
FISH-TAILS
and
some true ones

Henry A. Sherwin.


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FISH-TAILS

AND SOME TRUE ONES

HOMEWARDS

Bradwock Hall

FISH-TAILS

AND SOME TRUE ONES

By BRADNOCK HALL
AUTHOR OF "ROUGH MISCHANCE"

With an Original Etching by the Author
And Twelve Illustrations by
T. HOPE M'LACHLAN

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TO

J. F. B.

FRIEND AND FISHERMAN

THIS BOOK IS

(WITHOUT PERMISSION)

RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

The blessing of ST. PETER'S Master be with mine, and on all who love Vertue and Quietness and Angling.

" The dearest friend to me, the kindest man,
The best condition'd and unwearied spirit
In doing courtesies."

Merchant of Venice.

True happiness is of a retired nature, and an enemy to pomp and noise: it arises, in the first place, from the enjoyment of one's self, and, in the next, from the friendship and conversation of a few select companions. . . .

ADDISON.

But, O, how bitter a thing it is to look into happiness through another man's eyes!

SHAKESPEARE.

CONTENTS.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

FISH-TAILS, AND SOME TRUE ONES.

I.

Why.

"I live in the world rather as a Spectator of Mankind than as one of the species. . . ."—ADDISON.

"The gravity and stillness of your youth
The world hath noted."—Othello.

THE object of the makers of books is generally twofold, for they desire the fruits of their genius and their labours in non-material as well as material form: fame and fortune (money and notoriety), pelf and a peerage, pennies and *popularis aura*—what else do romancists desire? Anonymous newspapermen have to be satisfied with less; but who can appraise their consciousness of power?

It is not, however, with the hope of gain, still less in the expectation of waking Byronically, that the fabricator of these trifles asks you for the patronage which leaves you debtor; it is with a more secret motive that the little vessel trims its sails to the wind of readers' favour. I am the victim of success, as the world counts it, and am condemned to perennial gloom by an undeserved reputation for an almost puritanical sobriety. In my constituency, and round the modest mansion with which my grandfather's assiduous habits and commercial probity have provided me, I am pointed at by prudent parents as a paragon, and hated by boys, I have little doubt, as a hypocrite. They alone know me, for they judge me by themselves.

My uncle always intended that I should occupy his seat in the House, regardless of my private opinions, when the incursion of Labour Members in flannel shirts had in process of time rendered St. Stephen's unbearable to his old-fashioned prejudices; and with this future before me I early felt that gaiety would be unbecoming, and wine,

laughter, and song as dangerous as they were delightful.

I became a slave: I am still in bondage, and every year adds a new rivet to my fetters; so this book is the safety-valve of an overcharged existence.

Even at school people took me for serious; and when, a couple of years ago, I put forth that little volume on *Bimetallism as a Panacea for Pauperism* (which nobody has ever read), I was sadly convinced that all my friends would say how well I had fulfilled my destiny. I have, in fact, succeeded where to fail is happiness, and am now chained for life to a reputation which I have not hitherto had the moral courage to injure, and can never hope to shake off. When I last saw my large and expressionless features in the illustrated papers, I writhed beneath my mask in powerless fury, smiling sardonically to think that with my handsome majority, no profession, and what rich men call a competence, I am for life a public man. For the next half-century, it may be, my chief duty will be to march and countermarch to the crack of the Whip, to

gravely discuss the details of party measures I may not desire, and to vote against reforms I am convinced would be beneficial to the community. In the execution of this blameless programme my simplest actions are spied upon and praised by my unwelcome admirers, and I have to consult their tastes and prejudices before my own. I must not be absent from my place in church, I must not play golf on Sunday, I must eschew clay pipes and beer, and books which others read with interest and enjoyment must not lie upon my table: in fact, I have to eat, drink, smoke, and read to order, and to travel three hundred miles to find a desert place to laugh in.

To be the thrall of petty principles, shackled by the restrictions of a narrow morality; to have no more individual existence than an oyster or a cabbage; to desire the unconventional merely because it is free; and to despise the voice of praise: if this be success, I certainly have not failed. But human nature has its limitations even in public men, and I have been compelled to indulge privately in a pleasure which is both risky and enchanting.

I write. "I was not born under a rhyming planet," but when my friends, acquaintances, or political allies are characteristically offensive, when the ladies I have the honour to be associated with besmear me with confident adulation, I relieve the tension of my mind by caricaturing them in pen and ink, and writing personal sketches which would be easily recognised by their fidelity, if published, and would be ruinous from their red-hot rancour. I have scores of them by me which might make the fortune of a literary aspirant, but they are perfectly useless to a Conservative and Unionist M.P.; dozens more of my harmless fireworks have been converted, without editorial intervention, into that constituent of our atmosphere that gives us trees. Oh that you could have seen my *Post-obita Dicta*, or my *Laughable Lyrics, by a Liliputian Laureate*!

But the taste for ink grows into a passion, and having wasted hours on the enjoyment of composing what must be safely hidden or instantly destroyed, I drifted insensibly to articles and sketches which do not betray their authorship, though they would be severely damaging,

if detected, to a name like mine. Here are some of the least trivial and the least slangy of them, all connected, as it happens, with one subject; and I hope it will not be long before I have the opportunity of openly disparaging my own secret creations to those who honestly think me incapable of anything less serious or less "important" than an Essay on Man, or an article in the *Quarterly*. This is the object of publication. It has long been the desire of my life to find upon the drawing-room tables of my lady-canvassers, and my more rigid neighbours, a frivolous, shallow, useless book (as they will successfully invite me to call it), which they may possibly hear well spoken of by detrimentals, and called "gossipy" by indolent reviewers. After all, fishing itself is eminently respectable as well as fascinating, and if some untoward accident should reveal the authorship of what was originally composed as the indulgence of a passion, it is no hanging matter, and by some, by most, I shall be forgiven—for all except the preface. I need hardly say that I shall deny everything.

II.

The Bent Pin.

". . . *As unto the weaker vessel.* . . ."—1 PET. iii. 7.

"IT'S ill feeshin' wi' bent pins," old Sandy once said to me when I was a boy, and had broken the barb of my hook against a stone: at which sarcasm I could not repress an angry flush as I tried a shorter cast with a new fly. In earlier years I did not despise the bent pin when I used to go out with my nurse, or my brother, and fish for sticklebacks in the brook, with a string. But somehow one gets out of the way of practising that branch of angling, and when I started on my honeymoon I certainly did not think that I should ever be tempted to take to it again. However, early married life is full of surprises, and one of my first was a fishing adventure with a bent pin.

In sporting phraseology, I had landed my matrimonial fish in August,—to carry out the simile I suppose I ought to represent Hymen standing by with a gaff instead of a torch,—and we had chosen the Lakes for our honeymoon. I like being near water; and as my wife was anxious to visit the land of Wordsworth, we gave ourselves up to touring about from lake to lake, unfettered by rigid plans, basking in the sunshine, and making each other's acquaintance.

One day we were strolling along, arm in arm, within sight of the placid mirror of Ulleswater, when we came upon a grove of cherry trees loaded with a plentiful crop of the small black and juicy fruit which is so common in that part of the country. Two boys were lodged in the branches of two neighbouring trees, busily engaged in eating cherries, and occasionally throwing down a few to a bright-eyed little girl who stood below. She was bareheaded, her hat dangling by a piece of elastic from one podgy little fist, and she kept begging her brothers to give her a share of their spoil, and also to come down for a game in which she

could take a more interesting part. They replied with the superiority of possession, and sarcastically alluded to her sex in the pleasant way boys have when conversing with a younger sister from whom there is nothing to be gained at the moment.

"Girls can't play games," said the elder.

"Go and learn to bowl at the chair in the garden," chimed in the other.

When this kind of thing had been going on for some minutes, and the girl was becoming obviously piteous and unhappy, the young lords of creation perceived the presence of strangers, and slowly descended, looking self-conscious under their smears of juice. My wife's eyes are calculated to make unkind boys feel a bit ashamed of themselves even at a little distance: so the trio went off together, and we saw them no more that day.

On the next, however, they gave evidence of their continued existence by fishing in the lake within sight of our window. Each boy had a nice little rod, and the girl was courageously trying to scull them about in one of the dingheys belonging to the inn. Their voices

travelled to us over the water, and we concluded that there was a wrangle going on about the management of the boat. I made a mental resolve to take the downtrodden sister to fish by herself, if opportunity offered, and we strolled out, discussing the ways of brothers, female suffrage, and the equality of the sexes; but before our well-meant interference was possible affairs took on a different complexion.

A day or two afterwards we were taking a lovers' walk beside the burn which tumbles down the hill behind the inn, when we again came upon our young friends. The girl was evidently making a strong appeal to her brothers to be allowed to fish for trout with them, but they were obdurate.

"Girls can't fish," said the elder.

"You've got no rod," added the other. "And who's going to put on your worms? You can't do it yourself."

Upon this the poor child sat down on the bank and began to cry, while the boys moved off down stream, and disappeared. So ended Act II. Now comes the point of my story. It is a small one—not much larger, in fact,

than a needle's end, but, in its way, worth noting.

As soon as the boys were out of sight, our first idea was to take the weeping Ariadne for a row; but before we had time to show ourselves, or call to her, she stopped crying, and looked up with such an appearance of determination that we paused to see what it would lead to, and sat down behind a convenient tree to watch her.

She first drew herself up, and casting upon the ground an old sunshade that she had been carrying, took out of her pocket a piece of thin string about five feet long; then abstracting a pin from some place in her frock where it could best be spared, she slowly bent it into a V shape, and tied the string to it. The other end was quickly fastened to the ferule of the parasol, and the child stood equipped with a rod, line, and hook. Her tear-stained face was bright with the instinct of sport, and the concentrated desire to show that inferiority of sex need be no bar to skill in angling. I could not make up my mind to interfere at present, so we remained hidden, lazily watching the

progress of events, and wondering when the difficulty of bait would put a stop to the preparations. A moment later the infant Ariadne laid down her tackle and sped like a wood nymph towards the house which was near the cherry trees where we had first seen her. The voices of her brothers, who must have been talking Committee Room No. 15 politics, came to us on the breeze. It was a beautiful afternoon, and with my wife's permission I leisurely lighted a pipe.

Ariadne soon returned, carrying a piece of bread in one hand and a loose newspaper parcel in the other, and, seating herself by the parasol, carefully fixed a cubic inch of bread upon the bent pin. I felt a great desire to come forward now and offer my advice and assistance, but the lady at my side was too anxious for the honour of her sex to allow it, so we two lay low while the girl cautiously began to fish.

I presume that the bread was soon washed off, for after a short interval the young fisher evidently made up her mind to the final struggle, drew out the line, and taking a small worm from the paper parcel, set her teeth, and impaled

it on the pin. She looked like Cornelia devoting the last of the Gracchi to his country's service.

Between her and the pool she was fishing was a rock, beneath which the brook ran deep and brown, hiding indefinite possibilities of little fish, so round this cover she stealthily crawled, and dropped the worm softly into the water. It was a moment of supreme excitement, then—splash—she whisked out a small trout, high and dry. Like the ranks of Tuscany in the ballad, I could scarce forbear to cheer. She had actually caught a fish, and was softly contemplating it with radiant rapture, and indeed it was a remarkable feat.

At this point the boys reappeared upon the stage. Their patent tackle, town-made rods, and gut lines had caught nothing. One had broken the top of his rod, and the other his line; but as they could not agree to join their scattered forces for a combined attack, they had decided to "chuck it" and play cricket, so they came for their sister to field *and* longstop. Their faces were a study when they saw the trout. They hurried up, asked a hundred

eager questions, examined the worms and bread, and finally "forgave" their sister, and bore her off to play cricket on equal terms, and "have her innings like a man." Noble fellows! they little knew how my right foot was tingling.

And now, when I cannot get a rise with my best *March Brown* or *Olive Dun*, fishing "fine and far off," when difficulties seem insuperable, or when I hear some glib young man talking about the natural inferiority of woman, my mind goes back to that dingy old parasol, the string, and the bent pin.

III.

How to catch Pike in the Thames.

"We'll try a better one by and by."
Sam Weller.

"Sweet Themmes, run softly till I end my song."
SPENSER.

IN the pursuit of my favourite pastime I had had a day's fishing on Virginia Water, and had found out what other brethren of the craft have discovered before, that ordinary mortals do not take very large fish there, except in story. I thought, however, that the Thames might afford me more sport, and decided to consult Anderson, who lives near us, and has the reputation of being a nineteenth-century Izaak Walton; so I called upon him one evening, and found him dozing over the *Field* in the little den in which tobacco is allowed at "The Pines." Anderson

is one of those mysterious people who live, it is supposed, by journalism; but as he has never written anything over his own name, we do not know whether he forms our political opinions, or does the acrostics for *Johnson's Weakly*. In consequence of this mystery, we regard his life as being something apart and esoteric, and make no further inquiry, any more than we do when a new resident's wife says her husband is "in the City." He may belong to the profession of *Miss Shum's Husband*, for all we care in Dipton.

"Good-evening," I said politely, when my entry brought him broad awake. "I have called to ask you a few questions about Thames fishing. I have a mind to catch a pike somewhere on Saturday."

We shook hands. Anderson motioned me to a chair, pushed a jar of tobacco across the brass-topped Moorish table, and said—

"It is very good of you to come round and spare me half an hour from your Blue-books and Private Bills. My wife's aunt is here, so I have a headache: she is a most

estimable woman. And what can I tell you about the river? You live half a mile nearer to it than I do, and ought to be better up in it."

"I am better up in the mists than you are," I smartly returned. "I was up to my neck in them last night, but I have never tried the fishing. I see people in punts and boats, and on the banks sometimes, but they are mostly sad and silent, and catch no more than the man in *Happy Thoughts*. But the people I do not see write to the papers with accounts of famous bags: I want to go where they go."

"Oh, you want to try the stone jar and cigar-box business in a punt, do you?" said my host. "Poor young man! Angling is an art, and there is no doubt a certain amount of skill necessary, but what you chiefly need is imagination. Look at that Turner engraving: it is the small 'Lucerne.' Do you suppose you would have seen it like that?"

He waved his pipe towards a picture on the wall, and I examined the beautiful print with admiration, but confessed that in my recollec-

tion the place looked flatter. "Just so," said my friend: "that is Art."

"But you are a fisherman, are you not?" I said, "so you ought not to be sceptical. People exaggerate, of course, and the biggest fish are always the ones that get off; but still some good ones are landed, and I will be satisfied with others like them. I suppose you fish in the Thames sometimes? Tell me where to go to."

Anderson was looking dreamily into the fire.

"Yes," he said, "I have fished in the Thames—once. It was with old Stephen Farebrother, one of the best-known river anglers."

"I know his name," I remarked encouragingly. "Tell me about it."

Instead of replying directly, Anderson rose, and after a moment's hesitation, took from a shelf a bound volume of the *Field*, which he opened, and running his finger along a few paragraphs, directed my attention to one near the bottom of a page. It ran thus:—

"On Saturday, Mr. Anderson of Dipton was out with Stephen Farebrother, the well-known Thames fisherman, and had fair sport: the best fish were jack, 10 lb., 7 lb., and 5 lb."

"Capital!" I cried with enthusiasm. "That's just what I wanted to see. What's Farebrother's address? I'll engage him for Saturday."

"I am afraid you cannot do that, because he has taken a permanent appointment at the Angler's Rest on the Styx," said the subject of the stirring paragraph (who is of a slightly irreverent turn of mind); "but you can get somebody equally good, I have no doubt."

He smiled thoughtfully as we settled ourselves back into our chairs, and the twinkle of the successful sportsman glittered in his blue eyes.

"I will tell you about it," he went on: "fill your pipe. I was once staying with my brother-in-law, who has a rectory at Thornton; his garden adjoins the squire's park in the usual way, and a good-sized lake is visible from the dining-room window."

I should never think of interrupting anyone telling a story, much less a man like the humorous Anderson, but I spasmodically clutched my latchkey as I observed a Thames fish-tale beginning fifty miles off in a pond.

