinner (*imago* of male Iron Blue Dun) and the Olive Spinner, male and female. The wings are not tied on upright, but are at right angles to the upright position, and lie in one straight line. They are intended to represent the spent flies one often sees floating on the water with extended wings.

For shy trout feeding in the most gin-clear water, these patterns have sometimes proved successful when everything else failed. Particularly I remember one very dry July on the Braan, in Perthshire, I used to take three or four trout a day from the Hermitage pool with these flies, when the fish would look at nothing else. There are only about three places where one can cast into this pool, by lying flat on some rocks,

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as it is overgrown with trees. The water was so clear that one could easily see the bottom through seven or eight feet of it.

There is a considerable fall of water here into a roaring black hole in the rocks, from which it flows between perpendicular rock walls into the main pool referred to above. From a foothold in the rocks I once dropped a small Devon minnow some twenty feet down into the water at the foot of the fall, and hooked a pike that might have weighed seven or eight pounds, but whilst I was trying to get down to the water he broke me. In the spring, hundreds of trout are caught in this river with wet flies.

I have also used these Spinners for "bulging" * fish in lochs. I then oil the gut, but not the fly, which sinks a little, but is partly sustained by the gut. Pulling the fly along very gently is sometimes useful, and may attract the attention of the fish which are often roaming about within a small area. The fly in this case probably represents a nymph.

Cock-y-bondhu.—This "fly" is said by Ronalds to represent a beetle. Fished dry, it will sometimes serve in July and August on very hot days. It is also called the Marlow Buzz, and in the North of England, where it is said to be good on

* See page 92.]

“running off” waters, the Bracken Clock. It is not much used on the Borders, but I have done well with it both there and elsewhere.

Ronalds appears to have called a hackle-pattern fly a “Buzz,” and intended it to represent a fly buzzing or fluttering on the surface of the water, and perhaps appearing to the fish as a confused mixture of legs and wings.

Long stretches of the banks of most Border streams are not wooded, but bare and stony; and therefore the chief flies which the fish get are those whose larval existence is spent in the water.

Wet flies used on the Borders are, like loch flies, usually known by the feathers employed to tie them, thus: “Grouse and yellow” means grouse wing and yellow body, similarly “Woodcock and Hare lug,” “Woodcock and yellow.” Hackle flies are called “Spiders,” as “Partridge Spider,” “Dotterel Spider,” “Grouse Spider.” In contradistinction to dry flies, many of which are built to represent definite natural insects, these wet flies are probably the result of a long process of “trial and error.”

To some people with neat fingers tying flies presents no difficulty, but others, including the writer, would never be able to earn a living as fly dressers.

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Since flies can be bought so cheaply there is no reason for the angler to turn out standard patterns by the dozen, but there is a fascination in trying to imitate insects one has captured, and in experimenting with new patterns and materials. I use a watchmaker's vice, a pair of needle-point scissors, some mounted needles, and a pair of small pliers and forceps. All the usual materials, such as feathers and silks, for making flies can be bought at the tackle shops.

The most weird experiment in flies I ever saw was made by a friend, and was due to his noticing the trout below Murrayfield bridge, Edinburgh, taking an occasional fly that was spinning round on the water. Such flies are generally *Diptera*: bees and wasps that fall into the water often spin also. The idea was to impart to the fly, by the act of casting, a spinning motion which should persist after reaching the water. The only model I saw was the size of a large dragon fly, and it certainly would sometimes spin a little after it reached the water. The spinning part rotated round the shank of the hook.

The whole secret of successful artificial-fly fishing consists in deceiving the fish as to the nature of the lure, and even the best flies do not

much resemble real insects, so that there is a large field for improvement.

The aim must be to simulate nature. The fly fisher using a dry fly does this, when imitating the *Ephemeridæ*, by allowing his fly to float without movement on the water—influenced only by the currents. Caddis flies and some others do struggle on the surface of the water, and I should suppose, when using their imitations, that “drag” would not necessarily be fatal to success.

A submerged or “wet” fly, whether it aims at imitating a nymph or a drowning fly, ought to be in constant motion, like the reality. Hence the far greater effectiveness of wet flies in rough water than in smooth, or in a wind on a loch than on a calm day. In both cases the feathers are agitated, and give an appearance of life.

I think the success of an “Otter” can be explained in this way. Some years ago I saw one used very successfully on Loch Skene by three ruffians. It consists of a long narrow log of wood, something like a railroad sleeper. A line is fastened to one side, nearer one end than the other. The operator walks along the bank and pays out line as he goes. The “Otter” takes a diagonal course, partly forward and partly

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outward, on the same principle as that on which a sailing boat progresses, with a soldier's breeze. To the line flies are attached at intervals. So long as the man keeps moving the flies are in motion, but once a fish is hooked the thing becomes much more deadly, for now the tugging of the fish will agitate the whole line, and give all the flies a dancing motion, and thus render them lifelike.

Any attempts to agitate one's flies when angling, unless done very delicately indeed, can only give them a straight pull, which must make them far from natural in appearance.

It is probable that fish do not see objects out of the water so distinctly as objects immersed in the water, hence one of the reasons for the superiority of a floating fly to a sunk fly in calm weather is that the former is partly out of the water and its artificial nature not so clearly seen. A natural Dun or Spinner generally floats with its body clear of the water, and to imitate it successfully an artificial fly should do the same. In order to make a fly float well out of the water—well "cocked"—it must have plenty of hackle, and yet it should not be too bushy, since a fly has only six legs.

As much of the hook as possible should be clear of the water. Looking in certain ways at

flies floating in a vessel, the whole of the parts immersed are seen double. A good way to judge of the appearance of a fly on the water from the point of view of the fish is to put a piece of mirror at the bottom of the vessel. Very small flies float with the whole of the hook supported clear of the water, and this is probably why they are better for bringing up fish than larger flies.

Quill bodies best imitate the transparent segmented appearance of a fly's body, but in the case of small flies floating with the hook clear of the water, a view of the body is largely obscured by the hackle. Members of the *Diptera* and *Perlidaë*, I think, float with their body in the water, so the imitations should not have too much hackle.

Flies tied with detached bodies seem to float too much "end-ways," and the hook seems terribly exposed. Eyed hooks are always used to tie dry flies on, and the winged patterns have double wings when tied to represent the *Ephemeridaë*. Wet-fly patterns are sometimes tied with upright, rolled, and split wings, which, with a little oil, will float well. I think the best test of a fly is to throw it over a decent-sized fish feeding in clear water in a loch on a dead calm day.

The colour of the wings of an upright-winged

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floating fly is probably of very little importance, but for a wet, winged fly I regard the colour of the wing as of primary importance, since in the mere glimpse or impression of a sunk fly that a trout gets in rapid water the wing must play a prominent part. A wet fly should have less hackle than a dry fly, and it should be soft and "fluffy" so as to be kept in movement by the water. In June and July a hackle-pattern wet fly is better than one of a winged pattern. Wet flies like a Dun Spider are almost certainly taken rather for nymphs than flies. Some of the flies figured in Pritt's "North-country Flies" closely resemble nymphs of the *Ephemeridæ*.

A good general size of hook for winged flies is No. 0 (Hall's turn-up eyed), and No. 1 or No. 2 for March Browns and for loch patterns. Nos. 00 and 000 will rise more fish on extra bright days and clear water, but hooking a fish on a No. 000 is very delicate work, and a big fish is likely to tear away the hold. It is probable that the larger the fly, within reason, the more fish would it rise, if the larger sizes could be made to deceive the fish as well as the very small sizes, but unfortunately the larger the fly the better can the fish detect its artificiality.

Years ago I used sometimes to fish at home with a wet fly in a big pool fed by a tiny stream,

containing large free-rising trout, and invariably without success; probably they would have taken a dry fly. One of us met an old angler there who had a basketful of fish, and who, it appeared, often came. He said the only fly these fish would rise to was a "Caterpillar," but we were never able to discover what this was.

One day on the Tweed I was talking to an angler I had met there, and he showed me a fly he said was called "The Caterpillar." He believed it was dressed by some Derbyshire tackle maker. It was tied with a very soft dark fur body, ribbed with gold wire, and had a red hackle sparingly put on the whole length of the hook shank, and no wings. Altogether it was not unlike a "Woolly Bear" caterpillar, and it was, of course, a "Palmer" fly. Alfred Ronalds* describes Red, Black, and Black and Red Palmers, and says that they are intended to represent the caterpillars of the Garden Tiger moth or the Drinker moth (commonly called "Woolly Bears"), and are called Palmers on account of their wandering habits.

Ronalds observes further that they are very deadly for big trout. It is probable that fish take them for nymphs rather than caterpillars, and I have often thought they might be good for

* "The Fly Fisher's Entomology."

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“ bulging ” * fish, if sunk a little, and not too big. Ronalds’ dressing was black ostrich herl with a grizzled hackle, or ostrich herl ribbed with gold twist and red cock’s hackle.

By no means all the flies mentioned here are necessary to the fly fisher, and the build of the fly and the way it is presented to the fish, I think, are of more importance than any exact shade of colour.

Many fly fishermen attach great importance to the use of particular flies for each month. As I have tried to indicate in the next chapter, streams differ a great deal from each other. In some streams the fish get very few flies, and to them a fly is a fly—a thing to be eaten—and they certainly do not stop to reason that a March Brown ought not to be in the water in August. On the other hand, in some waters the fish get quantities of flies, and differentiate between them, preferring the fly that is hatching out, or that they have been taking in quantities at the time, to stray specimens of other kinds, whose flavour they do not know. In such streams, particularly when the fish are feeding on Duns, it is often necessary to have on some one particular fly. But later on in the season a feeding trout will often take any fly that comes close to

* See page 92.

him, there being then flies of all kinds on the water.

I should always feel well equipped for Border waters with Olive Duns, Red Quill, Blue Quill, Black Gnat, March Brown, and some of Mr. Halford's Spinners.

The choice of the right fly is of course only half the battle. A beginner often thinks he has but to get some reputedly deadly fly or bait on or into the water, and fish must take it ; whereas, undoubtedly, the crudest of flies, skilfully cast over a rising fish by a master hand, would be more effective than the finest imitation thrown clumsily.

At exhibitions and such places there are often Japanese stalls on which are displayed ingenious imitations of spiders, beetles, flies, &c., hanging by elastic threads. Some time ago, the idea being suggested by one of these stalls, I made some floating flies with tiny pieces of cork, silk, and seccotine, with mica wings and legs of fine copper wire, taken from the flexible conductors that support pendent electric lamps. With these things I did rise several fish, but they appeared never to take the fly, but to rise alongside it, and I never hooked one.

I think the explanation of this is given by Ronalds. He constructed a hut over the water,

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on the Blythe in Staffordshire, and from sundry windows watched the trout below. He used to blow flies anointed with cayenne pepper and mustard to the fish, and from these experiments decided that fish had no sense of taste. He noticed that when trout took things like Humble Bees they were instantly rejected, and he says * that the body of a fly should be “as soft as silk and softer, if it is to be retained in the mouth of a fish many seconds.” I think that my Japanese flies were actually taken or felt by the fish, but rejected so instantaneously as to appear to the eye not to have been taken.

Many fly fishermen hold that it is quite unnecessary to have one's flies made to imitate natural flies closely. They say that colour shades are unimportant, and are fond of quoting Sir Herbert Maxwell's experiments. I think the accuracy of such views depends on the water and the particular circumstances. From my own experience I believe it is sometimes essential to have on a fly of the right colour, but not always. I would distinguish three cases.

(1) When the fish are taking one particular kind of fly very greedily. In such a case, if the shape or form of the artificial resembled the natural fly, although its colour was wrong, I

* “The Fly Fisher's Entomology.”

think it might easily be seized by the fish in their haste.

(2) When the fish are taking a particular kind of fly, but leisurely. Then I think the artificial must be a very good imitation of the natural fly both in colour and shape.

(3) When the fish are feeding on various kinds of flies. In this case often a "fancy" fly, resembling (to the human eye) no natural fly in colour, will rise the most fish. But it is wrong to say that such flies are not a close imitation of nature. They are natural in form and, if properly presented to the fish, in behaviour, although their colour may be unnatural. Since no one knows how colour values appear to a fish, it is quite possible that a fly whose colours seem all wrong to us may appear like some real fly to them.

It is highly improbable that a Wickham's Fancy appears to the fish the shining gold thing it looks to us.

CHAPTER IV

THE FEEDING OF TROUT

ABOUT the middle or end of October, trout go up the little streams and to the gravelly shallows to spawn. A bottom covered with small gravel and sand, with a gentle stream over it, is a suitable place. Here the female fish scrapes out a kind of trench, and in it deposits the ova, often leaving little mounds of gravel on each side. The male fish accompanies her, and the operation lasts four or five days. The young fish emerge at periods which vary according to the temperature of the water; perhaps February is an average month for their appearance. They are some six inches long when about eighteen months old. Two-year-old fish may weigh about a quarter of a pound; but this depends on the amount of food they get, and in good water they are often much heavier. Trout live for eight or ten years. They are supposed to have very keen eyesight, some sense of smell, no sense of hearing, and probably a very delicate sense of taste, or touch with the tongue. In

the winter they do not get much food, and hide under banks and stones and at the bottom of deep pools. It is said, and my own observation agrees with this, that a very mild open winter is followed by a poor fishing season. The reason suggested is that fish get too much bottom food in the winter and early spring, much of which is destroyed (or inaccessible to the fish) during a hard winter.

In the spring fish begin to feed again, and as they get stronger they scatter themselves in suitable stations over the shallow running water. About May many will be in first-class condition in a good stream, but in hungry burns the fish never get properly fattened. On this question—of the amount of food per fish—depends the classification of a stream as “dry” or “wet” fly water. For consider two pools within twenty yards of each other, with water equally clear in both, on a hot sunny day in July. Why is it that one may throw a wet March Brown into one and, if out of sight, be fairly sure of rising a fish, and in the other, containing more fish, the same fly may be thrown until one is tired, and the odds are ten to one against rising a fish? That there are fish willing to feed in the second pool may be proved by floating a Red Quill down, which generally rises one. The place

where I tried the above experiment, on ten nearly successive days, was at the junction of two streams. The first pool was in the smaller stream, with a rocky bed, flowing down from the hills, and the second pool was in the larger stream flowing in the valley. The food supply of the fish in the smaller stream is probably very limited. The bed of the stream is of bare rock, unfavourable to the growth of weed or the accumulation of gravel, and consequently there is no harbourage for water insects, shrimps, &c. The fish must depend largely on insects and grubs, washed from the banks in time of rain, for their food, and probably it is only after floods that they ever get really satisfied. After a long spell of fine weather they are half starved, and will bite at almost anything. I remember walking, out of curiosity, up a burn that had nearly dried up during a long drought. The fish in the few pools left seemed to have had their normal fear of man overcome by hunger; for when I stood close to the water's edge and dropped a wet fly into some places, long, black, snake-like brutes came wriggling out from under the banks to take the fly almost at my feet.

Some of the rocky burns are fed by weed-filled springs and marshy places which will

supply some insect food, but not much; the bigger fish also feed on the young fry. The trout then, in such streams, in order to exist at all, must be continually on the look-out for food; they cannot afford to allow anything that *might* be good to eat to pass them, and consequently they will rise at the crudest of wet flies. I once watched the trout in a small burn pool for nearly a whole afternoon. The largest fish was one of about six ounces, and he hung in the current just below where the water fell into the pool. Behind him were three smaller fish, arranged fan-wise, and at the sides were a few babies about twice the size of a minnow. The biggest fish seemed to get very little to eat, although he occasionally took some invisible particles, and twice rose at flies that dropped on the water. But the three fish behind him seemed to get hardly anything, and if they attempted to move up in front of the master he butted at them, and they dropped back again. One can understand that the largest fish would be very reluctant to allow anything to pass him, knowing that there were three hungry mouths waiting behind him to snatch it up.

Coming now to the second stream, this has a beautiful gravel bed, and, although it has a not much greater volume of water, is much wider

than the first. Now the food supply of a stream depends more on the area of its bed than on the amount of water, since the larger the bed the more room there is for insects, snails, shrimps, &c., to live, and the more room for fish to feed. Also the wider the river is, the more Spinners and other flies, and windfalls generally, will get on the water.

The fish in this stream are probably not feeding all day, but principally when food is plentiful and not difficult to get, as when there is a "hatch" of Duns, or the larvæ are emerging from their hiding-places amongst the stones, preparatory to assuming the Dun condition. At other times they lie in their feeding stations, willing to take anything that particularly appeals to them, such as a Spinner or a small red worm, but letting many things pass that they would move out of their station to seize earlier in the season, when they are hungry; and they take no notice of anything that is at all strange to them.

In fairly deep pools under trees they will often take floating flies all day long in summer, perhaps because they prefer them to other food, and it takes them all day to get enough; but more probably because the food supply of the place is limited, snails, shrimps, small fish, &c.,

preferring shallow water, with plenty of cover in the shape of weeds or stones.