"I was working one morning," he went on, with great deliberation, "in this dining-room, and was rather pressed for time, when I was interrupted by a small boy in a knickerbocker suit, who was looking at me inquiringly through the window. He asked where the rector was. I said shortly that I did not know; but he would not go away, and stood shifting from one leg to the other, and feeling something in his jacket pocket."

(We now seemed farther from the subject than ever; but my chair was comfortable, anglers should be patient, and so I waited.)

"At last I got from him that the rector had promised to show him how to fish in the lake,—our lake, he said,—and he was not going away without instruction, so to get rid of him I stepped out on to the lawn and asked him what tackle he had got. The squire was evidently not over-generous to his offspring in the matter of gear: there was no rod, and for a line a strong cord was to do duty, attached to an enormous hook, made for conger eels, I should suppose; there were a dozen wine-bottle corks, a dead sparrow,

and a moist, flaccid little frog, which the lad had been caressing in his pocket. I walked the young gentleman off to the lake, put the frog on the hook, tied a bundle of corks to the line, fastening the shore end to a tree, and told Master Hopeful to sit on the bank, and tell me when the corks had been submerged for five minutes, and not before. I never saw a boy so good: he sat down without a word, and devoured the corks with his eyes. I went back to my work, secure for the day."

"So that put you in mind of more serious fishing in the Thames?" I ventured to suggest during a pause.

"Not at all. I settled down to my writing again as quickly as possible, but in half an hour the boy appeared again. 'Hi!' he yelled. 'Come, come along, we've got him on!' It was no use objecting; I had to go back to the lake, and there, sure enough, I found a pike securely hooked. He scaled seven pounds."

"How extraordinary!" I said, admiring my friend's unobtrusive good-nature.

"Yes, the boy was pleased, I recollect. Indeed, with one exception, I think it was the

largest fish I ever came across, personally, that was killed on such a rag-bag assortment of tackle."

"With one exception?" I repeated mechanically, feeling that we were sliding off into the deep waters of anecdote.

"Yes," said Anderson; "for the next one, which was hooked an hour later, weighed just ten pounds. I felt like a doctor in large practice, or Sawyer late Nockemorf, I assure you. That morning was a succession of calls from the imp of a boy, for by lunch-time we had added a third to our bag—a five-pounder. Then we drew stumps for the day, or we might have glutted the market. So, you see, fish are sometimes caught."

"Yes, but," I said, rising to go, and wondering if Anderson's headaches made him confuse ideas as well as metaphors,—"but it was *the Thames* we were speaking of."

"Just so," he replied, as we moved through the darkened hall to the front door; "we were speaking of my day with Stephen. It so happens that I told the old chap that story. There is time, you will find, for a good many

stories in a Thames fishing-punt—that day especially, for we did not catch so much as a gudgeon. It was not till I saw it in the *Field* that I knew we had killed three jack of seven pounds, ten pounds, and five pounds."

"Good heavens!" I ejaculated, "you don't mean to say that Stephen Farebrother sent up that fictitious "—

"Hush!" he said,—"*de mortuis*, you know. Mind the step. Good-night."

IV.

His First Salmon.

"Old men forget: yet all shall be forgot,
But he'll remember with advantages
What feats he did that day."

King Henry V.

WHEN I heard the ting-ting of the electric bell sounding in the kitchen one evening not long after the bootless visit to "The Pines" I have described, I concluded with a tremor that some lonely and sociable neighbour had decided to pay me a late call, unless, of course, it was one of the rival cricket clubs touting for subscriptions. I was trying to recollect which was the one I generally patronise, when the neat-handed Phyllis who "answers" our front door ushered in the familiar form of my fishing friend. Married men call on each other very seldom in this suburban village, preferring after

THE GREAT TEMPTATION.

a *tête-à-tête* dinner to put up their feet like the countryman in church, and think of nothing, so that I was considerably surprised and equally delighted at the prospect of some rational, non-political conversation with a well-read sportsman who always has something amusing to relate, and never collects subscriptions.

We made our guest as welcome as possible, and installed him in a comfortable chair near the tea-table, at which my wife was brewing an infusion as noxious as it is refreshing. He explained that his lady was away, and as he wanted to borrow a book I had offered to lend, he ventured to disturb us. We upbraided him for not letting us know he was a grass-widower, and then abandoned commonplaces for conversation.

Anderson was not, I believe, at Eton, but he possesses the Etonian gift of being able and willing to talk about what other people want to discuss, and when he is with me the subject is often fishing (though I detest hearing it called my "hobby"). On this particular evening my wife induced him to recount some personal adventures in search of sport, which

were entertaining as well as instructive, and, in the genteel language of Miss Ferrier, "time flew for a while on downy pinions."

I suggested tentatively that angling, like shooting, is a pastime to which men become attached by the force of circumstances: if a boy lives near a trout stream, and is early initiated into the hidden mysteries of the craft, he acquires a love for it to which dwellers in cities are necessarily strangers, just as they love riding who ride best, namely, those who, somehow, have always had a mount at command.

Anderson demurred to this, and stated his belief that your true fisherman is born to it, though he may never have a rod of his own till he has earned it, reminding me of William Ravenshoe, who, according to his creator, Henry Kingsley, was a poet although he had never written any poetry, and probably never would write any. This led us to talk of the trout scene in that immortal book, and of our own earliest experiences, my friend saying that nothing had ever moved him in shop-windows like the first artificial minnow he had seen in a Black Country town what time he used to catch

three-ounce perch in his uncle's pond. "They do say," he went on, "that your first salmon marks the brightest hour of life, but nothing in that way has ever made my pulse beat so fast as a jack I once saw in Sutton Park. I lived at that time in a manufacturing town in Staffordshire, and at the impressionable age of ten or so was taken to Sutton as assistant private secretary (unpaid) to a Mothers' Meeting annual picnic. My duties consisted in helping to row a barge full of Gamps up and down the lake, and distributing tea out of an enormous tin pot I could hardly lift. I was giving one old woman her third half-pint, and absently thinking that the perch must be larger in this big pond than in the little one at my uncle's, when a man who had been fishing from a boat came to shore, and the mothers began to remark that he had 'cot summat.' I abandoned the teapot and sidled as near to the boat as I dared, and there, lying on the seat, I saw IT, the fish of my dreams. It is a long time ago, but the joy of that moment was ecstatic, and remains as fresh as ever in my mind. It was only a jack of about two or

three pounds, but its shape and size (compared with the three-ounce perch), and the colour of its fins, raised my temperature to a height not to be registered by clinical thermometry. I could scarcely breathe. I supposed that such a splendid capture could only be vouchsafed to an elderly gentleman of forty or thereabouts, such as this angler seemed to be, and I wondered what sort of an apprenticeship he had served to be so rewarded. As we drove home in the gathering twilight, and the two large brakes full of British females broke into song and shrieked the chorus of a hymn, I felt that it would indeed be a sacrifice to leave angling (even with nets) to become a fisher of men."

At the conclusion of this reminiscence, which almost persuaded me that I was wrong and he was right about the innate character of the fishing instinct, Anderson said he really could not do all the talking, and called upon us to bear our share; but my wife said she must say good-night to baby, and left us to our pipes. I filled, and said—

"You imply that your first salmon did not leave so vivid an impression on you as this,

which surprises me. Was it a tame affair, then?"

"The fact is," he replied, "I am a little ashamed when I recollect that incident, and I do not think I have said anything about it for years. To speak plainly, only my extreme youth, and the suddenness of the trial, could excuse such a disgraceful business. When you say 'boys will be boys,' you generally mean something particularly hideous."

"I am listening," I said, leaning back in my chair.

"Well, if you want to hear about it, prepare to regard me with the contempt I merit," he replied. "You must know that I had an uncle once—not the owner of the perch pond, but another—who rented a house in the North country, to which he used to invite me. Not far off was a small trout stream, one of the many tributaries of a ducal salmon river. My young cousins, Rob and Willie, who were about my age,—somewhere near fifteen at the time I speak of,—occasionally had leave to fish for trout, and in their company I learnt how to throw a fly, and, like them, became animated

by a blind hope that I might some day hook an unwary grilse; but one of his Grace's watchers used to keep an eye on us and our tackle, which kept down the size of our flies, and we never caught very much. One Sunday afternoon we three went for a walk, and drifted naturally towards the stream, which was shining like gold in the brilliant sunshine. It was a sultry day in June, and we lay down in the shade of some large trees which formed a little wood near the water, and felt very happy. We were idle, and Satan was not far off. Sunday afternoon is his chief opportunity with boys."

Anderson sententiously tapped his pipe on the bar of the grate, and then continued—

"Not far from where we lay was the single arch of a stone bridge, rather in want of repair, and perfectly mirrored in the water; over-arching trees embowered it, and made a pretty picture, but I am not aware that we observed it. Willie said it was a nuisance that we could not fish on Sundays, and Rob grumbled that all the best trout lay by the bushes where no one could cast a fly. Then we clambered up on to the bridge and gazed down into the water:

what we saw was the Great Temptation. Not far below the surface of the stream there lay the motionless form of a lordly salmon serenely basking, unweeting of the Fates.

You may guess what our feelings were: our eyes jutted out of our heads, we clutched the stonework with clammy hands, and blushed a guilty pink. It was a sudden trial, as I pleaded just now, and we fell. We did not stop to speculate on what happy accident had brought the king so far from his proper haunt; it became at once a question of means and nothing more. These were limited, and the choice was soon made. After a whispered consultation, we raised on to the parapet an enormous stone,—you shudder, quite naturally, —and then I, being the strongest, by a stout effort directed the wicked engine of destruction towards the fish dozing so unsuspectingly below. There was a most prodigious splash, a terrible commotion in the tiny pool, and—a dead salmon. How? Oh, I don't know how, but there it was. We enticed the murdered corpse ashore, and guiltily hid it in the reeds till we could convey it in a sack under cover of

the darkness to a place of safety. We eventually managed this without any mishap, but found to our disgust that some jackal-like animal, rat or otter, had begun to feed in our larder among the reeds, and had bitten a piece out of the salmon's shoulder. That was my first salmon. I am afraid I must be going now, if you are still willing to shake hands with me. What became of it? Oh, the cook told us a gentleman was coming to lunch next day, and Rob ordered the middle of the fish to be served at that meal, knowing that my uncle would make no inquiries about the food. For my part, I had vague fears of a prosecution, and did not enjoy my help from the handsome piece placed on the table,—the fish weighed fifteen pounds after the animal's bite,—but my cousins ate heartily, and pressed the visitor to try it: in spite of their suggestions, however, he stuck to cold beef, I remember. I asked them why they had been so rash, as soon as the meal was over and we were out of danger, and who the guest was. 'Why, didn't you know?' said Willie. 'That was just the best of it. It was the Duke's agent.'"

Damming and Ladling.

V.

A New Way to catch Old Trout.

"We will not stand to prate;
Talkers are no good doers; be assured
We come to use our hands, and not our tongues."
Richard III.

I TOLD Anderson that after a recital of such a disgraceful kind I really could not shake hands with him for some hours, and as he was far too polite to leave until I did so, he felt compelled, of course, to stay on: so, having broken the ice of confidences, he plunged into the well of confession.

"There is a lot of affectation in these things," he said, "and if the adventures of a literary poacher are ever put upon the market, there will be a considerable extension of nefarious practices. I could tell you a story of depravity beside which that of my first

salmon pales its ineffectual vice, and becomes an episode of the saints."

"Sail in," I said encouragingly; "dip your pencil in eclipse. Human nature revolts from crime, and revels in the police news. 'Not enjoyment, and not sorrow, is our destined end or way, but to act that each to-morrow may' have something interesting to yarn about."

"Shakespeare and the Music Hall glasses!" said my friend, with a laugh. "What you mean, I suppose, is that distance lends enchantment to the view. At our age we use every endeavour to prevent boys from doing what we ourselves once loved to do and now laugh over. We even go so far as to say that all things lawful are not expedient."

"Yes," I said, "and to enforce the morals of St. Paul we examine our young men in the geography of his journeys."

"A good obsairve," said Anderson. "Philosophers of all nations have noted the pleasures of *mala prohibita*, and the sinister attractiveness of *mala in se*. But to my tale."

"It is an odd thing," I said parenthetically, "that morality should be so dependent on per-

spective. So long as you don't actually break the law in an obvious manner, you can do any mortal thing you like—only take care that you are not found out before you can call your peccadillo 'ancient history.' 'It's some years ago now' is the preface to many a narrative of escapades which though in themselves disgraceful are mellowed, like wine, by age."

"You are letting me down easy, I see," said my friend. "What I am about to tell you took place *very* long ago—long before the salmon incident—and was not much worse than Cholmondeley Pennell's trying to gaff that pike he writes about, *contra bonos mores*, as he says. It was a throw back to barbarism, that's all."

"Let's hear about your peccadillo," I said.

"'How sad and bad and mad it was,'

and likewise 'how it was sweet.'"

"Here goes, then. One morning in the dateless and unblamable long ago, I received the rare excitement of a letter, and the still more infrequent pleasure of an invitation to spend a few days at that same uncle's. This was whole æons before the salmon episode,

and the easiness of my fall under that trial may no doubt be traced to this amongst other early backslidings. *Nemo repente fuit turpissimus*, you know. 'No one very base was ever sorry,' as I once heard a boy translate it.

"The letter in question was from Rob, and merely directed me to come on at once, and *bring my fives-shoes*. Lawn tennis had not then been invented, and I could only conclude that some difficult tree-climbing was in prospect, or that fives was permitted, or at any-rate practised, in the attics. My cousins were fertile in fancy, and the mysterious message was redolent of a new, and probably unlawful game.

"When I arrived at the house, my uncle gave me, I remember, a hearty greeting, and said he hoped I had brought my fishing-rod, as there were plenty of trout that wanted catching, and there were also perch in the pond. But when I was alone with my cousins they explained that as soon as their father had departed next day to perform the duties of a county magistrate they intended to adopt a more fruitful

method of bagging trout than that he had suggested.

"Tickling? No, they scorned the idea of tickling as old-fashioned, difficult, and doubtful, and unfolded a plan which for sheer poaching villainy stood well ahead of anything in my experience. The trout stream, you must know, —this line on the table,—was small, and ran at no great distance from the bottom of the garden where the perch pond was which I mentioned just now—this ash-tray. A small offshoot of the main stream fed this pond, and rejoined the bigger one below—about here. Lower down (off the edge of the table) came the bridge from which I afterwards dropped the stone.

"So much for the geography. Well, the executive power being out of the way, we sallied forth in our fives-shoes, armed with rods (as a blind to the governess, I suppose), a saloon pistol, an old wooden bucket, a spade, and a hatchet. We went silently down the garden,—does not what's-his-name say in the play that 'silence is the perfectest herald of joy'? Mischief and joy are convertible terms

with boys, and we did not wish to court publicity.

"For half an hour we stealthily fired the pistol at the perch basking in the pond without killing anything, and then set about carrying out the more daring project which had been fermenting in my cousins' inventive brains for weeks. To begin with, we dug up turf, cut down bushes, and collected some small pieces of timber, railings, and so on, I forget what. Out of these materials we constructed a most successful dam across the stream immediately below the streamlet which fed the pond (about here, you see). This dodge turned off nearly all the water, and in an hour or so what had been a trout stream was a chain of pools scarcely connected at all, and mostly quite shallow. The first part of the felonious operation known, I believe, as 'damming and ladling' was now completed, and we were ready for the second. So, taking off our stockings, and turning up our knicks as far as they would go, we waded in our shoes into the best pool, which was fortunately covered, on the side towards the garden, by a group of thick trees, and stirred up the mud

at the bottom as vigorously as we could with our feet. You see why the fives-shoes were wanted.

"I was extremely excited at the prospect of transgressing all laws, public and private, but did not believe that the result would realise the rose-coloured hopes of the inventive Rob, for no fish were visible when we took to the water, and we had no net ; but the effect of our movements was remarkable. There were lots of trout hiding under stones and in holes, and the poor things could not stand the muddy mixture at all, and speedily appeared in a half-suffocated condition at the top of the water. Then ensued a scene of animated confusion. We splashed about, shouting at the tops of our voices, drunk with glory, watching like demented pelicans for signs of the slippery little trout, which we clutched with screams of laughter and threw out on to the bank, tumbling over each other till we were wet to the skin.