A general rise of fish is due to the appearance of a "hatch" of flies, and is often preceded by a meal off the nymphs or larvæ of the same kind of fly. When fish are not feeding at all, they retire to the bottom of the river and hide under stones, roots, and banks. The best feeding stations are in comparatively swift water, since the quantity of food coming to the notice of the fish in any given time depends on the amount of water flowing past. In July and August, towards dusk, in some streams, and on the Leader in particular, all the fish in a pool collect in the very strong streamy water at the head of the pool, and in water which in some cases is hardly deep enough to cover them. In the early part of the season Duns, and indeed food of all kinds, are a novelty to the fish, and they feed on them greedily; and as their feeding stations are largely rippling shallows and thin rapid water, they are easily deceived by a wet fly. But even then their food is comparatively plentiful, and they have no occasion to be on the look-out for food all day, as must the fish in the poorer stream; and the angler will find certain parts of the day much more productive than others. Later on the fish in such a stream pick and choose

their food more, and in order to catch them a really excellent imitation of something they like must be presented, and this is where the dry fly scores. It is a good imitation, and imitates an attractive object, *i.e.* a live fly floating on the surface. A wet fly is not so deceptive because it is immersed in the water, where it is probable that fish see things more plainly than on the surface, and maybe a dead or half-drowned fly is not so attractive to the fish as a live one. As already pointed out, some wet flies are a better imitation of a nymph or larva than of a fly. Hence the advice commonly given, always to use "Spider" patterns after May, and the statement sometimes made that the most successful wet "flies" are those that least resemble flies.

To use a natural bait is to carry the idea a little further, and instead of presenting an imitation, to give the fish the real thing. In the case of a worm there is perhaps the added attraction to the fish of a comparative novelty; for I believe trout in an ordinary stream get very few worms, unless they are washed off the surface of the land in a flood, and then they are probably dead when they reach the fish.

The thick moss growing on stones and rocks, on waterfalls and such places, often contains a

quantity of little blue Marsh worms, and perhaps some of these get down to the fish ; but most trout can never see a Brandling worm except on a hook, and yet it is a most deadly bait.

Besides the unpleasantness of handling worms, Caddis grubs, &c., there is not the same interest in taking fish with natural baits as with artificial, because in the latter case, by delicacy of casting and skill, one deceives the fish into believing the lure to be real, whereas a worm is a worm and there is no deception about it.

The weight of a fish is almost independent of its age, and depends on the amount and kind of food it gets. Small perch put into old gravel pits and similar places never increase in weight at all. In New Zealand, where trout were put into virgin water full of fish food, they increased enormously in weight ; but as they increased in numbers the average weight of fish caught decreased, and I was told recently that the average weight of fish in one river is now only 2 lb., compared with 5 lb. or 6 lb. a few years ago.

Most of the larger fish in a burn where the feeding is scanty must be fairly old, unless they have ascended the burn from a larger stream and, owing to lowness of water, have been unable to get back. If they are old they are

presumably wise, and although burn trout are easy to rise, yet heavier fish will be taken with a dry than with a wet fly.

Thus the average weight which fish attain in a river depends on the food supply, and the food supply per fish depends on the number of fish in the river, which in turn depends on the facilities for spawning. If these are good, the river will probably hold quantities of small trout, since the increase in the number of trout itself diminishes both the total food supply and the supply per fish. In order to increase the average weight of fish in a stream either the numbers must be reduced or the food supply increased. It is possible to account for the fact of fish being formerly taken by a wet fly, as in the Hampshire streams, that can now as a rule only be taken with the utmost refinements of the dry fly, by the supposition that there were far more fish in the river then, or that the food supply was less than at present. If the rivers were not much fished, there may easily have been quantities of old fish in the water; and a too great increase of fish might alter the food supplies of a river by decimating, or even exterminating, whole families of water insects.

In some rivers fish are said not to rise so well as formerly even to floating flies, and this may

be due to some increase in the supply of subaqueous food—an increase perhaps due to a decrease in the numbers of fish. To improve the rising of trout in a river it might be possible to introduce some other kind of fish that would compete with the trout for subaqueous food: perhaps perch, which feed largely on shrimps, would serve; but unfortunately, according to Mr. P. D. Malloch (“Life-History of the Salmon,” &c.), the perch fry themselves would form an additional article of diet for the trout.

The decrease of trout due to any cause, such as the destruction of spawning beds by draining operations, or over-fishing, would tend to make the fish more difficult to catch, since the natural food supply would automatically increase owing to the decrease in numbers of the fish. But it must be remembered that the amount of food a fish consumes is in proportion to its weight, and hence the amount of fish that a river will support is measured by weight rather than numbers.

Hence perhaps what is called the “education” of trout is a consequence of some alteration in the food supply. I once fished a small mountain stream in South Wales, and after trying for some time with various wet flies I eventually caught six small but fat fish with a floating

Olive Dun. It would be absurd to describe these little trout as educated, and I believe that the sole cause of their shyness was the scarcity of fish in the stream and the consequent abundance of food per fish. This scarcity was due to the systematic poaching of the miners : one of their "sporting" methods consisted in diverting the course of the stream at various places. Of course fish that are continually cast over with artificial flies are bound to become shy, and the shyness and "education" of trout on some streams are due to over-fishing, and the fact that certain fish, from the position of their feeding stations and because they are free risers, will be cast over continually, and thus may easily come to differentiate between the real and the artificial. Again, I have noticed in a stream, from part of which the water is cut off daily to fill mill ponds, that when the water is flowing, the fish in these parts feed much more freely than those that live in parts of the stream from which the water is never cut off ; and this is because the fish in the intermittent part get less food than the others. In fact, parts of the stream are "wet fly" and parts "dry fly," or in some parts the trout are "educated" and in others not. The recent cultivation of dry-fly fishing on the Tweed must be due to some such cause as that discussed

above, for formerly a wet fly was quite effective where a dry fly is now regarded as necessary for sport.

In his "Reminiscences of Yarrow" the Rev. James Russell, D.D., writing of some time before 1818, says of the Yarrow: "A good dish of trouts could then be got at almost any time in a few hours"; and further on: "Notwithstanding the many fishers at work for so many years, the trouting (now so poor) was at the last as at the first." "Now" refers to some time before 1883, when he died. It seems certain that a great reduction in the numbers of trout took place between 1818 and the time Dr. Russell was writing; and this may have been brought about by netting, and perhaps to some extent by drainage of the land, which must have altered the character of the burns, the spawning grounds of the fish. Probably many of the smaller burns, which are now roaring floods in time of heavy rain and nearly dried up in a drought, used, before the hills were drained, to carry a steady volume of water all the year round. Thomas Tod Stoddart, writing of the Yarrow in "Angling Reminiscences," says it was much harried by nets and unfair fishing, and deploras the extinction of the old breed of yellow-finned trout. To-day in Yarrow

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one gets some trout of a very sombre hue, and others most handsome, brilliantly coloured fish. Four thousand Loch Leven trout were put into St. Mary's Loch, out of which the Yarrow flows, some ten or twelve years ago. Still, I should not call the fishing in Yarrow poor now (1911). Last year I saw a man with 10 lb. or 12 lb. of fish, taken during a morning with fly ; and this year I saw two baskets of 5 lb. or 6 lb. each, taken with a natural Stone-fly.

In the early part of the season there is on most streams, practically every day, one definite rise of fish, which occurs when there is a " hatch " of flies. This is generally in the morning, *i.e.* before two P.M. From mid-June onwards the chief rise occurs in the evening about sunset, and after an interval is often followed by a second rise, when the fish leave their usual feeding stations and cruise about in the smooth shallows. This is the opportunity of the night fisher, who pursues perhaps the least delicate method of fly fishing. Thick gut, big flies, and a short line are used.

In addition to an honest rise at floating Duns or Spinners, trout often appear to be rising fairly when they will not look at the angler's fly. The fish on these occasions are said to be either " smutting " or " bulging." When " smutting "

they are rising at minute insects, "smuts" or "curses," on the surface, too small to be imitated. "Bulging" is the expression used for the swirls and breaks made on the surface of the water (often by the back fin of the fish) when they are taking nymphs or larvæ. I once saw, looking over the side of a boat, a number of what I took to be nymphs rising and falling in the water. They would ascend nearly to the surface of the water and then sink again, and they seemed to be in violent motion, as though swimming or struggling. Perhaps these were nymphs about to become flies. Some false impulse may set a quantity of nymphs rising to the surface before they are quite ready for their metamorphosis, or "bulging" fish may be taking nymphs that are really rising to become flies; but if so, some of them should escape and the flies be seen on the water; and in my own experience this is hardly ever the case when the fish are "bulging." If the force that bursts the nymphal skin were due to an accumulation of gas between the insect and its outer envelope, then, when the mud or gravel at the bottom of a river reached a certain temperature, the gas in the nymphal skin might expand so much as to make the insect buoyant and force it, however unwillingly, to rise to the surface,

and here the still higher temperature might split open the skin. Perhaps this would account for the "hatch" occurring at nearly the same time on similar consecutive days. A nymph that found itself rising to the surface might, whilst its strength lasted, keep swimming down again to the bottom, instinct probably always tending to keep it under shelter. It might be some such activity as this that sets the fish "bulging." If the above supposition is a true one, barometric pressure might also have an influence on the appearance of larvæ buried in the mud, just as with a rising barometer miners are warned to beware of "fire-damp"; and also as a low water and a high barometric pressure cause quantities of bubbles of the same gas (CH_4) to rise to the surface of stagnant ponds.

For "smutting" fish I believe the best fly, especially in lochs, is a Black Gnat tied on a No. 000 hook, and in rivers either this or a gold-ribbed Hare's Ear, also on No. 000 hook. For "bulging" fish I have found one of Mr. Halford's Spinner patterns fished wet the most effective. In any case, I think for "bulging" trout the fly should be wet; perhaps a fly like the "Caterpillar," mentioned in chap. iii. p. 74, would be worth trying. Obviously, if the fish are taking nymphs, an imitation of a nymph is wanted; but,

of course, the lure is now a wet "fly," and does not so easily deceive the fish.

Trout that are "bulging" seem temporarily to lose their shyness, and, however badly one casts over them, it is difficult to put them down. I have often seen fish "bulging" on Clyde on fine August evenings, and also on Tweed and Teviot, but hardly ever on smaller streams like Leader or Gala. Both "smutting" and "bulging" take place in fairly deep smooth water. On the Water of Leith, behind a place called "Waterston's Tip," is a stretch of muddy, still water, full of trout, but dreadful "bulgers" and "smutters" they are. I have sometimes had a brace or so, but generally they will look at nothing until after dark, when they are easily taken, I have heard, with a biggish wet fly; but the permit lasts only until half an hour before sunset, and, anyhow, the place is not a very tempting one, owing to its evil odours. The worst "smutters" I have seen are in Gladhouse, and always on calm still days. One is generally hopelessly defeated by "smutting," and particularly by "bulging," fish, but I have sometimes scored a modest victory with one of the flies mentioned. One reads of fish "tailing": that is, grubbing in weeds or mud for shrimps or other food, and occasionally breaking the surface with their tails;

but I have never seen any actually doing it, unless a large grayling I once saw, apparently standing on his head in the Tweed, poking at the mud, was "tailing." This fish was so engrossed in his business that a pack of otter-hounds splashing all around failed to disturb him.

Trout in lochs are generally more fickle in their rising habits than in rivers; they mostly inhabit the shallower parts near shore, where the chief supply of food is. Probably larvæ and creatures that trout feed on do not inhabit very deep water; thus shallow lochs like Loch Leven will support a far greater weight of trout than deeper lochs of a similar area; and in general, shallow lochs contain a larger average size of trout, the difference lying in the food supply. The food of trout in lochs is much the same as in rivers, except that, I think, there are in a loch fewer varieties of flies. The principal kinds I have found are Olive Duns and Spinners, Caddis-flies and Black Gnats. Mr. Malloch says the Loch Leven trout feed on Blood-worms, which Ronalds says are the larvæ of the Golden Dun.

It is difficult to know what the trout take the usual artificial loch flies for, but perhaps when feeding they are accustomed to take all kinds of

flies, and take artificial flies the more readily because of their unfamiliar appearance. The theory of adjusting the size of the fly to the state of the water probably amounts to this : that in rough water a large fly is necessary to enable the fish to see it at all, and that in smooth water the fly must be small to prevent the fish from detecting its artificial nature. Mr. P. D. Malloch ("Life-History of the Salmon," &c.) says that loch trout travel about when feeding, usually against the wind, and that in Loch Leven the fish go at the rate of two to three miles per hour. Fish in lochs, however, do not always feed in this way. Many of them (at any rate in some lochs) take up permanent summer quarters just as they do in a river. I have often seen the same fish rise within an area of about one square yard over and over again, and evening after evening. I have frequently put down a fish in a certain place and come back, half an hour afterwards, to find him rising again. There are lots of places in lochs where there are big stones and rocks on the bottom, where one may rise fish every day ; but fifty yards away on either side one never gets a rise. There is one place on Loch Tay, over a little submerged island, where fish are often feeding, but as soon as one gets off it not a rise can be had.

Surely in such places the fish have taken up a permanent residence, chiefly on account of the shelter afforded by the stones.

The fact that fish travel always against the wind may explain why on some lochs they can only be caught when the wind is in a particular direction, since it might be made possible by some effect of light dependent on the particular surroundings of the loch ; or perhaps the fish know from experience that food is only blown on the water when a certain wind is blowing. It is probable that in some lochs the fish *must* travel about in order to get sufficient food. They must also sometimes be travelling (although perhaps not feeding) *with* the wind, otherwise they would in a short time be all congregated at one end of the loch.

I think that, with two exceptions, fish *may* feed in all sorts of weather conditions when food is plentiful, *i.e.* when flies or subaqueous creatures are moving ; and that often, particularly in small, " hungry " streams, some fish are all day on the look-out for food. The two exceptions occur when there is a thundery atmosphere, and (in the evening) a mist settling down on the water.

I dislike wind of any kind, and in particular a down-stream wind, and a cold wind with a dull

leaden sky ; but I should not regard these conditions as fatal, and I only dislike a down-stream wind because of the difficulty of accurate casting. Mr. Stewart ("The Practical Angler") rather preferred an east wind, well on in the season. For fishing lochs with wet flies, of course, a little wind is almost essential ; and this is generally accounted for by supposing that the ripple on the water helps to disguise the artificial nature of the lure, and to hide the gut.

There generally is a wind of some sort on a loch, and therefore a wet fly is more often effective than a dry fly ; but to me it is much more interesting to catch fish on a calm day with a dry fly than on a windy day with a wet fly. I like best a bright sunny day, or a showery day with bright intervals ; and the first or second mild day after a cold spell is always good. Loch trout are often very "difficult," but they will generally rise at an artificial floating fly, whenever they are seen to rise at the natural fly. On Loch Leven, it is said, the trout on calm days keep rising just out of reach of casting distance from a boat ; but it is almost certain that it is the boat that puts them down.

All country people will tell you that when there is thunder about fishing is useless ; and this is the common experience of anglers. But

frequently during the actual outbreak of a storm good sport may be had; a number of examples of this are related in Mr. Aflalo's "Fisherman's Weather." I remember fishing one very hot August day in a small pond containing carp. Up to three o'clock we had not had a bite, when a heavy thunderstorm began to bank up, and before seeking shelter in a barn some distance away, we put in several baited lines round the sides, tied on to roots, &c., and we also left our rods on the bank and our lines in the water. After the storm had passed, we found all the lines broken, and a fish on both the rods, one about 1 lb. and the other about $\frac{1}{2}$ lb., but afterwards we never got another bite.

Many human beings experience a feeling of depression before a thunderstorm, and it is well known that domestic animals are similarly affected; therefore it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that fish also are affected, perhaps in a much greater degree owing to their different environment. Clouds heavily charged with electricity induce on the earth below, and perhaps for a considerable area around, a corresponding charge of opposite polarity. It is possibly this state of electrical strain in which the air is, or the charged condition of the water, which causes the "thunderly feeling." If a

flash of lightning passes between the earth and a cloud, or, as happens far more frequently, between two clouds, this charged condition is immediately changed, possibly only to pile up again. The point is that every flash of lightning alters the whole condition of electrical potential or balance, and therefore one can understand how fish that were not inclined to feed before a storm might come on the feed as soon as the storm burst. The idea that fish will not feed before a storm because they know it will bring an abundance of food appears to be very far-fetched and unnecessary.

All shepherds (who are usually bait-fishers), and country anglers with a lifelong experience of their streams, say that the moment a mist appears on the water one may as well pack up. I have taken fish on a loch during the morning when there were patches of white mist drifting about, but never actually in the mist. Sea fishermen say that fog makes no difference to their catch.

A dirty, flooded water is fatal to dry-fly fishing.

CHAPTER V

ABOUT TACKLE, WITH SOME REMARKS ON BORDER FISHING

IT may be readily admitted that in parts of Tweed, Teviot, and Clyde waders are almost a necessity ; that generally, owing to the angler's ability to cross from one bank to the other, and to approach fish where the banks are wooded, they are an advantage. Yet personally I would far rather catch fewer fish without them than more fish with them. An old gentleman, who once shared with me the most mustardy sandwiches I have ever eaten, declared that he would as soon net the fish out as go into the water after them. I knew another man who, rather than use waders, kept a pair of stilts hidden in the grass at a point on his stream where he always liked to cross over. Waders have many disadvantages : they are heavy to carry to the river, a terrible incumbrance when prospecting for fish from the bank, or when stalking, and are still heavier to carry home ; and, besides, they may crush one's fish and one's lunch. Another

disadvantage of wading is that one sends frightened fish scurrying ahead, alarming the trout in front, just as a disturbed blackbird screaming down a hedge-side sets all the other occupants of the hedge on the *qui vive*. I like to be as little hampered as possible, and generally wear an old flannel suit, and stout boots with rock-climbing nails, which prevent slipping on the stony banks of many of the streams and lochs, and are useful for climbing up some of the burns. On many streams waders are quite unnecessary.