Besides about five dozen trout there were eels galore, and we revelled in the massacre till we had filled the bucket and emptied the stream. Then we hastily pulled up the dam,

and allowed the water to return to its proper channel, and I tell you there were not three happier boys in England."

"'And now at last the sun is going down behind the wood,'" I murmured sympathetically. "'And I am very happy, for I know that I've been good.'"

"Yes," said Anderson, "the really happy boy is the despair of consistent moralists. The only way to understand him is to regard him as a survival of barbarism. Your true angler goes in for sport, and prefers his rod and line to a drag net. Not so your boy. Short of going to a fish-shop and hoicking the dead things off the slab into the creel, he regulates his happiness by the weight of the catch. 'Kill many,' he says to himself, 'honestly, if possible.'"

"I suppose," I said, "that you and your cousins would rather have taken those trout by a dynamite cartridge than not at all?"

"Yes," he answered. "Bees roam the country miles from the hive in search of honey, but did you ever see a swarm which had found a honey-pot? I have."

"Is there any more to that ladling episode?" I asked.

"No, no more. We found the pond had overflowed its banks, and the perch must have been considerably astonished. So was the cook when she saw the bucket, and heard our mendacious explanations; but nothing retributive occurred, and, so far as I remember, my uncle never heard of our exploit until it was buried in a safe past of uncertain date."

VI.

The Largest Fish.

" . . . No amount of moral tales will preach down the aleatory instinct of mankind."

The Law Journal.

My wife had made up our minds early one spring that we ought to secure a small house at the seaside in the best possible situation, not too bracing, but just bracing enough, where baby could get a good sniff at the ozone, or iodine, or whatever it is that brings the little creatures on so quickly and makes their dear little cheeks so brown. She said I could fish, of course, either off the pier, or in one of those tossing little boats, with a lobster pot and a string. As she seemed to be serious on the main point, I promised to call on my friend of the angling anecdotes to ask him whether he

A Strange Fish.

knew of a place which would suit baby, and at the same time provide me with rational amusement—not golf, of course. I had vague ideas of catching enormous bass on a fly like a Camberwell Beauty; and recollections of conger eels resembling boa-constrictors, vari-coloured mackerel, and whiting of sumptuous fatness, floated through my mind. So shortly after our decision to migrate shorewards, I called at "The Pines" again, and found our neighbour in his study busy with a quantity of figures neatly written out on half-sheets of notepaper. I said I feared I was disturbing him: was he, I wondered, writing the Money Article, that enthralling column? But no, he politely welcomed me, and said it was of no consequence; he was merely relaxing his mind by calculating the odds against his holding two trumps when each of his opponents held from one to five.

"There is something very fascinating to a vacant mind about the odds," he said. "I should probably waste my substance at Sandown if my wife had not such a horror of betting. Lyme Regis spoilt it all."

This thoughtful remark naturally surprised me not a little, and I was tempted to postpone the chief object of my visit in the hope of first drawing out my host a little. When you talk quietly to Anderson, *tête-à-tête*, he drifts off, as I have previously indicated, into delightful stories of fishing, which he invests with a peculiar charm I cannot reproduce on paper any more than I can draw his blue eyes and ruddy beard in pen-and-ink. Whether his yarns begin with a bishop or a cricket match, they always end up with a fish, and in general they bristle with sharp points like a Thames angler's tackle-box. Recollecting this, I thought his mention of Lyme Regis sufficiently promising, and threw my fly, in a manner of speaking, over the spot where he had risen.

"I came to ask you," I said suggestively, "about places like Lyme. I think of settling my little family down on the coast for a month or two as soon as the House rises, and when I go to them I should like some good scientific fishing. I want to catch something big, you know."

A peculiar expression, which I could not

analyse until afterwards, passed over Anderson's freckled face as he replied—

"You youngsters always want it big. You don't understand till you are forty that there is no pleasure in life like tickling a half-pound trout. But I sincerely trust that your experience in big bags may never be like mine."

"Why, you speak as if you were Jonah, or had wrestled with Leviathan in the deep," I retorted. "What terrible experience have you had? I should guess you were half drowned by some monster salmon, or scared by sharks. Was that it?"

"It was at Lyme," he gravely replied; "and though some men might have thought nothing of it, it made a difference to us, and prevents my going to Sandown or the seaside at present."

"This is myst'ry," I said tentatively. "If the details would not be painful to relate, pray give me your experiences."

I thought he was chaffing me. He rose silently from his arm-chair, and carefully detaching a large pipe with a meerschaum bowl of the darkest hue from a hook on the wall, filled and lighted it with great deliberation.

"I was attracted to Lyme," he began at length, after a few puffs, "by the fact that it has no railway station, and I rather fancy I had an ancestor who landed there with Monmouth: *he* was fishing for something big, if you like. Anyhow, we went, and so did the Vincents. While there, Vincent and I became very fond of games of chance, and decided our movements by the turn of a coin. So when my wife wanted a bonnet beyond her quarter's allowance, I tossed her for that or a box of cigars (which I cannot afford to smoke), and we loyally abided by the result. The bonnet mostly won, but it saved a lot of heart-burning."

"You fished, of course?" I put in, as he paused to stamp down the ashes in his pipe.

"Yes: it used to be heads for pollack in a rowing-boat, and tails for mackerel in Flint's *Dancing Polly*—the identical craft, I believe, that Besant writes about in that charming smuggler story of Rousdon. Heads we walked with the ladies, tails we bathed, and so on; no brain worry."

In the silence that followed I thought it wise to remind my friend that he was going

to warn me against the ambition of youthful anglers, but I might have had more faith: it was all right. Anderson got visibly graver, and helped us both to whisky.

"One morning," he continued, after an eloquent interval, "we had spent a charming time on the sands near that snake-like pier they call the Cobb. We were lunching and discussing the cause of Mary Anne's disappearance two or three days before from the Vincents' lodgings, and each of us took a different view. I said it was 'spoons,' Vincent suggested fright at the landlady's false teeth, his wife (ignoring my *double entendre*) thought it was 'some horrid man,' while mine hotly contended that it was a made-up yarn to run the house without a servant, and only an economic ruse. As Mary Anne was publicly reported to have run home to Charmouth, I offered to sail round the bay and investigate, if anyone would give me four to one about my theory; but the idea of sailing put an end to the discussion, and the meal, for the word suggested fishing, and we were soon hailing Flint for boats. It was a glorious afternoon, with just enough breeze for a sail, but not too

much for a row: in our opinion, however, there was too well-meaning a sun for the latter form of exercise, so we let the Vincents take the *Susan* and the pollack lines, while we raised sail on the *Dancing Polly*, and stood out to sea with the mackerel tackle. I have not been near the place, or on salt water, since that day."

I thought of saying that this was "odd" or "funny," but somehow, like Brer Rabbit, I kept on "sayin' nothin'," and lay low: it was quite exciting.

"I must tell you," said my host sadly, "that my wife wanted to go on for a week to Charmouth, which is the next place round the bay, you know, while I preferred to stop at Lyme, so as we turned to follow the line of the Devonshire coast, Rousdon way, we arranged (on our plan of leaving it to Fortune to decide) that whoever caught the largest individual fish during the afternoon should be allowed to choose our next week's place of abode; then we began to let out line.

"Nothing of interest happened for about half an hour, and we only made two scientific observations: first, that if you hook the rope of

a lobster pot while sailing through a row of them, it is the mackerel line that gives way, you do not catch any lobsters; the second phenomenon was that in the bright sunlight the sea showed a deep ultramarine on one side of the boat, and a bright emerald on the other. After we had each taken about half a score of fish, I hooked a monster and claimed the prize; but my wife adroitly referred the matter to Flint as arbitrator, and he of course said that one of hers (about half a pound lighter) was quite as large as mine. I was about to enter a formal protest, a sort of general objection to the jurisdiction of the Court, when she shouted from her side of the boat, 'Never mind, this is the biggest, anyhow,' and began to try and haul in her line; but instead of coming, it held taut for a moment, and then ran quickly through her fingers. I was endeavouring at the moment to light my pipe, and having lost several matches in unsuccessful attempts, was agreeably surprised to notice that the breeze had died suddenly away; then the rope which keeps the sail up snapped (which was odd), and down came the sail, bang. Old Flint was

too excited to attend to it, and came aft to see what strange beast, shark or porpoise, we were towing.

"'It won't come; it's a rock,' said my wife.

"'Yes,' I said, 'in twenty fathoms.'

"'Then it's only a sunken bundle of weed.'

"Nothing else was said. I fancy I see the boat now bearing down slowly and almost broadside on towards that fish: my wife's excited face, Flint's graver, but equally alert, not a breath stirring, and the salt taste on the amber of my pipe. My wife suddenly uttered a shrill cry, fell back into my arms, and fainted dead away. You guess what it was?"

"I have not the vaguest idea," I responded, for I did not like to suggest the sea serpent or a ghost, because there was evidently something real in all this, and contrariwise you never know when Anderson is giving you away; so I said I could not hazard a conjecture.

"I was looking over the side of the boat," he went on, "and just as my wife screamed her line broke, and the thing, which was almost at the top of the clear water, sank with a gurgle to rest evermore in the deep: it was Mary Anne."

VII.

The Gold Devon.

"Thou gaudy gold,
Hard food for Midas, I will none of thee."
Merchant of Venice.

THIS paper is a very humble contribution to the science of catching fish, and is not intended to amuse the careless reader who hunts for humour in all things printed, like the proverbial pig for the infrequent truffle: it is written with the deep conviction that he who makes two trout lie in the basket of a brother craftsman, where one would otherwise have reposed alone, is a benefactor to the human race. "Ignorance is the curse of God, knowledge the wing wherewith we fly to heaven." Some superior people consider Devon minnows useless for killing trout, especially in still, deep pools,

where there is no current to disguise the taste of the tackle-shop; and others think them poaching, pure and simple, though they never can explain why, and shelter themselves behind an expressive shrug. Since a day that I once had on some Yorkshire ponds I have been unable to share either view, and I regard a certain form of this artificial bait as quite legitimate and particularly deadly. I am informed that the apparently charming little quill minnow is very destructive in the hands of some experienced anglers in streams where there is a good clattering ripple, but I have never killed a fish on one myself in England, though I have given the bait a fair trial. To my mind, it cannot be "thrown as a fly," and its very lightness is not altogether in its favour, while its lack of the metallic gleam of its heavier brethren seems distinctly against it.

The course of events which led me to pin my faith on the small golden variation of the Devon minnow was shortly as follows. It was August, the month when the fish always seem to ask us, in their mute, unsympathetic manner, why it is necessary to take a holiday

and go a-fishing then instead of at a more rational time of year. They know all about the artificial whipping of water, but little of the stern habits of the natural or Parliamentary Whip. It was, then, a bright, burning August, when the grouse were dying by thousands on the neighbouring moors, and the trout pools lay all day beneath the sun like burnished mirrors, unrippled until at eventide the small fry began to leap and jeer at the perspiring angler, while their great progenitors lay solemnly below, meditating, no doubt, on the vanity of human wishes. I inspected four beautiful ponds on the evening of my arrival in Yorkshire, under the guidance of my host, who pointed out the special characteristics of each. The first was newly made, and a quantity of fry had but lately been turned into it: nothing had as yet been caught there, and as it was in a very exposed position, it was difficult for the fishermen to approach for a cast without attracting attention. The second was a similar one, but in a more overgrown and secluded spot, and contained, I was told, some large fish. The third was much deeper,

and well stocked with all sizes, but could only be got at from one bank. Lastly, we came to the Beech Tree Pool, which was large and deep, embowered in a grove of the stately trees from which it derived its name. I have never seen a more beautiful spot: as the setting sun struck through the overhanging branches and "made a glory in the place," I almost expected to see a wood nymph gliding off into the bracken, or some sylvan deity challenging our intrusion. However, nothing of the kind happened; and as we had but a short hour at our disposal, we lost no time in putting our rods together and getting to work. There were quantities of beautiful water-plants growing in the middle of the pool, which appeared to be very deep, but round the edge there was a margin of clear surface, from fifteen to twenty feet wide. On the inward fringe of this belt the wary old fish lay waiting for us. The only available method of attracting them was to cast a small single fly as near as possible to the first water-lily visible on the surface, and it was by no means easy to do this satisfactorily without being seen or getting hung up in a

tree. However, we each hooked and netted a nice fish before we had to reel up and tramp back across the park to dinner.

On the way homeward I showed my friend a gold Devon, and asked him what he thought of it; to which he replied that it was useless, as the fish in these still pools were much too experienced for such obviously human lures, but I was welcome to try it to my heart's content. For my part, I thought it looked so pretty and inviting that I would take him at his word; and I did. So the next day, when I had a couple of hours to spare before sunset, I set off, accompanied by an ardent young friend with a net, towards the ponds. It was again very bright and hot, so I was not surprised to find that my flies attracted nothing in the nearest of the series. I got a rise in the second; but did not stop there long, as the water was too clear: besides, it was a small one, and, being short of time, I was anxious to reach number four. In the third, small fish were rising and leaping everywhere, but nothing, small or large, would look at a fly; so at length I decided to try the minnow. It was

soon on a gut trace, and made a most disconcerting splash as it fell into a deep corner, reminding me of Silas Wegg's punishment at the hands of Sloppy; but the noise of its entry into another element did not seem to matter much, as, before it had run more than a few feet of its course, it was seized by a large trout. My surprise was naturally considerable; but my pleasure was destined to be shortlived, for my youthful gillie unfortunately struck the line with the net in trying to land the fish in some weeds growing near the bank, and the result was what might be expected. The *fario* not only got off, but went straightway and told the rest; and it was some time before I got another run. At length I secured a threequarter-pounder in a similar manner, which was duly grassed, and then decided to spend the remainder of my time in the romantic Beech Tree glade.

Arrived there, I found that it was a matter of considerable nicety to use the minnow at all; but at the deepest end of the lake there was some open water, and also a space between the trees which made some sort of casting practi-

cable. At the second or third successful attempt I was anxiously watching the bright metallic lustre of the bait, sinking in the dark mysterious depths, when I saw an answering gleam of gold, and a large fish darted after it, but missed the hooks. I cautiously repeated the performance, and the same or a similar trout immediately showed himself and made a most eager rush: this time he was really on, and, after much cautious playing round an intervening alder bush, was safely landed. After this I tried other parts of the pool, but, owing to the shallowness of the water and the splash of casting, took nothing. However, a final effort in the old place was again richly rewarded, for another experienced fish, which would not look at a fly, attacked the minnow with a most obliging ferocity, and soon reposed in the basket: the brace scaled over three pounds. I was then reluctantly obliged to hurry away; but I had fully persuaded myself that, under certain circumstances, the Devon may be used to great advantage even in the stillest water; and my host, who was a much better and more experienced angler than myself, was con-

siderably surprised when he saw the three fish.

I subsequently tested the same minnow in a Norwegian lake, and found that it caught fewer trout than the *Alexandra* fly, but more than the blue or grey varieties of metal minnow, the quill, or the small spoon. It is especially useful in peaty water, and in places where the fish are large and lazy.

VIII.

The Competition.

"'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,'—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

KEATS.

IN the smoking-room of the House of Commons you hear many interesting things: they are generally wholly disconnected from government and legislation. For instance, I remember once inviting an enthusiastic young friend to dine with me, in order that he might hear a debate on the Death Duties. However, the delivery of the minister whose turn it was to speak when I got my guest into the gallery was so portentous dull that we speedily took refuge below, and listened for an hour to a scientific M.P., who explained to us how to calculate the velocity of a star by means of

the spectroscope. It was vastly ingenious, and much more entertaining than any debate. On another occasion, Anderson came up to sample the hospitality of what used to be called the best club in London, and I introduced him in the private temple of Nicotina to two other votaries, both fairly well known to the public, and the conversation naturally turned upon fishing. The stream of comparative anecdote was mostly kept going by my red-haired friend and the member who smoked a clay pipe,—I must not further identify him,—whilst I and the fourth man, who may for my present purpose be earmarked as the possessor of cheroots, contented ourselves with sympathetic comments.

We discussed the piscatorial art from a philosophical standpoint, vaguely endeavouring to formulate a Theory of Enjoyment, but gradually came to the conclusion that the elements of happiness are too indefinite and elusive to be categorically sorted. Of course, pleasure generally varies directly with success, which is itself always comparative, and inversely with the ease and celerity with which

the prey is captured; but we could not agree about anything else, and soon got rather fogged.

"It is not necessarily more enjoyable," said Anderson, "to catch a salmon than to catch a trout, unless you take the *fario* on a salmon rod, which always seems to me as tame as cracking nuts on an anvil."

"It would probably be fun," I said, "to kill a salmon on a trout rod; but that kind of accident never happened to me, and I should hesitate to believe it of anybody else."

"I know something about that game, anyhow," said the man with the clay pipe, "but you need not believe it unless you like."

We hastened to protest unbounded credulity.

"I was passing through Argyllshire last year," he continued, thus encouraged, "and spent a night with a friend in a manse he had rented near a river. As I never can sleep after about seven in the morning, I generally go for a walk before breakfast, and on this occasion I strolled down to look at the river. There was a bridge handy, upon which I took my stand to admire the view,

wishing, as was natural, that people got up earlier to breakfast. Early risers are given that way. In a few minutes the landscape became animated, as the Italian picture catalogues say, by a white-bearded old gentleman with a trout rod ; which was very surprising, for trout-catching in Scotch salmon rivers is about as unprofitable as subscribing to charities outside your constituency. I was not inclined to stay long ; but when I perceived the old sportsman select and affix to his cast a small salmon fly, I was petrified with astonishment. The rod, you understand, was nine feet long. Well, he walked slowly down from the bridge, cleverly casting a good long line, and making me feel that he must be either a new kind of novice or a curious variety of madman, for the person who deliberately fishes for a salmon with a toy rod of that size is hard to meet.

" Just as I was turning homewards towards the parritch and haggis, I saw the line tighten, so I stopped and took a front pew. The salmon—for of course it was a salmon—ran out a score of yards of line ; but the old

gentleman cunningly increased the check, and the usual silver bar gleamed in the customary manner. There was no gillie visible, and the fisherman had no gaff, or net: it seemed to me that he must be fishing for the fun of breaking his line, and he was within an ace of doing it several times with an almost empty reel; but he managed his light tackle to admiration, and it was soon evident that the gaff would be needed shortly. Still no 'Donald' appeared on the scene, and tailing the fish seemed his only chance. However, the old chap reeled steadily up and up, and at last dropped the rod and gathered the fish into his arms with a sudden sweep—altogether a most skilful performance. I ran down and found a nice fish on the stones, weighing eight or nine pounds. No introduction was necessary; and I learnt that this master of the craft, being afflicted with a weak heart, which prevented his using a proper rod, was quite accustomed to giving these heavy odds, and winning the game too."

"In the unavoidable absence of the kettle," said the man with the cheroots, "let me

present you with this very handsome ash-tray."

"Wait," said Anderson, with his grave manner; "if *true* stories are wanted, I have a couple of details of my own to relate."

So he took his turn in the competition.

"I was fishing," he said, "at Nunnington, about ten years ago, near the old Hall, where the stream comes down below the mill. It was a clear, warm day towards the end of September, and I had given up shooting, for a day at the grayling for which the Rye is famous. I had not been at it very long, and had grassed a brace, I think, when I made a longer cast than usual, and felt, as I began to pull in, that I had something bigger than a half-pounder at the end of my line. Sure enough there was a grayling on my tail fly, and a grayling on my dropper, both well over the eight-ounce figure, and between them was a third, not hooked at all, but noosed up in the gut, which was wound round his neck. I netted all three. The middle one must have been rising, you see, when the other two put the halter round his neck."

We all nodded silently.

"The next day," he went on, "I was again fishing near the mill, when I saw a handsome trout of two pounds or so basking in very shallow water. I cast over him, and he took no sort of notice. Tried another fly with the same result. Did not know what to do. Tried again: no use. So I waded in warily, made a frantic effort, and *kicked* the beggar bodily into the net. He was *blind*, stone-blind,—struck by the mill-wheel, I expect,—so no wonder he was indifferent to a fly. Now, what about the kettle?"

We gave a miniature round of applause by tapping pipe-stems and ash-trays on the table; upon which the man of the cheroots felt that, in the absence of the division-bell, his county expected him to outshine the mere borough member with his trout-rod anecdotes: so he waved his hand and spoke in emulation.

"I lack your powers of invention," he said disdainfully, "and I only consent to stand (as I have said elsewhere) at the urgent solicitation of my numerous friends. The only fishing I have of my own is my father's,

and is only trouting and such small deer; and I never kill seven at a blow, or salmon by mistake, or anything of that sort; but the only salmon I ever bagged anywhere was the first I ever fished for, and I only cast for him once."

The man with the clay pipe held out his hand.

"I have looked for you all my life," he said solemnly; "I knew somebody must have done it, but no one has ever dared to say so before."

They shook hands.

"Where was it?" I asked, laughing.

"It was in Aberdeen. I was staying with a friend, I am afraid to say how many years ago, on the Don. I was young, and he gave me lessons in casting—on the lawn, you know, without a fly. Then we went down to the river, got into a boat, put on a fly, and I made that cast. I told my companion I was fast in a rock, as the line would not come back. 'No, by Jove, it's a fish!' he said; and so it was. He showed me how to play it, landed me in due course, ran up to the house

for the gaff, came back and lifted out a clean fish of twenty and a half pounds. I have never caught one since."

"That easily might have happened," I said, "but, somehow, it never "—

A sharp rattle of electric bells sounded through the smoking-room, and, with scarcely a word of explanation or apology to our stranger, we Members bolted like rabbits for the division-lobbies, leaving him to muse on the miraculous, and laugh at legislators, till our return.

IX.

Outrageous Fortune.

"A very antient and fish-like smell."
The Tempest.

THE power of memory residing in what scientists call the olfactory nerve is a constant surprise to everybody with a nose, and may be truly called transcendent. The faintest imaginable whiff of some odour, which has not greeted our nostrils for a number, any number, of years, transports us in a second of time to a vivid scene which would not otherwise have been reproducible upon the mental retina. Sights and sounds never remind us half so readily, or so completely, of bygone things and the years that are really lost to us: we have danced, for instance, many times to the now almost forgotten music of "The Cloisters," and, in conse-

quence, its familiar cadences scarcely produce even a blurred recollection of many mazy pictures; but though we have worn a gardenia as often, and sniffed its languorous odour far oftener, that perfume has preserved its power of faithfully recalling our first "Commem.," and never fails to conjure up a vision of that first brilliant ball.

Of evil smells it is not perhaps fitting, as Herodotus says, to speak; but tobacco may be mentioned without offence even in the presence of ladies, although there are still some who say they dislike smoke, as it always reminds them of a bar-parlour, a room which they have, of course, never seen. To dislike tobacco is like objecting generally to the taste of wine, for the aroma of a choice Havana is no more to be confounded with the exhalation of a clay than the flavour of Lafitte or Margot with the flavour of a tawny port. The slightest suspicion of one kind of cigar carries me, for some reason that defies analysis, to Lord's, as rapidly as if I had been placed on the magic carpet of the Arabian, and I see the glaring July sun shining down on the thousand glittering hues of that crowded

ring, where the heroes of old are still making history. I meet a cloud of a certain species of cigarette smoke at a street corner, and straightway am transported to the old College rooms, trying to believe, with other Freshmen, that manliness is synonymous with capacity for enormous breakfasts, and that dons and duns are subjects rather for ridicule than fear.

Did you happen to notice what those two foreign gentlemen were puffing at as they went into Simpson's just now for their daily encounter over the chess-board? There was nothing to see but an amorphous cloud of blue, but surely it wants no Sherlock Holmes to tell us that it came partly from a villainous black "Vevey," and partly from a lighter brown roll, grown and curled in the distant Fatherland. I do not know how it affects you, but for my part I look down the magician's telescope and see, as in a single picture, my first "foreign tour" of long, long ago, when that good-natured parson warned us, by the waters of the blue Thunersee, that though smaller than the mouse in thickness, the "Vevey" is more powerful than the lion and more noxious than

the adder; whereupon we youngsters tried it, with the most direful results. I see, too, that sturdy Heidelberg soldier turning his day's pay into pale wreathes of the same smoke beneath the red walls of the greatest Gothic ruin in Europe.

We had little bunches of "old man" in our gardens at home; and though no modern plants or "gay parterres" ever seem to remind us of that wonderful place which was so large and is so small, it only wants a scrap of that scented herb to show again the box-borders, marigolds, and asters of that long-vanished child's paradise; while a rotting oak in Windsor Forest sends up into the quiet air a more vivid reminder than a photograph of the old wood-shed in the vicarage garden, which was the triumph of hide-and-seek.

This undecipherable "programme" tells us of nothing but a string of obsolete valses; but stay—that faint suspicion of a tuberose conjures up from the antenuptial past a figure in white, surely a "coming-out" dress—ah! yes, we were madly——pshaw! What *was* her name? . . .

There is a certain smell of soft, black, clayey mud which I hardly ever come across; but when it does, on rare occasions, assail my nose, there passes before my mind's eye one of the most humiliating and painful moments of my life.

I see, then, a very large untidy garden: so large that the corner beyond the red rhubarb-pots seems to stretch away into an uncultivated infinite: so untidy that distinct traces can still be seen of the prehistoric potato-field and rustic path. In this garden, between golden laburnums, "dropping-wells of fire," and sad-looking plane trees, lies a small still pond, much overgrown with water weeds and lilies save in the middle, where a dozen perch are basking in the sunshine, which visits even the Black Country at times. A faint breeze stirs the leaves of the plane trees, and makes them show silvery and quivering against the dead wall of a factory, which bounds the garden on that side.

Enter a boy. He is a small pale-faced boy, and, having nothing very particular to occupy his attention, has come down to look into the

most mysterious and interesting part of the garden, the inscrutable pool. He does not live in the big house, but in a very little one hard by; still, he comes often, and once, indeed, caught a roach on a night-line. He knows that somewhere in the unknown deeps there dwells a large pike which has broken many hooks, and defies even men; so he is magnetised to this corner, and stands gazing into the hiding-place of grand possibilities, and clicking one marble against another in his pocket. I feel that I am that boy. Just for the brief moment that the sad little tragedy is enacting, I know by the sharpness of my sensations that in my own proper person I passed through those extremes of feeling, and must still, when thus reminded of my earlier self, glow with breathless hope and burn with undying shame.

There are slender green iron railings round the pond; and as the lad leans over these to scan the open water with the air of stout Cortez, "silent upon a peak in Darien," his eye quickly falls upon the small perch lazily enjoying their siesta, and immediately the metal fencing trembles under his hand.

The garden is again vacant, and no sound is heard except the throb of the machinery in the mill.

A small red-faced boy—the same, but not the same—is digging for worms with frantic energy in the midden behind the stable: by him lies his hickory rod, fitted up complete with red float and shotted hook; for he has obtained a ready permission to fish, and, being strongly convinced that the perch can only be successfully angled for when visible at the top of the water, is working with the energy and under the circumstances of Hercules in the Augean stable, to take at the flood the tide in his affairs which leads on to fortune, but if

> "Omitted, all the voyage of his life
> Is bound in shallows and in miseries."

How desperately the heavy fork turns the reeking heap: there is no to-morrow, there was no yesterday: all is a halcyon dream of present hope, and beneath the farther end of the rainbow of desire lies buried the magic pot of gold. The boy, wide-eyed and breathless with running, his heart thumping up into his throat, is now returned, clambers over the railing, and

creeps like a panther to the edge of the pond: a red worm from the broken flower-pot is sacrificed to the necessities of the situation, and, wriggling on the hook, is thrown out as far as possible into the water.

The effect is somewhat discouraging. The line is not long enough to reach the best open space, but the perch all disappear in an instant and the horizon is a blank. Have they seen the bait and rushed to it, or, horrible thought! are they merely startled and scared away for the day, for ever? Hours, ages, seem to pass, but not even a nibble relieves the tension: by and by a young perch, bolder than his merry companions, ventures to return to the upper levels, and is soon followed by half a dozen others. They were only startled, then, and have not seen the now limp and untempting worm at all. What is to be done? The bank on this side, which is covered with slippery grass, has an awkward slope, and it is impossible to throw the bait any farther out from it, but on the other, under the shade of a tree, there are two or three large stones from which more of the best water can be covered. . . .

The boy is on that side now, balanced on the broadest stone, and preparing for a great effort with a new worm: his eyes are still shining with unexhausted excitement, and his dirty little hands are trembling. A baker's dozen of innocent fishes swim lazily to and fro in full view, with all suspicion disarmed.

The catastrophe, which for a quarter of a century has returned upon the odour of that horrible mud, now happens. The poor little angler has slipped upon the stone, lost his balance, and is flat on his face in the dirty water,

"And all his trousered flanks with garlands dressed,"

but the garlands are of duck-weed and green slime.

His only suit, except his Sunday best, is utterly and hopelessly ruined by mud and filth: he has to face the mother who made it, and, what is worse, the jeering boys in the street: he has to leave the merry fish unharmed, while he learns one of the bitterest lessons of life in his undisciplined heart. He is defeated, disgraced, and dirty, and the cup of infant misery, full to the brim, is drained to the dregs.

I know that on sundry subsequent occasions we caught perch in that pond, and, what is perhaps more remarkable, ate them afterwards; but how many, or when, or under what circumstances of happiness, I can no more recall than I can find in my present person reliable evidence of identity with my early pre-school self. I can only say that no later triumph ever served to obliterate the sting of that first defeat, and that the whole play is re-enacted, as I have set it down, whenever the moist and noisome smell of a similar slime rises from a bypath of maturer life.

X.

In Far Lochaber.

"*Fortune brings in some boats that are not steered.*"
Cymbeline.

WHEN does a man not look at his best? *Vide* "*PUNCH*" *passim.* Many occasions, not illustrated in his merry pages, occur to the mind. A man does not look at his best when he has just been dragged to light from one of those hiding-places "known to members of the House of Commons," and is forced to record a vote directly contrary to his conscience or his pledges; or when he is compelled reluctantly to admit in the witness-box of a court of justice, that he uses a code, in cabling to his agents in South Africa, which contains a cipher meaning, as shown by the key, "Send me a lying telegram in plain words." A woman

does not look at her best when she is drinking porter; and a boy only looks at his best when he is asleep.

All of which is the prelude to saying I once found Anderson searching for a lost address. He was sitting in his shirt-sleeves at his writing-table, surrounded by the débris of a large blotting-pad; half a dozen drawers were pulled open, one being upside down on the floor; papers of all kinds were scattered about; and the attitude of my friend expressed the extreme of perplexity. His yellowish-red hair was standing up in mutiny over a puckered forehead; and his pipe was not only out, but held firmly upside down by his strong white teeth, as if he had arrived at the point when he was morally obliged to grit them on something, or explode. He waved a greeting with a large inky sheet of blotting-paper in each hand, and expressed his feelings in one short, sharp word, which included the whole gamut of feeling.

"You have lost something?" I suggested.

"Your penetration is as remarkable as my stupidity," he said. "I have lost James's

address, and James goes near to lose one of the best letters ever penned by a fond uncle. He is at some beastly place between Kingussie and Fort William,—a kind of mixture of Kirriemuir and Tora-na-freer, so far as I recollect. I wrote it on one of these infernal sheets, *mais laquelle, laquelle?*"

"Perhaps you have a letter from him," I answered.

"*That's* in one of these drawers," he said, indicating the hay-cock, "unless I lent it to a fellow at the office."

Anderson did not look at his best.

"What would Sherlock Holmes do?" I asked.

"He would crib something from Edgar Allan Poe," replied Anderson tartly. "By Jove, 'The Purloined Letter'! Of course."

He leant over his correspondence-basket with a scrutinising glance at the neatly-docketed letters, and then rang the bell.

"Tell your mistress," he said to the parlour-maid, "that I have found what I was looking for, and that it was in its proper place."

"Discipline must be observed," he said (for

he knows his Dickens) as the maid departed. "I am nothing if not methodical."