A creel is unfortunately a necessity, for carrying the fish in, and is also useful for tying a waterproof on, and for the landing-net. I like a plain, roomy wicker basket with a brass ring on it for the landing-net handle to slip through. I often used to fish without a net, but when using really fine gut it is better to carry one; and indeed without one it is impossible to get a fish out of some pools after he is hooked. It is not a great nuisance if it is carried on the creel, and the left hand can feel for it and pull it out when the moment arrives, without taking one's attention from the fish. In use the net should be well sunk in the water, and the fish drawn over it.

The wet-fly fisher who wants to try the dry-

fly method would be well advised not to buy anything new, except a sixpenny bottle of paraffin oil, until he has experimented with his present tackle.

The oil is sold by tackle makers in little bottles that will go in the waistcoat pocket. These are made on the non-spilling ink-bottle principle, with a brush pushed through the cork. Another preparation sold for the same purpose consists, I think, of paraffin wax dissolved in some such substance as benzol. The oil, of course, does not make the fly buoyant like cork (it merely prevents it from becoming wet), so that if you push a well-oiled fly completely under water with the finger, it will sink to the bottom. The fly must be dried by casting it in the air after each cast over a fish. More than one application of oil to any one fly is rarely necessary. Care should be taken not to oil the gut point of the cast, as it may prevent it from getting thoroughly wet. The wet-fly fisher should choose a small-sized hackle fly, *e.g.* a Black Spider, tied on fine gut, and lightly oil it with the brush ; also give a touch to the lower part of the line and the thicker gut. Then flick the surplus oil off the fly by a cast or two in the air, and, having found a rising fish, cast as accurately and delicately over him as possible

from some point down stream. If the stream is at all rapid the angler, accustomed to fishing down, will experience some difficulty in keeping his line straight, and consequently in striking quickly enough, especially if his rod is inclined to be "whippy."

For great accuracy in casting, a stiff rod is essential ; but on a calm day I can get a greater length of line out with a "whippy" rod. I like a split cane rod because it is almost unbreakable ; ten feet is quite long enough, and the lighter it is the better. It should feel well balanced and comfortable in the hand, and have no "top-heavy" sensation. If a "whippy" rod is given a rapid rotary motion with the wrist (not the arm), all the top half of the rod from a little below the middle will describe a kind of figure 8. It ought to be rather difficult to do this with a decently stiff rod.

A plain check reel from which the line will run freely is good enough for any fish. I always use a reel without the check arrangement, and regulate the line with a finger. I put the reel on with the handle on the left side, to be worked with the left hand, so that on hooking a fish I do not have to change hands with the rod. The angler should part with line to the fish grudgingly, endeavouring to lead him down stream, and

always keep the rod point well up, and himself below the fish. Big fish are more manageable if played with a light hand. If using one of the beautiful (but often delicate) reels with various check arrangements, it is safest to carry a spare reel, as it is difficult to avoid one's reel getting an occasional knock which may put it out of action. A proper dry-fly line is tapered at the casting end, and fairly heavy for ease in casting. I keep a length of gut knotted on the line, so that I do not have to cut the end of the line every time the gut cast is taken off. The gut cast is tapered from fairly stout gut to a very fine point, and is generally from two to three yards in length; I think two yards is ample. Some tackle makers will tell you that the finest undrawn gut is fine enough for the point. It may be so in May, but it most certainly is not for July, nor yet for clear still water; at least, the ordinary "finest undrawn" is not. I believe undrawn gut *can* be got fine enough, but the difficulty is to get it; one can sometimes obtain it by asking the tackle maker to get it specially, and paying his price for it; and indeed some makers keep wet flies tied on finer undrawn gut than any they will offer to sell you separately. Gut can be stained in strong green tea, extract of logwood, a very weak solution of sulphate of

copper and afterwards a solution of alum, or in various dyes used for colouring fly materials, and also in different coloured inks. The idea of staining is to take away the glittering white appearance. Gut can always be bought ready stained.

The knot for joining two lengths of gut is shown in Fig. 3, A; Major Turle's knot for tying the fly to the gut is shown at B. I can never remember this knot, and myself use the one shown at C, and I do not find that it slips.

A flat metal box with a cork bottom is used to carry eyed flies in. If one does not carry too many, it is convenient to keep the flies loose in the little metal boxes in which they are sold, one kind in each box, as then they do not get crushed. I have a flat box holding half a dozen of these small boxes, with a label on each one; all kinds of nice boxes are sold. A fly book to hold gut casts and points, and a damping box for gut—a flat cigarette box with pieces of white flannel cut to shape serves excellently—with a knife containing a pair of scissors, complete the essentials. There are all sorts of other ingenious articles which may be carried, if one has a fancy for neat things. Strong thread, like that used for binding cricket bats, and a piece of cobbler's wax are useful for repairing a top joint; and an

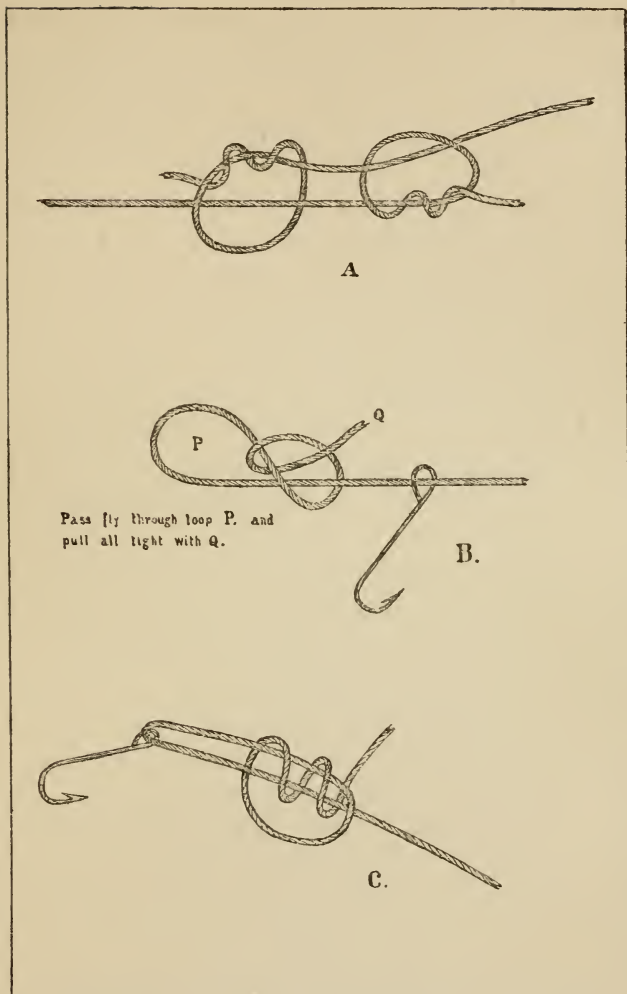


FIG. 3

empty cigarette box for keeping flies which one may wish to identify at home is also handy.

The flies that fish are feeding on may be discovered by first catching one fish and examining the contents of his gullet. The kind of fly that will catch one fish will generally rise others, so that by the time the first part of this advice has been followed the second part may be unnecessary. This tip was first given by Cotton in "The Compleat Angler." It is, however, occasionally instructive to open a fish's stomach and examine the flies he has been taking; the contents should be put in a tumbler of water, and a magnifying glass is of great assistance.

Of all Border waters that I have fished I like the Yarrow-Moffat district best. Anglers and poets have often written in praise of Yarrow, and the whole valley is steeped in history and legend. But apart from the fishing, which is good, I think the charm to me consists in the freedom of the district: you may go anywhere and fish anywhere: the great variety of water—lochs, rivers, and streams; the glorious tramps among the solitude and wildness of the hills and mountain streams; and, finally, the sense of exploration, of throwing a fly into pools rarely fished, miles away from anywhere.

There is a particular fascination about fishing with a float. The fascination, which is almost entirely absent from fly fishing, consists in the feeling of expectation and of unknown possibilities that seizes one when the float begins to bob on the water; there *may* be some mighty five-pound fish nibbling at the bait. It is a protracted sensation compared with that caused by the rise at a fly; and it is greatly increased if you are exploring in new water—in water that perhaps has not been fished for years, and may hold undreamt-of monsters. Nearly all the duck ponds and gravel pits near my home used to hold fish of some kind—perch or carp. To see one's float pulled under for the first time in some new pool (probably fished without permission) gave a glorious moment, and if the result *was* only a small perch—well, one had had the excitement, the expectation of something extraordinary, just the same. In one pool in which I often used to fish, I saw, one hot August day, the noses and tails of really big fish gently moving amongst the weeds on the surface. These fish were said to be tench, and although I never caught one, yet I loved fishing there, always with the hope that at any moment I might be fast in a big fish.