"It is all a matter of method," I said ironically, with my eye on the chaotic confusion of his table; "and who and how is James?"

"James," said Anderson, "is the orphan bantling of a lovely sister of mine, and, as he favours me in his colouring, you may believe him beautiful. In the intervals of reading for the Bar, he studies the habits of game-birds—with a gun. He is now in Scotland, and has written me a letter which, as an uncle and a fisherman, I consider a prolonged and painful insult. Read it."

I read:—

"MY DEAR UNCLE,—Your importunity is almost biblical; and though I do not wish to draw a flattering comparison between my humble self and the unjust judge, I will so far copy that ancient model as to spend an evening in clearing off my debt to you, or some of it.

"Sheridan, or Lamb, or another of those letter-writing coves, says that we should not write to each other about our health or meals,

but should discourse at large on Life, so I will tell you at once about some sport we have had here.

"You know already that, being an honest man, more like the dove, as the poet says, than the serpent under it, I do not set up for being a professional fisherman, or any other kind of hypocrite, but when there is nothing else to do, and fish of any kind are to be caught, I am quite ready to enter for the Anglers' Stakes; and here, in bonnie Scotland, when our poor feet want an off-day from tramping the moors, it is not bad fun to wander down the glen, past the cave where Prince Charlie hid himself (you've not forgotten him down south?), and watch our neighbours trying to catch salmon, or trout, or other finsome things, in the brown stream which runs through the big rocks at the bottom. Having frequently heard these fellows complain of weather, luck, drought, and the stupidity of their unwilling prey, and having had an uncle (you need not blush), I thought salmon-fishing must be a poor kind of sport compared with shooting. You see, you are not always blazing away on the chance of a

grouse getting in your line of fire—at least I am not. First see your bird, then loose off your gun, and an empty bag is an absolute impossibility, even on the worst day. It seems to be quite the other way on the river: you fish for hours in a pool which may not contain one fish, or you may see them leaping about all over the place without getting one to browse on the flannel, hair, feathers, or worms that you offer; and a blank week—if I may so put it to a Scotchman—is an everyday occurrence.

"One day last week the tenants of the river were away convalescing somewhere, and, as we had given them some shooting to cheer their depression, they politely invited us to do our durndest with the water for a couple of days, bar prawns. Jones and I thereupon rigged up a rod and line, and started forth to try stones and water instead of heather and hill, for the sake of variety. We came to the conclusion that you fishermen are a lot of grumblers, and that most of you are devoid of natural aptitude. A sort of liquid rush, called, I am told, a spate, had been tiring itself out for a couple of days, —this was what choked the other fellows off, I

suppose,—and there was still a good body of water careering down the rocky channel. The sun shone warmly as we approached the river-side, and I remarked to Jones that it was a good day for cricket. We had plenty of flies, and a long strong line and new gut, but neither of us had tried the game before. However, you must begin some time; so we began. We did not think it gentlemanly to fish with worms, which are dirty, and prawns were barred; besides, we had none, which simplified our code of sporting morality, and decided us to try the fly. I agree that it is quite exciting to stand by a deep brown pool through which a quantity of water is rapidly moving, and it is very amusing to smoke a pipe on the bank while the other fellow is heaving away with an eighteen-foot greenheart pole, as if he was being paid by the job.

By the spin of a coin Jones had first shot, and, selecting an attractive blue sort of fly, he tied it firmly on and cast it upon the water. I hastily got out of the way, and took the cork off the point of the gaff. Pretty soon the fish knew we were there, you bet, and the fly went

working about industriously inviting bidders; while I contemplated the scenery, feeling that, armed with the gaff for a crook, I only wanted a sheep or two to make a picture. I suppose there were no fish in that pool just then, for nothing happened; but as, some way below, I saw a great thing jump out of the water and go back with a sounding splosh, we moved down after him. Jones, who perspired, thought it was not a day for blue flies, and handed over the rod to me; so I tried a brown one, carefully hoicking out the line as far as it would go. I did not know whether to keep my finger on the string or not (nor do I believe that it matters a dump), but Jones said it was always done; so I conformed to usage. While he was laying down the law, I found the line had stuck, and that it was a fish which prevented me from making a fresh cast. I pulled and the fish pulled. My finger slipped off the string, and a lot of it ran out; when I recovered my presence of mind I began to wind it up, whereupon a salmon jumped a yard, I should compute, out of the water. This did not do him any good, and I gradually

lugged him up in-shore; then, when I was wishing we had brought the *Compleat Angler* or some other book of directions (even a *Murray* would have been something), and Jones was fatuously describing how he was going to engineer the gaff, the fish perceived our conspiracy and ran out some more line. Then it all had to be done over again; but this time J. hooked the beggar in the head, and successfully dragged him on to the bank. He was an enormous fish, and weighed over ten pounds. I now perceived that skill in salmon-fishing is born in a man, and that I had found my real vocation. Jones, poor fellow, was perhaps qualified to be a gillie, but, aping the manners of his superiors, insisted on taking his turn with the rod; besides, he said that if I went on we should empty the river, and the proprietors would not like it. I reluctantly gave up the tackle, and we moved down a piece.

"I never saw a clumsier man than Jones: he had none of the grace of the true angler, though he licks me at the grouse; and I pointed out that we were wasting time. However, he

cut the hook out of his clothes for the fourth time and cheerfully continued his efforts, gassing about luck the while, until, after an hour's noisy flogging and entanglements, he hooked a fish. This chap ran out nearly all the line, and we had to follow him across some of the roughest country in the Highlands. He went over a piece of tumbling, broken water like nothing at all, and then danced about in the pool at the bottom as if he was giving an exhibition of gymnastics. Then he stopped for breath, or the equivalent in water, and did nothing for a while. This annoyed us, as we knew he must be up to mischief; and we threw stones at him until he moved. Shortly afterwards, he flew the white ensign, and J. dragged him slowly towards me. To gaff a fish, you have to get the hook (you know) under or over him, and pin him with the point. Jones said the head was the place: that's why you never see a mark on the salmon in shops. He forgot about nets; and I do not believe he was aiming for anywhere in particular when he struck my fish. Anyhow, I decided on a general charge; and as I hoisted out a young

'un of nine pounds, I imagine it is more a matter of innate judgment than anything else: keep cool, and then go with a dash. Jones was childishly pleased, and we had lunch.

"After a decent interval we again took turns at the rod and tried some more flies, but nothing worthy of this letter occurred until we were on the point of chucking it, when I hooked a thing called a grilse in the tail. What resulted was more like a fox-chase than anything else I ever saw. Off went the fish up stream, full bat; Jones fell over a rolling stone and sprained his knee; while I hung on, running like a hurdler over boulders and round corners, till I was out of breath. The fight lasted ages, but I kept the line as tight as wax, and we won, poor old J. forgetting to groan at his knee when we sat down and panted beside our quarry. He only scaled five pounds, but when he was in the water he pulled harder than both the salmon put together. I did not mean to hook him in the tail, but I suppose you have no fault to find with that. We went up to the shooting-lodge and sent the keeper for the fish. He was right mazed, and told us the

other chaps had been whipping low water and watching the spate for a fortnight without killing a single fish. We smiled superior. I am going to advertise for pupils next year. When a salmon-fisher goes home empty-handed, depend upon it he has not got the knack: it's like writing poetry.

"Adoo, nunx; if I scribble any more, you'll think I am turned Clarissa Harlowe, instead of being plain, truthful JAMES."

XI.

Northward Ho!

"I rather would entreat thy company
To see the wonders of the world abroad,
Than, living dully sluggardized at home,
Wear out thy youth with shapeless idleness."
Two Gentlemen of Verona.

I AM told that Bosnia offers unique opportunities to the angler, and that no one who has not been there can form a proper estimate of its attractions, which I am quite willing to believe; but I must be permitted to "hae ma doots" about the journey thither, the brigands, the inhabitants, and the scenery. Many fishermen have read a romantic paper in one of the magazines, describing "a lost paradise" for their kind in Russia; and tarpon-fishing has been as much exploited in attractive illustrations as riding on a motor-car. But, though

BERGEN.

we take an interest in these things in the smoking-room, we do not look out the trains or calculate the fares to Bosnia, Petersburg, or Florida. As to the tarpon, he is no use when you get him, and you've got to get him first. But when travellers display enthusiasm about Norway, they talk of a country more accessible than the Highlands, and so universally enjoyed that men who go there are all in a tale on their return. As a rule, they say little, especially if they are frequent visitors—

"I were but little happy if I could say how much";

they do not wish to encourage immigration, or to give a clue to the exact position of their own particular hunting-grounds.

Ask one of these where he has summered and he will simply reply "Norway," knowing well that if his interlocutor has never visited that country he will not require details; and if he has, he will understand.

But a talkative man, who is full of the glories of what he probably calls the El Dorado of sport, is not welcomed home again by the friends who rusticated the while at Littlehampton or Herne Bay. He asks them where they went to, and

what they did there, and scarcely waits for the answer before enlarging on the delights of travel beyond the North Sea. Shortly, the unfortunate stay-at-home is not only bored, but actively irritated, for he feels there may be something in it. There must be undreamed-of enjoyment in those distant fastnesses for those who have a long enough purse and holiday to adventure the fjords and fjelds. The family seaside visit in England will never be played out, and golf and the bicycle have now given it a fresh impetus, just as lawn tennis did in an earlier age; but poor paterfamilias has almost ceased to provide humorous copy by his annoyance at the countless worries and unrequited sufferings that beset him. The same old game goes on year after year; and when the parent has varied it to the best of his ability, by taking the elder boys and girls to Lucerne or Etretat, no one is more unfeignedly glad than he is to glide once more into the London terminus. The heat, the noise, the dirt, the extortion and inconvenience which are the invariable incidents of continental travel, soon pall upon maturer minds, and it is a common complaint that the

crowd of ill-mannered tourists who scramble for every meal, and almost for every bed, *en route*, grows greater year by year. Is there one man in a hundred who regrets the moment when his face is turned at last towards the white cliffs of home, and he can once more anticipate the near enjoyment of sitting at ease in his club or his comfortable house, and writing to the *Times* about the brazen Boniface who swore his sovereign was a Napoleon?

And then the food! It adds a relish beyond the wit of Soyer to your first British chop, to remember the greasy slice of beef, the odious garlic, and the tasteless *poulet*, and you feel that your holiday has done you good, because (as it did in the old lodgings on the Marine Parade) it has made you contented to dwell at home. In fact, to quote the patriotic bard, there is no one

> "Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned,
> As home his footsteps he hath turned
> From wandering on a foreign strand,"

when he has suffered the pangs of most of our countrymen abroad.

In modestly praising the sweet peace and

deep enchantment of a Norse holiday, "we" do not blind ourselves to the attractions of other places: we say nothing against the Alps, for instance. You cannot get them anywhere else; and if you do not honestly enjoy a view which is obtainable without bodily risk and great fatigue,—if, in short,

"Towards the mountain tops you still must ride,"

like Palomydes in Mr. Dobson's moving verses (though what *he* was going to do there beyond "crying her name," no commentator has been able to tell us),—by all means go there, but do not expect either sympathy or admiration when you break your neck. And if you care only for Art or cathedrals, if you love your species, and enjoy the brisk activity of hotels with a thousand guests, let me not detain you: the *table d'hôtes* of the Maloja are not to be sought in Telemarken; and those who love the Engadine because "you always meet someone you know, don't you know," will not be happy in the solitary gloom and grandeur of the Romsdal, jump the salmon never so gaily. But he who fishes in Norway communes with his own heart, and echoes what I say—

"Let others praise, as fancy wills,
Berlin beneath her trees,
Or Rome upon her seven hills,
Or Venice by her seas;
Stamboul by double tides embraced,
Or green Damascus in the waste";

but "there's nought he would not leave" (to quote the same brilliant imitator of old Horace) to revisit the glimpses of the brown river gleaming under the pines in its majestic rush to the placid fjord.

He may love the September turnips or the sweet shady side of Pall Mall as dearly as another, but it is, as a rule, with a sigh of forlorn sadness that he watches the twinkling harbour lights of Stavanger or Aalesund fade into the darkness of the past, knowing that for many months, perhaps for years, he must live on recollections and anticipations, and meet the cold looks of those who are afraid he will give them details of his sport.

His heart burns like that of a man on the Dover packet, but his face is set the outward way.

There are, of course, exceptions (whom I have never had the misfortune to meet), but, as

a class, the folks who go to Norway with rod-boxes are more attractive to sensitive minds than those who take part in the continental scurry, although this may be partly attributable to the conditions under which the journey is performed: still, there seems to be more repose in their manner, and, being sportsmen, they are all brothers: it is better to share a tiny steamer cabin with a man who loves to chase the reindeer on the rocks, than to travel in a lordly coupé with a tripper who intends to climb every mountain provided with a railway, and comes home nursing an alpenstock branded spirally with all the summits between Mont Blanc and Mont Cervin.

I know this, for I have passed through both experiences; but here I suppress three vigorous and defamatory personal sketches.

The first enjoyment of the expedition for non-sailors (*laymen*, they might well be called) begins at Stavanger, if they take the shortest sea passage, for the safe arrival of the steamer after that little turn-up with the North Sea puts everyone into a good temper, and perfect strangers congratulate each other on the happy

fact that the day's voyage to Bergen, which now begins, is "all inside," which means that the outlying islets will keep the swell of the long Atlantic rollers from interfering with the smooth water of the fjords.

Stavanger, which has a fine Norman cathedral, is not a particularly beautiful place as seen from shipboard, but it is, at anyrate, novel, Norwegian, and the right side the water. Some passengers go ashore to explore the south, to work their way up to low-lying Odde and the mazy Hardanger, or across to Christiania; but the majority hold on for Bergen.

Although many of the views reveal only low islands and promontories, bare alike of houses and vegetation, it is an interesting journey, especially when first enjoyed; for the colours in sky and sea, and the sense of freedom and happy expectation, are themselves the very elements of rational pleasure. There are mountain ranges visible, too, in fine weather, and distant glimpses of glaciers, little toy houses now and then, and picturesque boats everywhere; at very rare intervals a tiny church points heavenward its tapering spire.

Hour after hour the steamer ploughs her way steadily through wide and narrow channels, until, late in the afternoon, an abrupt turn in our course brings us in sight of the romantic western city, nestling, as it seems, at the feet of the mountains, but, in reality, scattered over low hills which rise abruptly round the deep inlets of the sea, that make it one of the most beautiful places where men "undo their corded bales."

We must press on. It is not our object to examine marts or towns; so, after a passing glance at the crowded quay, where strange sea things of brilliant hues—carmine, amber, and ultramarine—are kept alive in briny tanks, we must re-embark upon another steamer, and at nightfall speed Northward ho! again. The bright ray flashes from the beacon on the Custom-house mole as we emerge from the shadow of the Bergenhus (once bombarded by a British vessel) and venture without a qualm upon the waveless sea.

Dawn of the next day finds us tasting the full flavour of the fjords. We pass the craggy heights of Hornelen, shaped like the Lion of

Lucerne; we round the headland of the Stattlande, that terror to bad sailors if there is a contrary wind, go ashore for a walk up the ridge above the peninsula of Aalesund, and see the sun go down and the moon shine out over the mountains round Molde, the paradise of wealthy merchants.

After a second night, we wake to find the shipping and wharves of Christiansund diminishing in our wake, and by midday the screw is striking into foam the still blue waters of the wide Throndhjem Fjord, and we gaze idly and happily at the gambols of the porpoises, and the myriad colours of the jelly-fish that float beneath the keel. The afternoon brings us into the harbour of the wooden city, where, according to the old proverb, "it is pleasant to dwell," and we come to the end of what is by no means the least enjoyable part of our expedition.

A hearty farewell to the intimate friends we have never seen before, and may never meet again, and we must separate to our various destinations, some of which are still far distant, as distances are counted at home. Some

adventurers go forward by yet another steamer to Namsos, or the Lyngen Fjord, or places unspellable in the far North ; others return to an island where we could not stop to set them down. Two men, who own a tract as large as Yorkshire, it appears, take the infrequent train to a village from which they still have a hundred miles to drive ; and we, too, travel forward with quickening hope, and exchange the fjord for the forest.

At length, after much bumping in karioles and stolkjaerres down wild mountain paths, past rocky streams and sylvan tarns, and through innumerable woods, we cross a river which we learn, with a thrill, is our own, and, as the late darkness begins gently and almost imperceptibly to gather over the land, we approach the village which is to be our home for a month and a memory for ever. The moon shines down upon the winding curves of that peaceful valley, even as it is shining upon the muddy Thames what worlds away ! The babble of hidden brooks and distant waterfalls comes softly to our ears, and mingles with the never-ceasing roar of the turbulent flood which is

dashing over the huge rocks far below us in its resistless headlong career to the sea. The evening air is laden with the scent of new-mown hay and fragrant pines, and someone breaks the spell by whispering the fervent wish that the river may be in good order for the fly to-morrow.

XII.

How not to Catch a Salmon.

"Now, I hold it is not decent for a scientific gent
To say another is an ass . . ."

The Society upon the Stanislaus.
BRET HARTE.

IF Wilton's eye ever falls upon these pages, he will testify that what I say is true. We had invited him to come for a few days' salmon-fishing in our river, which runs into the largest fjord in Norway; and he came. All we knew about him was that he was a Magdalen boating-man, whose father had given one of us some shooting somewhere once; so when I met him on the *Domino*, as we were getting into Stavanger one rainy morning, I asked him to come over. He arrived towards the end of an August evening, after a ten days' drought, during which the river had fallen as many feet;

THE HAPPY VALLEY.

and just as he was driving the off-wheel of his kariole into the gatepost of our compound, and twisting the stout iron step into a derisive-looking curl, I was reflecting that, if he was not a patient sportsman, he would not thank us for asking him, and if he were not good company, we should not thank him for coming. He was splendidly got-up, and called himself "Briggs" with all the pleasure in life: a patent ventilating leathern helmet, with the brim turned up at the back, adorned his head, while an immense grey-cloth "Newmarket" covered a Norfolk jacket, knickerbockers, and stockings of the three-acres-and-a-cow style of architecture, gay but not gaudy.

He also wore a blue corduroy waistcoat shot with red, and the largest pair of yellow boots I ever saw. His face was of the usual undergraduate kind, rather sunburnt, and he flushed slightly as he explained his noisy arrival by saying that the *heste* had shied at something or other as he turned the corner.

We of the log-house introduced each other and unloaded our guest's traps (which included a rod-box that would have set up the whole

district), and, after a look at the nearest pool, collected for dinner: afterwards we sat round the empty fireplace and smoked. I have met a good many ardent sportsmen, I have spent pleasant "fishing evenings" with the best-known anglers of the Fly-Fishers' Club, but I never heard such fish-talk as Wilton's: after a while the other men only spoke to draw him out, but he did not require encouragement. It transpired later, that he had never personally slain anything more soul-stirring than a two-pound jack; but at one time I thought that his father must be the pseudonymous owner of one of those fishmongers' shops in Bond Street, or vitally interested in the whaling industry. We learnt that fishing in Norway in any state of weather and water spoils you for everything else in the world: that the real difficulty in trout-fishing is to prevent the fish from rending your cast into as many pieces as there are flies directly it touches the water, and that salmon-fishing is really only running up and down with a fish on. He showed us a new kind of reel for spinning, a new knot for attaching flies, and several novelties in minnows. Anderson

was with us, and his face made me long for a kodak: this was *his* fourteenth season in Norway, and, as I have elsewhere indicated, he knows a hawk from a hand-saw; but he gratefully accepted Wilton's "tips," and promised to try all the minnows next year. As a matter of fact, he detests minnows, and never uses anything but a fly, killing his three to eight fish a day during the month that they were running: the rough wooden model nailed to the wall over the Magdalen man's head showed the outline of his forty-two pounder; but as a sympathetic listener he has no rival. Unfortunately for everybody (except perhaps himself), it was his last evening.

Wilton stayed with us for three days, and reduced his theories to practice: at an early hour on the first morning he was off in the rough country cart for two, which they call a *stolkjaerre*, with Anders, one of our excellent boatmen, about whom I shall have things to relate presently, to a distant pool, equipped with a brand-new eighteen-foot rod, and flies enough to catch an alligator. The fish had of course stopped running, the river was getting

lower every moment, and, as it was a very bright and lovely day, I thought it advisable to do a little sketching, while keeping a friendly eye on our guest. So I followed up the valley. Upon their arrival at the top of our beat, Anders unlocked the boat, put the line through the rings, rowed the young man into the stream, suggested a fly, and told him to begin. He began accordingly, and a fruitless hour passed: they landed, and Wilton tried from the bank, fishing the rush below the pool. He then discovered for the first time, I imagine, that it is unwise, on shore, to meditate in the middle of a cast: it does not so much matter when you are in the boat, because you only flog the water on both sides of you instead of one, but ashore you catch a rock, and bang goes two and sixpence. I saw him discussing the second "Somebody's Fancy" with Anders, who consoled him by saying it was the fault of the "schlam" stones; and after the stolid boatman had had a try himself, they knocked off for lunch.

After the usual interval, which I spent with them to apologise for the river, the same performance was gone through again in another

pool, with the same negative result: the old red fish lay at the bottom laughing, and the green young man struck the clear brown water with coils of line, and cursed them by Odin and Thor; but this they are accustomed to.

In the end, I left them in order to catch some trout for breakfast; and when we met again at dinner, Wilton seemed rather dashed: but after the whisky had circulated he brightened up, and regretted cheerfully that he had not tried for trout instead of salmon: it was just the day for trout, he said, and trout run large in Norway: they are almost as much sport as salmon: to-morrow he was going to knock sparks out of *them*, if it did not rain in the night, and make the *salars* amenable to reason. We cordially drank to his better luck; and Jackson, who was the only one of our party who had been fishing, promised to go up to the fjeld and shoot rype the next day, so as to leave him the whole seven miles of river. I decided to accompany Jackson, and we were away all day: upon our return in the evening, we found Wilton sitting in the verandah smoking a meerschaum twice the size of Anderson's largest (which looks as

if it held a quarter of a pound), and explaining to Eric, our other boatman, who had not been with him, how and where he had caught the two six-ounce trout which lay on the grass in front of the house. It appeared that he had conscientiously fished a number of pools with various flies, but with a lumpiness of delivery and a general want of luck that had attracted nothing. He had then rasped the river-bed with revolving minnows until he was persuaded that the only fish in the water were two artificial ones he had himself planted in "schlam rocks"; finally, he had caught the trout by harling a sea-trout fly forty yards behind the boat. "Salmon-fishing is an overrated pastime," he said. "If it weren't, I should introduce it at Oxford, where the sport would be quite as good as it is here,—no fault of yours, you know, —but the exercise is more severe than rowing in the College Boat, so the men would not take to it. If your accounts of your 'takes' are genuine, all I can say is that you've caught the lot. I've done all that mortal can do, but nary fish. However, I've got one more day; and it's salmon or bust to-morrow."

After dinner, he asked a good many questions about the kind of fly we generally used, and how we preferred to use it, and went to bed determined to catch a fish if he had to dive for it. But to the high gods it seemed otherwise.

Jackson took our guest to all the best places, to give him every chance on his last day, and showed him a few of the tricks of the trade, but not a rise did he get; and when I walked up to Boat Pool to finish my sketch, I found him alone with Anders rigging up a powerful pike rod with spinning tackle. When he was ready, I watched him sending out a large minnow, which he had fortified with an arsenal of hooks and the red tail of a Colorado spoon, until after some fruitless casts the line suddenly tightened, and a twelve-pound salmon, red as a fox, leaped to light.

The lad laughed with glee, and shouted "I've got 'im" at the top of his voice; but the fish, after a few angry tugs, remembered an engagement he had on the other side of the boat, and, by a rapid manœuvre up stream, proceeded to tie the line round the unused fly rod which was projecting from the bows. How-

ever, the skilful Anders disengaged the tackle with the single remark, "Dis ting bery bad dat," and in a few minutes managed to land the excited angler, who was holding his fish as if he had him on a two-inch hawser. The fish "stopped coming" when only a few yards off, and I fully expected to see the top joint of the pike rod go; but it held. After waiting five or ten minutes, they re-embarked and stirred up the water; but it was too late. I saw the minnow come up, and I saw Anders pointing out the broken hooks to Wilton, explaining how the knowing fish had stuck them in the stones to free himself: then a kind of blue mist of missing words surrounded them, and I reverently withdrew.

We gave Wilton our last bottle of champagne at dinner and sedulously talked about the county averages; but his mind kept recurring to the river, and he spoke like a man who has had to buy experience dear, and has bought like a copper syndicate. At last he lighted his bedroom candle and said, with a melancholy satisfaction, "At anyrate, I have learnt how *not* to catch a salmon."

GRANA-FOSSEN.

XIII.

Grana-fossen.

"The Cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep."
WORDSWORTH.

MANY miles of good road west of the railway, and many miles of bad, execrably bad, road south of the most northern city in Europe, a beautiful little waterfall rolls over a steep cliff and scatters rainbow-lighted spray into the pool below. A more exact geographical description of it would be indiscreet, and might bring a horde of bicyclists and pedestrians to disturb its solitude, and demand "rustic" seats, tea-tables, and coloured fires. Let them visit the Rhine and enjoy themselves, satisfied with the rivers of Philistia. But Grana-fossen has many charms for the favoured few who know it, and I was fortunate

enough to find myself near it, and to visit it in the delightful company of my friend Eric, of whom more anon. Its chief beauty lies in the fact that its drop is sheer, in a wild, narrow, and rocky gorge; and the Grana, which forms the fall and gives it name, is a bustling brown trout stream, which goes hurrying down below to swell the waters of the great salmon river at its mouth. Over the pool above the foss (or waterfall), a frail wooden bridge connects the cliffs, which are covered with luxuriant raspberry bushes, bearing fruit as large as any in a Hampshire garden: they formed a welcome addition to sandwiches of pressed beef; but I failed to understand the necessity for gathering them by the bush, which is the Norwegian method.

When we arrived, by a circuitous route, at the pools below the thunder of the spray, I found that the most accessible one was overhung by a granite wall on the farther side, and enclosed where we stood by a steep grass and heather bank, pitched upon a fifteen-foot slab of rock which sloped almost vertically into water running so clear that many fish were

visible eight or more feet down. By creeping carefully along the grassy bank, I was able to catch hold of a young sapling on the top of the rock; and in that decidedly perilous position I had to cast my fly up and down, as if I were trying to flick the water, much in the manner that schoolboys use to each other with wet towels. When a fish was obliging enough to rise and take my *Alexandra* it had to be gingerly landed on the slippery stone and gently hauled up within reach of the boatman's net: some, of course, got off in the process. I also tried a quill minnow, but, owing to its triple hooks, it was more difficult to keep it from catching in a ledge of rock at the end of its swim.

The second pool that we tried was nearer the fall, and almost impracticable. We crept along the cliff, holding on by the trunks of trees, until we got as nearly over it as possible. I then found that the base of rock was so high, and the trees so close to its upper edge, that it was impossible to use a fly, and very difficult to get even a minnow into the water; and this was the more tantalising, because we

could see big fish serenely contemplating nothing in the pellucid depths. However, we rose to the occasion, hoping that the fish would follow suit, and fished in this rather unusual way. Eric, the boatman, held the rod in his right hand and a sufficient coil of line in his left, while I wrapped a piece of moss round the minnow, and at a given signal threw it across the water. The moment it touched the surface of the stream it was washed out of the moss, and went spinning down the eddies in capital style, until, when it had finished its course, it had to be carefully steered over the edge of the rock and up the bank. We both trembled with anxiety when a nice fish made a grab at it; but he missed his shot, and could not be induced to make another, although we were offering him the identical gold Devon which proved so destructive elsewhere. The larger fish were not to be tempted either; but this was perhaps, on the whole, fortunate, because I doubt if it would have been possible to have brought one within reach of the net.

After we had reluctantly come to this conclusion, I reeled up, and we ascended above the

bridge. Here there was another beautiful but almost impossible pool, below a miniature fall which rushed, white and foaming, into the clear green. By dint of perilous climbing down ledges of rock as slippery as glass, we reached a point where a single spruce fir gave us something to hold on by; and from this halting-place my smiling guide managed to let me down, by means of the net-handle, to a hollow that was almost a natural cave, quite close to the water. The rock was so near overhead that casting was again extremely difficult, but by dropping the minnow into the rush of the fall I steered it towards the centre of the pool, and found a couple of decent fish. Unfortunately, the undertow was so strong that, as often as not, I was set at naught by the bait being kept under the rushing water instead of swimming down properly in the current; so at length I gave the order to retreat, and, after much crawling and hauling, found myself again on the bridge. I used this as a fishing-station for a few minutes, more for the fun of the thing than with the serious hope of catching the trout so far below me, though Eric showed

me how he could clamber down through the raspberry bushes to land anything that might fancy a minnow apparently dropped from the sky. And then, after all these vicissitudes, I returned to my starting-point, to make up the basket with the aid of the small and lively worm, which turned out to be the one kind of fly the trouts in that clear pool had been waiting all their lives to see.

I do not know how long I stood balancing myself on the edge of that slippery turf above the slab of rock; but I hooked thirty-three fish, of which I lost eleven on the stone and put back eleven. Not being the man who stops out all night to complete his dozen, I reeled up at that point, being well assured that I should be late for dinner: by late, I mean, of course, more than half an hour late. In this expectation I was not disappointed, and I was caught in a thunderstorm which would have been rated A1 at Lloyd's; but one gets dried, and changed, and cleaned, and fed at length, and, after the experiences of the day, I was not a little pleased to be able to go to bed with whole bones, for Eric

told me a doleful, amusing tale of a certain cow that navigated Grana-fossen on her own account, and was nearly "pulled dead" in consequence. I dream sometimes still of an angler struggling in mid-air, grasping desperately at a rotten tree, and trying to haul up gigantic trout from pools out of sight hundreds of feet below: then I perceive, to my speechless horror, that I am the angler, the branch breaks, and I awake regretting that I took that coffee; but the adventure is one I shall repeat.

XIV.

A Pocket Spate.

". . . the brook itself,
Old as the hills that feed it from afar,
Doth rather deepen than disturb the calm
Where all things else are still and motionless."
WORDSWORTH.

FOR pure enjoyment give me a fair day on a Norwegian salmon river far from the haunts of men, fish running, and a tight line; but of casting, as of all carnal pleasures, there cometh satiety at the last (especially if you work with an eighteen-foot greenheart), and then the jaded angler turns for variety from the unresponsive and diminishing river to the rype of the fjeld, and the trout in their several kinds that go up and down and have their business in the deep black lakes. It was on a broiling, cloudless August morning that

we abandoned the pursuit of the unfriendly *salar*, to make our way up a steep hill through thinly-planted groves of birch trees, now being cut for winter fodder, towards the plateau where the waters of the mountain streams have collected through centuries of time, in a hole of unknown and unfathomable depth, to form Foss-sjö. The abrupt ascent along the bank of a swiftly-flowing burn soon gave us some splendid backward views of the river valley below, the rich, scattered farmsteads, or *gaards*, on the opposite heights, and the distant snow peaks of a fringe of the Dovrefeld range. The ground opened out at the top of the first incline and presented a lovely stretch of heather and moss of every shade of colour, while the strawberries, raspberries, bilberries, and large amber *multibaer*, seemed to be trying to atone by their richness for the brief span of the northern summer.

With the assistance of our guides we found a path which avoided more than usually boggy places, so that the ponies which carried the ladies could cross in comfort, and we soon found ourselves in the sparsely-timbered

country where the rype loves to hide, and does it so skilfully that you will almost walk over him without putting him up, or even seeing him, if you have no dog to play detective. We caught sight of a few birds flashing their white feathers in the sun, and Eric told us that the capercailzie, the giant of the wood, comes here later in the season, and may often be seen like a huge fluffy ball in the top of a tall tree.