I have not fished with a float for twelve or

fifteen years, yet I never see water-lily leaves lying flat on the smooth surface of a pond without feeling a desire to see a little quill float cocked up amongst them. Fishing some of the less accessible hill streams gives one something of the same feeling. Your fly is floating, cocked perkily up on the water, in the deep hole at the foot of some miniature waterfall, and who knows what cunning old trout may live there, and seize it at any moment ?

I have spent whole days fishing in the Yarrow district without seeing a soul from the time I left the road in the morning until I returned to it in the evening. But the water is by no means deserted. One has for company the "whaup," redshanks, moorhens, wagtails, pied and yellow, the shy dipper, perhaps a wild duck and her family, the noisy peewits, an occasional grouse or blackcock, and a poaching gull or two. And during the walk home at dusk the bats are busily feeding, a ghost-like owl flits silently by, the little voles scamper across the road, a big hare, after a good look, goes clumsily down the road to the next gate, a hedgehog may perhaps be seen ambling along by the ditch or amongst the cut hay. Great moths are busy round the hedge tops, and beetles fly humming past.

There are St. Mary's Loch, the Lowes, Loch

Skene, Talla Reservoir, Yarrow, Ettrick, Meggatt, Moffat Water, the upper waters of the Tweed, and innumerable smaller streams to fish. There are any amount of $\frac{1}{2}$ -lb. trout to be negotiated, occasional 1-lb. fish, and in St. Mary's there is the possibility of fish up to any size. Some of these big fish get down the Yarrow. Some years ago a trout weighing 19 lb. was killed in the Meggatt with a hay fork. The Lowes contains pike, and is also full of perch, which I have seen caught by the boat-load; and very big trout of 6 lb. and 7 lb. have been taken out with minnow. St. Mary's is about $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles in circumference and $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles long, and I have caught fish almost all round, from the bank and from a boat, so that this loch alone affords plenty of sport. It is said to be an early loch, and does well with a wet fly in April; but it is very good for a dry fly in June and July. Apparently there used to be char in the loch, for the Rev. James Russell, in his "Reminiscences of Yarrow," quotes a MS. account of the lochs written in 1649: "There is also taken in these Lochs a little fish called by the country people red waimbs. It is about the bigness of a herring, and the belly of it is wholly red. It is never seen nor taken but between All Hallows and Martinmas

—the space of ten days—and that only in the little stream that runs betwixt the two lochs. It is very savoury meat.”

I have never seen trout rising in the Lowes, which is quite small and connected with St. Mary's by a small stream ; probably, like nearly all lochs containing pike, it does best early in the season. The trout in Loch Skene are small but very handsome. The best way to go up is to follow the burn by way of the “Grey Mare's Tail,” so that a few trout can be got from the burn, and one may be sure of not losing the way. There are some ghastly holes—“linns”—and bogs to fall into, if one gets lost in a mist, and some of the bogs round the loch are dangerous. There is a description of Loch Skene in “Marmion” :

*Some ruder and more savage scene,
Like that which frowns round dark Loch
Skene.*

*There eagles scream from isle to shore,
Down all the rocks the torrents roar ;
O'er the black waves incessant driven,
Dark mists infect the summer heaven,
Though the rude barriers of the lake
Away its hurrying waters break.**

* The visitor may think the reality rather tame after reading this.

The Meggatt is preserved, but permission can generally be obtained for a nominal payment ; and it has some lovely pools. Permission to fish the Talla Reservoir has to be obtained in Edinburgh from the Water Trust, on payment of a small fee.

Peebles is a good centre from which to fish the Tweed, and here, as is now the practice on most Border streams, a local Angling Association keeps watchers, and issues angling tickets at a small charge. This policy is likely to do an immense amount of good to the fishing, which was rapidly being ruined by netting. It is possible that in the near future one big association may get powers to control all the trout fishing in the South of Scotland ; but the best of all remedies for poaching would be to make the exposure of trout for sale illegal. At present, on some of the streams, water that is nominally private is netted far more than water under the care of an angling association. The Jed, a very sporting stream, and parts of the Teviot have lately suffered cruelly from netting. A shocking ruffian whom I used to meet on a certain stretch of Teviot, and who was in the habit of smoking my tobacco, would often point out to me which pools had recently been netted ! Roxburgh is

a good centre for Teviot. Leader, an ideal trout stream, and Gala are conveniently fished from Lauder and Stow. Tickets for Leader can be obtained in Lauder and Earlston. No one should grudge paying the very modest charge made, since all the money is used for paying watchers to keep the nets off. Chirnside is a convenient place for the Whiteadder, another excellent stream. A man who fairly often fishes it told me he had hardly ever fished more than a length of about 200 yards, and there he finds enough sport for a whole day.

The Clyde is good near Biggar. I think the Tweed is rather understocked at present, but it will doubtless improve as its tributaries become better looked after. From 6 oz. to 1 lb. is about the average weight, but occasionally fish of 4 lb. and 5 lb. are caught. In Yarrow and Leader the fly fisher should have no difficulty in getting three or four brace of $\frac{1}{2}$ -lb. trout on a good morning in June. On Teviot and Clyde the average weight of fish caught with a dry fly is well over $\frac{1}{2}$ lb.

The English visitor need not have the slightest fear of being crowded on any of the open water. Except on Saturday afternoons and public holidays, and in the evenings near a town, it is rarely that more than one or two anglers are

met with during a whole day ; and I can recall days on Tweed, Teviot, Ettrick, Yarrow, Leader, and Gala on which I have never met any one else fishing at all.

Nowhere can the angler find cheaper fishing than is to be had in the Border district. Comfortable quarters at a reasonable price, either at an inn or in a cottage, can be found everywhere, amongst a most kindly, hospitable, tactful people, innately well bred, who form a great contrast to those in some other parts of the country, where one can hardly ask the way without paying a shilling for the information.

A word of advice may be given regarding sheep-dogs. These brutes, generally two or three in company, have a habit of holding one up at gates or walls that one attempts to climb, and snapping at one's foot or hand. The tip is to abuse them in the hoarsest voice at your command, and to swipe at them with your landing net. Any attempt to conciliate them by saying "Good dog," &c., is fatal. Use the worst language you can think of, and they will slink away utterly ashamed of themselves.

The angling visitor to the Border will often hear of, and sometimes meet, "the Local Expert," who can *always* "fill a basket." Of course the secret of his success consists in a

thorough knowledge of the water, and the most favourable conditions for fishing, rather than any phenomenal skill. The visitor, on the other hand, fishes every day, whether favourable or otherwise. One "worm" expert's dodge consisted in kicking clods of earth into a burn as he worked down, and thus muddying the water in each pool before he came to it—a procedure which reminds one of fishing for gudgeon.

Probably most Edinburgh anglers are familiar with the 6.15 A.M. train from the Waverley. On public holidays this train is full of fishermen armed with all the paraphernalia of their craft. One lines up at the booking office behind a motley row. Anglers in green squashy hats with a little bow behind; artisans in their oldest clothes, artisans in their Sunday clothes; very workmanlike-looking anglers that one could swear were deadly with a minnow; very occasional anglers, who ask questions about flies all the way down in the train, and study old and rusty fly books—in short, anglers of all sorts, kinds, and conditions. And oh! how long it takes to get to Portobello! The train stops at every station down the line—a beast of a train! One starts to read *The Scotsman*, determined to find oneself well on the way before looking out

of the window. You read a few columns and the weather forecasts, and at rather a long stop look out to find you have only got as far as Portobello, when you had expected Fushie-bridge at least. At Heriot and beyond, anglers begin to drop off the train at each station. Heriot water takes two or three; the Gala, by the side of which the train travels for some way, more. Stow claims the Leader contingent. The fussy little train for Lauder is waiting in the station—its driver has to get off his engine to open gates, while the guard closes them again. And so to Galashiels. Here the Yarrow, Ettrick, and Tweed fishers change, but the train goes on to St. Boswell's, where most of the remaining anglers alight, some to go on to Roxburgh and the Teviot.