After scrambling up a steep bank by the side of a waterfall, which, I suppose, gives its name to the lake, we came upon the latter, a bright stretch of water covering about a hundred acres and studded with a few rocky islets bearing Scotch firs. The water was intensely dark in colour, and so shallow at the edge that bank-fishing was practically impossible without waders, with which we were unprovided; but as we had wisely sent up a boat on a hay-trolly, some of us at once embarked to try our luck in the middle. We soon discovered why our neighbour in the valley had so eagerly volunteered to drag this heavy boat up the hill for a modest consideration: he

was an ardent poacher, and, finding himself too carefully watched on the river to be able to practise his fascinating but nefarious trade there, had used our boat to net the lake extensively; however, we did not feel called upon to interfere with his trap, and proceeded to get out our lines.

The fish were rising freely, but not with the serious idea of feeding; and although we diligently tried a variety of flies on the finest gut, and also the minnows, which sometimes prove destructive, even in still water, and the mild and apparently succulent gelatine worm, we had but poor sport. There was thunder in the air, as the boatman remarked, and the August angler must not expect the fortune of his earlier brethren.

After a delightful picnic-lunch, for which the whole party collected, the male members began to feel the postprandial-pipe serenity so well known to the guild of the line, and, though the threatening clouds had made a grey sky, and all signs of fish had disappeared, we cheerfully set to work again. Making the boatman row a slow steady stroke, which

he did as if he were cutting out a slaver with muffled sweeps, I unreeled a long line adorned with a small white fly, a *March Brown*, and the ever-reliable *Alexandra*, the most deadly lure for the upland tarns. When these had sunk about a foot, and had fallen behind the ripple of the boat, the fish began to come up, and, notwithstanding the unpromising closeness of the atmosphere, we had some better luck. The white fly, which was on very thin gut, was quickly torn off the line, and its successor met the same fate; and finally, some good fish were killed on the tail-fly, the *Alexandra*, one or two giving plenty of work to the little nine-foot rod. After landing and catching a few small ones in the stream, which, though at first hopeless from lack of water, was easily swelled and freshened by raising a sluice-gate in a stone wall at the lower outlet of the lake, we had a merry tea, packed up our traps, caught the hobbled ponies, and started for home. I ought to mention, for the sake of those interested, that the *Black Gnat* paid best in the stream, though I have little doubt that if I had had an *Alexandra* of

the smallest pattern, it would have proved equally destructive.

The fish were not carried down the hill in bag or basket, but were strung through the gills on birch twigs, a method which adds a picturesque touch to the return of a fishing party. The journey homeward was uneventful except for the capture of a couple of small jays of a beautiful black colour, marked with fawn; they are rare, in this part of the country at least, and quite unlike their more brilliantly-attired cousins whose discordant note is so common in English woods: this pair was subsequently very skilfully skinned by the poacher; but I do not advise you to shoot such delicate little creatures with No. 6, even at long range.

When we were seated over the week-old newspapers after dinner, my wife happened to make the rare complaint that there were no more stockings to mend, so I suggested that she should embody her notion of the day's experiences in prose, if she was capable of the effort, so that we could compare two pictures of the same view created in the brains of two

artists working independently; and this is what she produced:—

"My husband laughed at me so dreadfully for not being able to catch anything with my new trout rod, that I made up my mind to consult the boatmen privately, induce them to give me what Mr. Wilton called 'the straight tip,' when he was here, and then surprise everybody some fine day with a basket of fishes, 'part as yellow as a Marygold, and part as white as a Lily.' I knew it was easy enough when you learned just how it was done, like water-colour sketching, or crewel-work, but I felt that I had not yet acquired the knack. I used to go out with my husband in the evening sometimes, and whip the water for half an hour or so after his labour with the big rod was over; but it never resulted in my getting a rise out of anything except that long-suffering master. I came to the openly-expressed conclusion that there were no fish to catch, though it was provoking to see what a large river there was for them to lie in; but when I made this observation to old Mr. Jackson, who seems a very old-fashioned kind

of fisherman, he only said there were plenty of fish but no water, which was obviously absurd. Anyhow, fly-fishing is rather tiresome at first, as you catch those hooky little flies in your frock or on bushes; but after a time I managed to learn how to throw the whole thing nicely upon the stream: however, I never caught anything.

"The boatmen, Eric and Anders, were generally engaged, of course, in their legitimate duties,—gaffing salmon for the men of our party when they fished, or dragging about guns and ammunition on the fjeld (when anybody went rype-shooting), splicing lines and drying them, and so forth,—but there was a vague sort of promise that they should take us up one day to a lake about three miles off to catch unsophisticated trout. I therefore got hold of them one evening after a blank day, and suggested fixing a date for the expedition. They were always awfully polite to me, and readily promised to suggest a day's rest on the morrow from salmon-fishing in order to try the 'licks,' if the bright weather held. A shower of rain would, of course, change everything, and glue

them to the valley. They admired my tackle in their funny broken English, and showed great interest in my artificial worms, which were made of gelatine expressly for ladies, and certainly looked very attractive; but as I am bound to say I never knew anybody who had caught anything with them, I suppose fish are like boys, and love cruelty.

"Anders and Eric were so very unlike each other that the younger Mr. Jackson used to call them Tweedledum and Tweedledee, which he declared were names easier to remember when he had a fish on than those given them by their godfathers and godmothers. They had other names derived from their fathers, and surnames from their respective villages, but no one ever took any notice of them. Dissimilar as they were in appearance, the chief difference I noticed in them was in their power of speaking English. Anders was immensely tall, and quite red in colouring,—hair, face, shirt, waistcoat, etc.,—and when I asked him a question he always laughed genially and said, 'Oh, I donaw'; but Eric would reply with great volubility, though not

always comprehensibly, using all sorts of strange words and phrases which made me roar with laughter: he was short, thin, and dark, with a grey beard, and wore black: two better sportsmen, I am sure, never pulled scull or gaffed fish in a Norwegian valley.

"On the day of my first fishing exploit we set off up the hill soon after breakfast, the men walking in front and behind the sturdy little ponies provided for us; mine was caparisoned with a wonderful saddle-chair, beautifully embroidered, and marked with the date, 1814. Norwegians seem to set great store by dates: I forget which of us it was that first suggested the holiday witticism that they bore the palm in that respect, but I make no claim to it myself.

"When the path was unusually precipitous, I got off to ease the pony,—I was riding *Strangles*,—but when I had walked a few yards Eric always feared I should become fatigued, and said persuasively, 'Will it please you to sit up again?' so my poor Rosinante did not have much respite. We were ascending along the bank of a rushing stream, which

had its rise in the lake whither we were bound, and on my inquiring conversationally if there were many fish in it, Anders replied in his customary non-committal manner; but Eric remarked smilingly, that he would raise the water and make it much presently, 'oh, very much, I s'pose,' which puzzled me not a little. At length we entered upon a mossy upland which seemed to be chiefly composed of bogs; and although the men were very clever at leading the ponies along the firmest paths, I got a little ahead of them once, and came utterly to grief, for, just as *Strangles* was plunging through a very soft place, the girths gave way, and I was deposited, saddle and all, in the soft wet mud. The consternation of the guides was exteme, for they held themselves responsible for everything; but as no harm was done, and I could answer in the most decided negative to the anxious query, 'Oh, are you badly bruk?' their jovial nature soon asserted itself, and they laughed at the recollection of my tumble for hours afterwards.

"Arrived at our destination, we chose a camping-ground, unsaddled, and prepared our

tackle. My husband took the rider of *Svart*, the other pony, and Anders in the boat for the first row, and caught one or two really nice trout, though I cannot think how he did it, because we had the same flies and, when I tried afterwards, I could not hook anything at all; but his rod was longer than mine, if that goes for anything. Now and then I saw those round ripples which show where the fish are, and we rowed softly up to them; but when I threw my line just on the very spot, the fish did not like it, and went off to a quieter place. I cannot think why a trout should like to swallow a piece of iron not half-hidden by a few feathers; but there is no doubt they do, as I proved myself later on. The colour of the fish caught in this lake was not at all nice, and anything farther from the Marygold or the Lily of old Izaak Walton I never saw; but, I suppose, it is due to environment and all that sort of thing, though it is odd that living creatures should be so impressionable, and nobody seems to know much about it. Mr. Jackson says that the naturalists in London are still quarrelling about the twelve-pound trout he

caught last year, and taking sides as to whether it was a giant specimen of the ordinary kind or an ordinary specimen of a giant kind. It does not seem to matter much either way, does it?

"After rowing all over the water and round the islands, we landed and had a jolly picnic close to where the stream runs out of the lake. I do not know when I have felt so hungry. The boatmen camped by themselves at a respectful distance, and solemnly munched their brown bread as if the idea never entered into their heads that anyone could offer them a choice sandwich, or a drop of smoky whisky, so incomprehensibly dear to the male palate; but you may be sure they were not forgotten, for, as all good children know, nothing is ever lost by that kind of behaviour. After the last crumb had disappeared, Anders showed us the very simple arrangement by which the water was prevented from escaping too quickly from the lake into the stream. It was a wooden door, something like a lock-gate on the Thames, only it pulled up and down instead of opening inwards, and regulated

exactly the depth of water in the stream. I soon understood what Eric had meant when he said that he would 'raise the water much,' and I was cheered by Anders' confident assertion that though I had failed in the lake I should catch plenty in the stream. I walked a few yards down with him to try the first pool, leaving the other lady to make a sketch, while Eric set off on a foraging expedition to a neighbouring *sæter*, or summer farmhouse, for milk. The pool was about as large as the kitchen floor in a small villa, and of a beautiful deep-brown colour; the water was only moving very, very slowly; and although I trailed my flies across and across in a graceful and enticing manner, nothing happened. I asked Anders why they did not bite, and if he thought they would like a gelatine worm. To both queries he replied, grinning, 'Oh, I donaw,' but added that it might be as well to try. I accordingly tried, with no result. I then inquired, rather fretfully, I fear, why the other man did not turn on more water and let out some of the lake trout, and sent Anders to investigate, and to lift the sluice-

gate himself, *strax*. Eric soon afterwards came hurrying down to say that the water was coming, bidding me prepare for a miraculous draught of fishes. I laughed at his enthusiasm and his English, and asked where my sketching friend was; to which he replied, peering under his hand, 'I cannot look her, she kips on drawing the lick, I specs.'

"Up to this moment, you understand, I had never caught a trout in my life; but just when I was fairly tickled at the honest Norseman's original expressions, he hastily drew my attention to the water, which was rising and curling and swirling in a most unwonted manner. In a minute all the little pools seemed joined into one rush, instead of being peacefully scattered about—in fact, it was a kind of artificial freshet, a pocket spate; and as I once more, with renewed hope, cast my line across it, I actually felt a tug. Then I knew that I had hooked a fish at last, and all the special directions I had been given crowded in confusion upon my brain, until I could not remember whether I ought to wade in, or run back, or let out string, or what. While in this

state of doubt, I instinctively gave a violent jerk, like that little girl we watched at Ullswater, and, much to my delight, saw a very nice trout jump out at the end of my line and fly airily over my head on to the bank, when the boatman seized it and administered the happy despatch. With much half-suppressed merriment he explained that this feminine method was quite contrary to the rules of the game, for fish should be landed more slowly, and by the net. However, I consoled myself by reflecting that the object of fishing is to catch fish, and I had caught one. Indeed, I very soon secured two; and pulled in the second for Eric to net in the orthodox manner, which he did very neatly. I do not think there were any more fish in that pool; and when we got down to the next likely place, the water was getting low again, and so, being tired, I soon left off, and went back to our camp to make the tea, much elated at having, at last, succeeded in really catching some trout all by myself. I need hardly say that my husband jeered a little when I showed him the twig on which my finny prey were strung,

and said he could claim the benefit of the Act passed to protect people from fish-breakfasts more than six days a week, and a lot of nonsense of that kind; but I secretly think he was rather proud of me."

Thus, you see, two people form different impressions of the same scenes and incidents. "Two children in two neighbouring villages" do not necessarily think alike on any subject, —domestic, artistic, or piscatorial.

A day or two afterwards, the season broke, the rains descended, and the floods came, and in a single night the wide, barren fjelds were covered with snow as far as the eye could reach. We had come to the end of our visit, and, the river being still regarded as hopeless, I decided to pay a last visit to Foss-sjö; so, after a lazy morning, I left the others to toast themselves indoors, and went off in my macintosh to hunt up Anders. Him I found mending the family shoes in the paternal mansion, and, merely pausing a moment to adjust a flannel chest-protector, he followed me cheerfully into the rain. Ponies were out of the question owing to the softness of the ground;

so we scrambled along as best we could on our ten toes, getting bathed by showers from every bough we touched. Oh, how wet it was, and what a contrast to our previous expedition! The bushes of juniper and birch, and the thick beds of heather, held innumerable douches, which they never failed to shed upon us as we passed; the bogs had trebled their depth and juiciness in a day, and had spread in every direction; the stepping-stones at the various fords had sunk out of sight — rivulets had become brooks, and brooks rivers. The grey fustian of the Norseman was plainly soaked through and through before we reached the boat; but when I asked him, sympathetically, if he was at all wet, he rubbed his knees and denied the imputation; but he looked chilled, despite the chest-protector. For my part, I was so numbed while fishing that, when we landed, I could not fasten a button of my macintosh until half a mile of brisk walking had restored my circulation. Flies proved of no avail in the peaty water under that leaden sky; and it was not until I tried a small silvery revolving minnow that I killed my first fish, which

was of a goodly size, but again very black. Afrer rowing up and down for a couple of hours with occasional moments of anxiety and satisfaction, I declared myself too cold for more, and, with only a small bag, decided to consider the season over. As we tied up the boat for the last time, I indicated briefly to my companion that it was an opportunity not to be lost of cutting the record for pedestrians between Foss-sjö and home; he acquiesced, and we cut it.

XV.

Lyngen Fjord.

"Send precepts to the leviathan
To come ashore."

Henry V.

An Easter holiday on a Devonshire trout stream is not, as a rule, like daily cold pork to those that love cold pork, "one long round of delirious joy," unless they have been so long in populous city pent that they are thankful for a breath of pure air; and, while contemplating a brace or two of tiny trout at the close of an arduous day, I am always strongly reminded of a very different fishing adventure in a very different place. You cannot hold a fire in your hand by thinking on the frosty Caucasus; but there is a grain of consolation in reflecting that all angling is not

equally unremunerative, and that to the patient sportsman the whirligig of time brings about its revenges. To-day the stream runs low and clear, and the unclouded sun throws your shadow with undesirable emphasis over the water, so that casting is but a weariness, and the fish laugh silently to themselves as they remark, in their proverbial philosophy, "in vain is the fly cast in the sight of any *farlo*," but you peacefully reflect on past success and future chances, and possess your soul in patience.

The adventure to which I so naturally look back on these occasions took place in the extreme north of Norway; and as I killed on the morning in question pretty nearly a ton of fish with my own right arm, I think I am justified in considering it a day of large things.

The Lyngen Fjord is too remote for much traffic; and though the hardy fisher-folk know well how its snow-clad mountains rise sheer from the sea, strangers are rare, and only one little coasting steamer disturbs the serenity of the landlocked bay as it goes to meet its larger neighbours plying from Tromsö to the

North Cape. The scenery is strikingly grand even for those wild parts, for the cliffs are abrupt, and an immense glacier, embedded among competing peaks, rolls almost to the unbeached margent of the sea.

One bright morning in September we were awakened in our bare-walled chamber by the voice of a fellow-lodger at the farm: he did not know much English, but, making the most of his slender vocabulary, he repeatedly shouted, "We have—much—fish," a phrase sufficiently suggestive to make us dress quickly and hurry downstairs for explanations. Our host spoke German fluently, and told us, as we accompanied him to the shore, that the fishing-boats were making a great haul. About a score of the clumsy, but seaworthy, vessels were visible in the offing, and of these a dozen or so were holding up a net half a mile long, in the middle of which was a bag measuring, I should say, thirty feet by ten.

We were immediately rowed out by a handsome, fair-haired and blue-eyed Norseman, a son of our farmer, and I was given a small gaff, with the simple direction that I was to strike

at the head of any fish that came within reach of my arm. I accordingly disregarded the scenery and peered over the side of the boat: in a few minutes I saw my opportunity, and dragged on board a long dark fish, weighing about ten pounds: it had a grey belly, and a white line down the side, and was, I believe, a ling, though the boatmen called it a *seigh*. I knocked it on the head and killed it, being a humane man; but after treating a second in the same way, I found business was too brisk for the exercise of the gentler emotions, for merely gaffing and landing fish that averaged as much as my first took up all my time.