My first day of the season is nearly always on the Teviot. It means getting up at an unearthly hour in the morning. I always cut it rather fine, and near the Royal Infirmary I begin to worry about catching the train, and to doubt the accuracy of my watch. At the north end of George IV. bridge the clock of St. Giles comes in sight, and I slow down a bit. If one is a little late, the steps leading down to the Waverley Bridge seem interminable, and all the things in

the creel rattle together. The first hour of the journey, with a paper, is not so bad. The second hour is a very long one, and I make many resolves never to be such a fool as to start on this expedition again. I always begin to feel hungry, and wish it were lunch time. Then St. Boswell's at last, and a change of trains. Now the hunger and boredom seem to vanish with the near prospect of the water. It is perhaps a sunny spring morning; the trees are beginning to show green. The wind is sure to be a bit easterly, and an Englishman, used to better things, would call it cold. Personally I am grateful that it is not snowing. Here one is amongst the Border folk; several farmers probably get into your carriage, and the talk concerns prices of cattle and sheep. I always think they are one of the finest set of men in Great Britain, the very embodiment of health and fitness. The train starts out of the station, and generally returns again for some obscure reason connected with "points." Soon, however, Roxburgh is reached, and for me another change into the little Jedburgh train waiting in the station. At this point I begin to fidget, and the few minutes' wait seems to last hours. At length we are off, and I fight against a great desire to begin untying the knots of my rod case. The second station is my bourn, and

finally I step out on the platform. There is no village, and hardly a house in sight but the station-master's. The river runs a hundred yards below the platform. It is just nine o'clock, and I know the "rise" will not begin for a couple of hours yet, but I nearly run that hundred yards to the bridge and eagerly scan the river up and down. No sign of a fish, and at once I get quite cool, and laugh at myself. But then comes the question, Shall I go up or down stream? Up stream there is a beautiful shallow bend in the river where heaps of fish will be rising, once the "rise" begins; but they are rather difficult to approach. Down stream is another very favourite corner, where good fish will be rising, and where I was twice broken in ten minutes last year; but the grayling are a nuisance there. Whichever way I go, in about ten minutes I am convinced that the other way would have been much better.

CHAPTER VI

DRY-FLY FISHING ON THE BORDERS

AN attempt made by any one to illustrate any particular method of fishing must of necessity largely consist of a description of the writer's own methods and experiences. In the present case this is still more so, because I very rarely see or meet any one using a dry fly on the Border streams. This may be partly explained by the fact that in a district where every one has trout fishing at his door, few people consider it worth while to fish, except at the most likely times. Thus one might hang about the Tweed in the neighbourhood of Peebles for the whole of a long June day without seeing a single angler until the evening rise begins, perhaps at half-past seven or eight o'clock.

The Teviot ought to be fished with waders, but on the day of which I want to give a short account I was fishing from the bank. It was about the middle of May; a bright sun occasionally obscured by clouds, and, as nearly always during the Scottish spring, an easterly

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wind. I got to the water about nine o'clock, and although I did not expect to do any good for a couple of hours, there was too much of east in the wind to do nothing. The Teviot here flows through a flat pasture country, holding cattle and sheep; the river has high earth banks with now and again patches of gravel beach. The country is finely wooded, but in the two-mile stretch of river which I had to fish, the banks are almost destitute of trees or cover of any kind. I went up stream, choosing the right bank. The first stretch is a broad rippling shallow, two to three feet deep; typical wet-fly water. I fished this carefully up, throwing an Olive Dun at the end of a long line as much across the stream as possible. There was about two hundred yards of it, and the result was two smolts. Then there came a long tiresome stretch of deep, still water, without any visible current, and with high undermined banks. At the end, or really the beginning, of this the stream comes over a gravelly shallow into a deep sullen hole, in which opposing currents cause the water to revolve. Repeated casting into this with a slack line eventually brought a grayling of three quarters of a pound, who was landed, and had to be killed as "vermin." Above this hole the river widens out and flows in a series of channels

three or four feet deep with shallow gravel beds between. It seemed a pity to disturb this water until the "rise" began, so I went further up, passing some more shallows, with tiny islands dotted about, to a place where the river runs swift and smooth past some willows on the opposite bank. Here I had two small trout and a half-pound grayling. Then I noticed some flies coming down, which proved to be Olives, and I hurried back to the channels mentioned above. There the rise had already begun. The channels had broken water at their heads, leading to smooth, swift currents broadening out and getting shallower at the tails. All down the smooth parts fish were rising greedily. Several of the channels could be easily reached from the bank, but the fly could only be allowed a very short journey without "dragging," as I had to cast a good deal across stream. The fish were sucking in the flies, and one saw nothing but the widening circles and a few little bubbles. Fishing from this bank and wading over my boots, I had nine trout and three grayling, and returned sundry smolts. There was a solitary and most persistent riser within easy reach of the opposite bank, so I crossed the river higher up by a railway bridge and came down the other side to try conclusions with him. The

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third cast brought him up and he proved to be the best fish of the day, just over a pound.

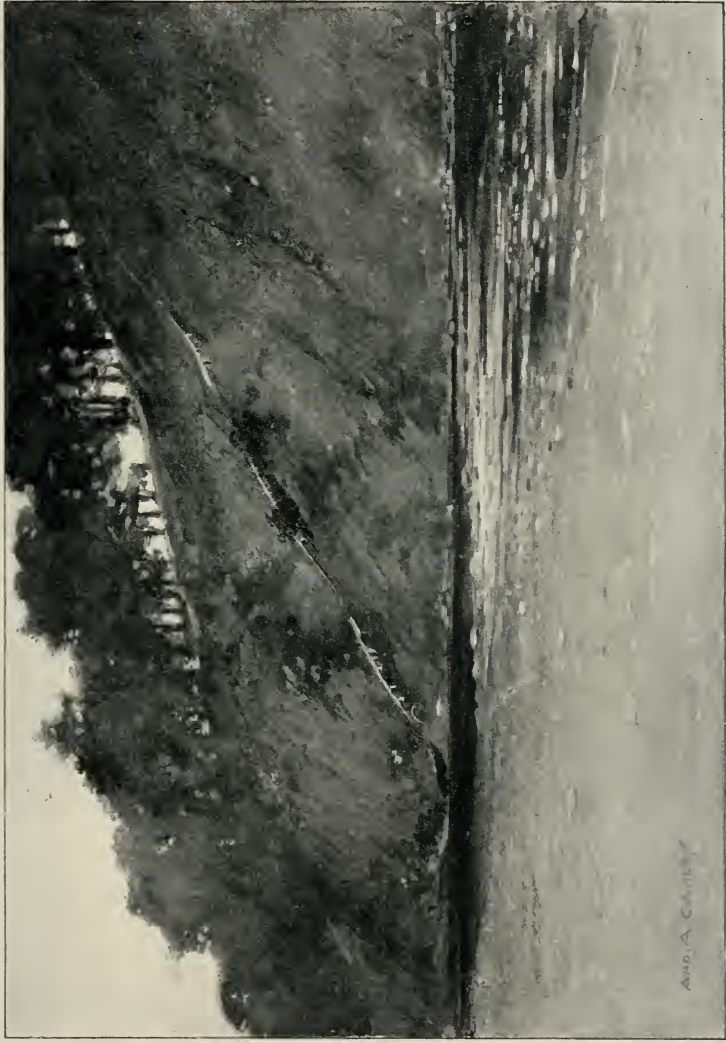
The grayling continued rising for some time, but I got no more trout.

I have known the "rise" on Teviot in May continue spasmodically from eleven to four, but the best of it is in the morning. In July I have fished this same water all day and seen nothing but smolts moving, but on other days, in the more sheltered, wooded parts lower down, there are often fish rising, and there is nearly always an evening rise after the warm weather begins. One July day I remember especially. Nothing was doing until about two o'clock, and then in an impossible part, with both banks thickly wooded, trout began to rise everywhere. The river there is broad and rather sluggish, and what appeared to me to be enormous trout were making heavy plunges at, I think, Spinners of different kinds. I made many attempts to get a fly over a fish, but only succeeded once, by wading out along a mud bank. My Red Quill came slowly over him, and just as I was about to lift it he took it with a great boil. He made for a partly submerged tree, and for about five seconds, with the rod bent nearly double, I held the heaviest fish I have ever felt, and then, not by any wriggle or plunge, but by sheer straight

pulling, he broke my gut point, doubtless chafed by sundry previous encounters with branches.

Leader, Gala, Yarrow, Ettrick, and the upper waters of the Tweed are all fairly alike in character, and consist of a series of pools, narrow at the head where the water rushes in, and broadening out fan-wise at the tail. Here and there are broad shallow stretches of broken water connecting two pools, or broad reaches of thin smooth water. The shallow broken water holds lots of small trout, but is not much good to the dry-fly fisher. One must also wade to fish it properly. On a good sunny day in June, there are likely to be fish rising in every pool, but even if there are no fish rising, the whole of a pool may be fished with advantage. Generally there is no cover, and to fish the shallow end one must at least kneel, well back from the water's edge. In the smooth flowing water at the tail of a pool the trout will come up quite leisurely and suck in the fly. Higher up the pool, in the swifter but still quite smooth water, the fish often make a jump for the fly, and not infrequently miss it. The whole of the pool should be covered, but near the head is the best part, especially just clear of the broken water in the centre of the stream.

But as has been said before, the very best



AND, A CHURCH

ON THE LEADER.

shots are those made into little smooth backwaters, or eddies between two rushes of water. I rarely see fish rising to the natural fly in these eddies, because, I suppose, only a very occasional Spinner ever gets there. In a deep short pool there is often fairly deep slack water at the sides of the main stream, where a fish may frequently be "risen."

Suppose now it is a July day and the scene the Leader. One's cottage is on the right bank, and just above is a broken-down mill dam. The old mill pool, now only some three or four feet deep, is bordered by willows on our bank, and should really be fished from the other side. From the little overgrown path above the trees it is possible to drop a fly in the water here and there. At the second opening a trout comes into view below the fly, but at the end of its four-foot-long course it begins to drag and the fish vanishes; nor can he be persuaded to look at it again. At the top of the pool it is possible to get down the bank to the water level, and from here it is an easy shot into the slightly broken water at the foot of the miniature fall. I had taken a trout from here every morning for the last week, and to-day proves no exception, for hardly had the fly alighted when a half-pound fish came for it with a rush, as though to

be ahead of a possible competitor. I hit him hard with the hook, and he is soon in the net.

To-day I go down stream and the next essay is in a deep eddying pool. I rise a fish in the shallows at the tail, but the deep part proves to be unproductive. The next pool is a long and narrow one, and very easy to fish. On the opposite bank is a partly sunk tree, and my fly floating down close to the trunk is sucked quietly in. I hook him all right, and immediately haul him down stream, clear of the tree's branches. Below is a pool almost round, the lower part covered by a big beech tree. There are always a few fish on the move beneath the tree, but it is only a fluke if one gets a fly under the boughs. Below this is some hundred yards or so of streamy broken water, between high banks, difficult to fish and not very fruitful. Next is a beautiful pool, at the head of which a burn runs in. Making a *détour* to get to the foot of it, I fish all the pool carefully up, paying particular attention to the water close under the opposite bank. I rise two fish and am too late for both. At the head of the pool, between the main stream and the burn, is a triangular patch of foam-flecked, gently rocking water. I make two or three shots into this from below, but each time the fly is immediately dragged out by the

belly of the line in the main stream. Getting a little higher up, I make another attempt with plenty of slack line. This time the fly (a Blue Quill) remains a few seconds cocked up on the surface, and a good fish jumps at it clear of the water. I think he missed it, for I did not feel him.

A little way below this pool, the stream flows out of a kind of "half" pool in a "glide"—a stretch of very swiftly flowing water with a smooth glassy surface and clear as crystal. Such a place often holds trout, but is very difficult to fish. Any attempt to cast across it results in immediate "drag." To-day I get well below, and kneeling down on the stones try to cast straight up. The fly comes down at a great pace, and the third or fourth shot brings a fish up with a kind of spiral wriggle, but I have too much slack line and miss him. Glides like this may be seen on Tweed and Clyde, and although you may see fish in them that look as though they are feeding, I have very rarely "risen" one. Below here again is a "stickle"—broken shallow water. In order to approach this unseen, one must go some way down stream and, wedging oneself as close as possible into the bank, creep along what is little wider than a rat-track, just above the water level.

Such water appears unlikely to hold anything but small fish, but if it is connected with a pool, there are sometimes very good fish lying in it. A little drag is of no great moment, the main difficulties being to keep out of sight and to strike quickly enough. As I have suggested elsewhere, trout seem to reject almost instantaneously anything not to their taste, when feeding in fast broken water. To-day I see the tail-end of a "rise," realise too tardily that it was to my own fly, which I had momentarily lost sight of, and of course am much too late to hit the fish. And so on for another half mile, until I come to a weedy stretch, with channels between the weed beds. I got three fish out of this length, all of which were rising at the natural fly. Below this again is a long thin stretch of smooth water, once dammed up for a mill lade. Several fish are rising here. One has to crawl through the grass and, keeping well back from the edge, cast from a prostrate position. An occasional fish comes and circles round below the fly, and at last one collects his courage and takes it. A rather over-vigorous strike pulls him partly out of the water, and he is soon netted—a short plump little trout. I believe it pays to hit your fish definitely as hard as you dare. I very rarely lose a fish that I am con-

scious of having hit. The fish that wriggle off at the last moment are the flukes—the fish that have hooked themselves.

At lunch time I have eight trout that would weigh a little under four pounds.

In the afternoon I go up to a pool a little above the point from which I started in the morning. This is a deep pool overhung by trees. The sunlight playing through the leaves makes a delicate lace pattern on the water, and hovering above it are swarms of flies, rising and falling in the air. Just where the deep merges into the shallow are some half dozen fish, slowly cruising about, and picking up any flies that fall on the water. Here a very lazy afternoon can be spent amongst the uncut hay. A very small fly—of any kind, so long as it is small—must be used, and after hooking or missing a fish, it is necessary to wait twenty minutes or half an hour for the trout to regain confidence. Tea occupies a little time about four o'clock, and then there is nothing much to be done until between six and seven, when the evening rise begins. Now there will be fish rising in most of the pools, and a Red or Blue Quill will generally bring them up. Towards dusk, in one pool in particular, the fish collect in the strong streamy water at the pool head, and a floating Mayfly is then very good,

and will rise plenty of fish, but they are difficult to hit in the very rapid water. On the day I have in mind I had six fish in the evening, making a total of eighteen for the day.

Now suppose, on a fine June morning, you are seated on the top of a pile of parcels in H.M. mail cart, driving the eighteen or twenty miles from Selkirk up to "the lochs," with the prospect before you of a week or a month, with nothing else to do but to catch trout.

A very pleasant drive it is in the summer, but in a hard winter the mails are sometimes unable to get through, and some of the hill farms are quite cut off from the rest of the world. The journey takes under three hours, which, considering the many stops to deliver letters, and the one to change horses, means fairly good going. About half way you begin to get glimpses of that great cleft in the hills in which St. Mary's lies.

And how keen one is on the first morning! If you know the water, you may perhaps go first of all to the little stream joining St. Mary's to the Lowes. There is one deep hole in this stream, which in some years holds a number of trout, but in others appears to contain none.

On a bright morning there may be three or four fish rising near the pool head, and one or two smaller ones lower down. From the right

bank it is an easy shot to the head of the pool, the only difficulty being a fir-tree behind. A Black Gnat or an Olive will almost certainly bring a fish up. Now if you have a boat, row across to the promontory on the east shore where the fir spinny comes down to the water's edge. Opposite to this is a comparatively shallow patch, and here and there are little crops of weed. Close to one of these a tiny disturbance appears on the dead calm water, almost such as a fly might have made. Now paddle the boat very gently forward until nearly within casting distance. Then a half turn suffices to stop the way on the boat, and to bring her broadside on to the fish. One or two trial shots, taking care not to rock the boat, and a long cast puts the Black Gnat close up to the weed. Then a wait for five—ten—perhaps fifteen seconds, and a black nose is poked up at the fly. A distinct pause, and he is hit with the hook. At first he bores down at the bottom, then takes a number of short runs, the last two ending in a jump out of the water, each of which moves is responded to by a lowering of the rod point. After a little sulking at the bottom, he makes a final rush and jump and comes peaceably to the net. A rather lanky fish of $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. he proves to be. At this place there is frequently a

general rise, but nothing further seems to be doing to-day. After getting beyond the promontory the boat is rowed much closer in shore, as the water is deeper. Sometimes little local rises will be met with in tiny bays. I have seen these begin suddenly, last violently for ten minutes, and then end abruptly.

Further down this side of the loch is a corner shaded by some trees, and here fish are often rising casually all day. On the opposite side of the loch is a bay, famous for wet fly when there is a wind blowing. Proceeding leisurely down the right bank, always watching for a moving fish, one comes with perhaps eight or ten fish to the end, where the Yarrow flows out of the loch. At this corner there is good fishing and always the possibility of a big fish. I once saw three anglers who were wading (two of them being ladies) catch about forty trout in an hour in this place.

After two o'clock the Yarrow is not likely to be much good until evening, so that one can stay on the loch (where, if it is calm, there may be stray fish rising all the afternoon), or make an expedition up one of the burns. In the evenings there may be quite a good rise here and there, and some of the best fish are often moving then. Later on still they roam about in the shallows

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near shore, and good baskets are got by night fishers.

In this chapter I have tried to indicate the kind of sport to be got with a dry fly on the Border streams. No fly fisherman will need to be reminded that there are plenty of blank days as well. No doubt the angler who "fishes the stream" systematically will catch more trout than one who tries only for rising fish, yet the latter probably gets more fun from his day.

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