One, two, three hours slipped by, during which the slaughter went on without interruption: as soon as a trawler became loaded she retired shorewards from her place by the net, and made way for one that was waiting her turn: when the bag was at last empty, our boat was deep in the water with corpses which filled it to our knees; and if there had been any lee-scuppers, they would have run blood with a vengeance, like those of a pirate schooner in the zenith of its prosperity. I said just now

that I claimed a ton of fish, and, upon reflection, I do not think it is an exaggeration: the total catch was 3877, and we were so exhausted that we had to fall tooth-and-nail upon the welcome coffee and bread brought down to us from the farm before we could take a proper interest in the rapid conversion of the ling into stock-fish: but every available hand was needed, and we were soon at work with the rest.

First the fish already dried are removed from the lines of birch poles which decorate the shore, and stacked for shipment: the fresh-caught monsters are then beheaded, split open to the tail, cleaned, and hung over the wooden lines, which are so high overhead that the hanging is done by a long fork: if you are clumsy, you get a clammy corpse swishing into your face: the entrails and backbones are thrown away, but the livers are collected in tubs, in which they are kept for times varying from one to twelve months, and then made into "cod-liver oil." The heads are dried separately in long strings, kept till winter, and then boiled for cattle food; the main part of the carcass, which forms the stock-fish of com-

merce, is simply dried in the sun, without being smoked or salted, and forms the most unattractive variety of food I ever saw: but it is often eaten raw by those who are used to it.

By the time the day's work was done the place was a veritable shambles, and everyone was weary; but as the English strangers departed to supper and well-earned repose, a faint column of smoke became visible across the fjord,—for though it wanted scarcely an hour to midnight, it was still day in that northern latitude,—and the farmer dispassionately informed us that the smoke was a signal to the boats that more fish had been sighted, and more labourers were wanted for the harvest. So, as we settled down to dreamless sleep, the sails were again hoisted, and the fishermen were constrained to turn seaward for the fourth consecutive night under the shadow of the Pipertind to reap their golden opportunity, and even through a fifth night that mutely eloquent pillar of smoke hung over the fishing-ground. It is difficult to understand how flesh and blood could bear it, but the northern heroes of toil managed it somehow, and the southern

markets reap the benefit. I fell into an idle speculation on the ruin which would be wrought in these distant fisheries by a change in the religion of Spain and Italy, and exercised myself in some valuable moral reflections on the power of the Papacy.

And now, when I regard a small bag of diminutive trout, I cannot help thinking of my day on the Lyngen Fjord, for the two occasions, though both enjoyable, are indeed at opposite ends of the scale. What a splendid year's fishing you would have if you could spread over a twelvemonth the mere weight of fish that a man may claim in one day when the ling are in! But the true angler will properly say that, though the world must be supplied with stock-fish, there is more sport in grassing a basket of half-pounders than in gaffing a couple of hundred fish twenty times their weight out of the salt sea wave. But if you are fired by a noble emulation, and really yearn for something sizeable, as I did when I went to see Anderson, what time he told me the moving tragedy of Mary Anne, go to the North Cape and fish for cod. Take a stout cord, and

a very large double hook, ornamented with a bright leaden body, shaped like a small fish: tie a pound of lead to the line, hurl out five and twenty yards from the steamer's deck, and wind up: if your captain has chosen a convenient spot for the attempt, where fish lie thick and hungry at the bottom, one of them will quickly grasp your hook, or your hook will grasp him in passing, and big things result. I remember seeing a companion thus catch a thirty-pounder which was too large to be dragged on board, and had to be put through a hole in the side of the ship: this voracious cod-prince had a two-pounder in his mouth, and another lord of the deep offered us a herring with his latest breath. For myself, I only secured four of about ten pounds a-piece, cod and ling, but our five lines took altogether a couple of hundredweight: if you want it big and plenty, Northward ho! and try cod-snatching.

Above Bear House

XVI.

Foul-hooked.

"*And his language to me in the boat, sir,*
Is frequent, and painful, and free."
BRET HARTE (adapted).

A MAN once said to me that he did not care about fishing, what he liked was *exercise*, which shows that I number amongst my acquaintance at least one very ignorant person; he fancied, I suppose, that the whole art of angling is practised by the Sunday watcher of bobbing floats, and that to be as lame as a tree is rather an advantage than otherwise to the poor deluded creatures who seek their recreation at the waterside; he could not appreciate the real labour of salmon-fishing, and it is difficult to do so properly until you have foul-hooked a heavy fish, fresh run, and with a notion of his respon-

sibilities. Casting a long line with a big rod, in sun or wind especially, tires the brain, the back, the arms, and the legs of even the most enthusiastic; but you can stop to breathe when you like, and even venture to sit down on the bank or in the boat, until the long-desired moment arrives when you hook your fish, and then your time and energies are no longer your own. Directly the tug is felt, your fatigue vanishes like a dream, and if the hold is a good one, and your tackle worthy, all goes well; but sometimes a clumsy fish muffs his shot, and then all sorts of complications arise. You begin to understand that something is wrong when you have seen your salmon in mid-air, and know that he is nothing very tremendous, but still he will not come: he must be well-hooked, because the hold does not break under a strong and continuous strain, but beyond that you know nothing; and as time goes on, you wonder at the suggestion that a minute per pound is well under the proper limit of time to allow for the whole performance from cast to gaff.

I gathered some experience in the following

manner: It was very late in the season when I arrived at a certain log-built, match-boarded house on a certain river in the middle of Norway, but the news that nearly 2000 lbs. weight of salmon had been killed during the previous months made me hope that all the good things were not yet over, and I was early on the water. Anders, the tall, red-whiskered, flat-nosed boatman, was told off to carry my gaff and tackle-bag; and having crossed the hay-field beyond the picturesque farm buildings, we embarked in one of the clumsy, leaky boats of the country, which you can buy for the price of a silk hat: they are heavy to row, but impossible to upset, a pleasant quality to reflect upon when a big fish takes you down a piece of tumbling water, which at first looks anything but navigable to a British eye.

After a little unsuccessful casting we floated into a long even pool with a high tree-topped bank on one side and dry stones on the other, which plainly told that the stream had fallen to its minimum: in a few minutes a salmon showed himself, and gave notice by his vermilion colouring that he had been residing on

the spot for some time, and by his size that he would probably require attention for a quarter of an hour. But in his lunge at the enticing gleam of a *Jock Scott* he had shown a crass unskilfulness or unwillingness, for the barb struck him in the shoulder, and he ran out forty odd yards of line in a manner which caused the excited reel to scream aloud like some strong syren in its agony. A severe tussle ensued, and it was not until after the effluxion of a good half-hour that Tweedledum lifted him with native and dexterous politeness on to the heap of stones. He was truly of a red favour, but only weighed half a dozen pounds after all: the hook was firmly embedded just below the pectoral fin.

This was, comparatively speaking, a trifle, and I only mention it as a prelude to a more important episode. The river yielded nothing else that day or the next; but rain having fallen on the fjelds, there came at last a welcome rise in the water, and at noon on the third day I was fast in another red fish in the same pool as before. This fellow, however, was fairly hooked in the lower jaw, and gave good sport of the

ordinary kind, being ultimately despatched in sixty minutes from the start, timed by Messrs. Waterbury's patent, short-wind, seventeen and sixpenny chronometer: he was of a goodly shape, and scaled some baker's dozen of English pounds.

We re-entered the boat, floated down over a stretch of very rough-looking water, turned a sharp corner, and found ourselves in a long deep reach, which I have good cause to remember. The bottom was somewhat light-coloured, except in the middle of the stream; and about two hundred yards below us the river divided itself into two branches, which became reunited beyond a large wooded island.

I tried a fly without success, and we landed for lunch.

Now, it so happened that I had brought a small stout pike rod and a new spoon that I was anxious to try with a Malloch casting-reel, but Anders, a strong Conservative, thought scorn of spoons, and did not wish to waste valuable time on such novel gewgaws; so, whilst he was contentedly finishing a fill of my tobacco,

I put together the trolling-rod, and hurled the spoon into the pool "from shaw," as he calls it. The water within reach was, of course, too clear and too still for a serious attempt; but a minute trout followed the glittering metal to the bank, and this so impressed my man that he himself condescendingly suggested trying a few casts from the boat. I assented, but without much enthusiasm, for the sun was bright, and the water everywhere like glass for transparency; however, as I was reeling up after the second cast, and the bait was not more than twenty feet from us, near the top of the water, there was a flash of something decidedly big from the depths, and the line ran out again.

"Is it a trout?" asked Anders cheerfully.

I said I thought not.

"You sit down," the man responded; "I hup very large."

I sat down accordingly. It was exactly a quarter-past two.

Though I live long, I suppose I shall never forget the remainder of that afternoon. We saw nothing whatever of the fish for the first

hour, and Anders varied the monotony of his slow, even stroke by repeatedly informing me that this was "biggest fish he ever knew," and, to judge by the way the enemy took his fathoms of line when he felt that way, I thought it very probable: many times he let us come within a few feet of his resting-place, and then went off, for seventy or eighty yards, like a Great Northern express. The neighbouring haymakers abandoned their labours and collected in a stolid group on the high bank; but whether they mutely speculated upon the size of the fish or the fatuity of foreign anglers, I could not guess. They gazed and gazed, and faintly smiled, and kept on saying nothing. During the second hour Anders came to the openly-expressed conclusion that the fish was a troll or demon, and would never be caught at all. For my part, I felt that two hours was quite long enough to be staring at my line among the swirling eddies in the bright sunlight; but I kept it tight, with every nerve on the stretch, set my teeth yet again, and waited. Nothing that we could do would induce the fish to come into shallow water; and I began

to think he must hear and understand the boatman's mournful response to my ignorant suggestions: "I cannot gaff him i' middle; bad plas," for when we rowed round him, and bored him steadily in-shore, he always concluded the manœuvre by dashing out above or below us, and then the whole thing had to be done over again. There were also periods of absolute sulkiness, which time after time brought my heart into my mouth with apprehension, lest the wily fellow should have buried the hooks in a convenient rock and gone off rejoicing; but on each occasion a stone or two eventually moved him, and he was away again, as fresh as ever, on his headlong career.

At five o'clock, when less fortunate sportsmen were turning their attention to the mild refreshment associated with that hour, we thought we perceived signs of flagging in our plucky foe; so I landed for the third time, and tried to coax him towards the bank. He did, indeed, now come to the top languidly, "Rend'ring faint quittance, wearied and outbreathed," turned on his silvery side, and seemed to be ready to make terms; but no

amount of judicious pulling could bring him within reach of the gaff; and the haymakers laughed silently.

Nearly half an hour was spent in these fruitless attempts, and at last, in sheer despair, we took to the boat again to make trial of a shallower place lower down, a proceeding which the salmon accepted as an indication that we were sufficiently rested for further travel, for he immediately started down river at a spanking pace, and dragged us doggedly for nearly half a mile, over shallows and through deep holes, before we could pull him up. At last, at six o'clock, he paused, far down in a pool of inky blackness and mysterious recesses beneath a precipitous cliff; and as there was a most convenient little sandy beach just opposite, we determined to make a great effort to get him out. Nor were we disappointed: inch by inch I drew him across, and, after a few minutes of steady and continuous hauling, succeeded in bringing him within the fatal circle of the steel; then of course the unerring Norwegian struck home, and I theatrically dropped the pike rod with a gasp of genuine relief.

It was exactly four hours from the start, and we were a good mile below my fly rod and tackle-bag, which, with Anders' coat, were still reposing by the crumbs of the luncheon table beneath a birch grove. The fish was fresh-run and foul-hooked in the shoulder, two of the three hooks having deeply penetrated the flesh; but he only weighed a trifle over fifteen pounds. He would probably have succumbed sooner on a big rod with a heavy line, but I do not think that, with the tackle I had, I could have shortened his struggles by a minute.

Anders gave an almost British "Hooray," and hastened off along the bank to get our luggage, and, I have little doubt, to reassure the haymakers on the subject of trolls. I was pleased to hear that another angler in the same water had had a fish on for the same length of time earlier in the year, but had lost him. I never contemplated such a catastrophe as that for myself; and when the boatman serio-comically suggested that, with this demon, there would come a time when we should have to break the line or the hold in order to get home by midnight, I coldly and firmly

explained that the fish and I were going back to the house in the same cart, regardless of what day of the week it might be. I think that if it had been my ill-fortune to "loose him" after all our trouble, I should have let fall the unmanly tear and the ungodly word; as it was—

Hæc olim meminisse juvabit.

XVII.

In a Knot.

". . . whom the fates have mark'd
To bear the extremity of dire mishap!"
Comedy of Errors.

THOSE who go a-fishing for the Princes of the great river are usually armed either with experience or advice. There is, of course, the Retiarius, or net-fiend, who needs neither; but he is the foe of all true men, and may be here dismissed with an anathema. The young angler who is equipped only with advice never appreciates the solemn warnings of his elders on the prime necessity of attention to detail; nothing but practice, disasters, and the love that is bought by actual loss can teach that. There are perhaps few, if any, who have killed the first half-dozen salmon hooked, and the risk of losing a good fish is of course infinitely

greater to a man, however skilful, who cannot rely on his knots and his gut as he would on his mother's affection; but if he is really expert, he will have served his apprenticeship, and will not fear a vote in reduction of his salary for negligence.

The worst part of it is, that the particular fish you lose through defective gut or recalcitrant reel is always a monster (or he would not have broken you, don't you know), and the longer you have him on, and the more feeling you get up about it, the more likely he is to find out your weak spot and take his legitimate advantage. The rule is simple: do not have any weak spots; that is, do not give any points to the adversary which prudence and diligence can save. Cricketers know that the man who bats with a loosely-made cane-handled willow, which clicks when he hits the ground, deserves that unfortunate and wholly mistaken verdict from the umpire when the whole field simultaneously cry out "How's that?" and the bewildered professional raises the fatal finger. A good workman, says a musty and somewhat foolish old proverb, never finds fault with his

tools, but then he does not willingly use bad ones; and the skilful fisher discards the untested and untrusty whenever possible. But some defects are only discovered by the ruin that they cause; and therefore if I tell how I ought to have lost a couple of fine salmon, but somehow did not, I must not be charged with misleading the young, or taken to hint that the most careful sportsman bestows a thought too much upon the efficiency of the smallest detail in his equipment. I am nothing if not moral, and would rather die than poison the springs.

As the intelligent reader will recollect, I have said before that I am not as immaculate as people think; and although I could name several ladies who would stake their last hairpin on my being the most skilful fisherman in the world, I willingly admit that there is another man who is quite as good ("still naming no names"); and so, partly for his sake and partly to encourage the despondent, I may as well begin by admitting that I lost a whopper the other day all on account of a casting-reel which I ought to have given to a friend or sold to an enemy. It was a beautiful reel, and for

measuring a long cast on the lawn quite unsurpassable; the mechanism, too, was so ingenious that I continued to use it until it broke in half, although I soon found out that the first rule for fishing with it was that it must be kept dry, for as soon as it got saturated it developed a trick of sticking in a manner that would have provoked a Dean: a sudden jerk was fatal to it. Now, you cannot fish much and keep your line dry. I was provided with a bottle of the most enticing prawns that ever swam in glycerine; and though it was late in the year and the fish were quite contented to read sermons in stones at home instead of going marketing, I could not doubt that something interesting would happen as soon as that delicious pink morsel went sailing down the river: but still I used that reel. The first cast was a very fine one, notwithstanding that some previous experiments with a minnow had soaked the undressed silk; and the moment the prawn touched the water at the head of a deep black pool there was a sudden rush, a large head and shoulders emerged from the wavelets, and I felt the tug we all dream of. But, alas! the delicious ting-

ling sensation of pleasure had hardly time to get down to my toes before it was succeeded by a twinge of mental gout: there was a momentary stoppage as the wet coils of line perversely stuck together, and the fish, with the ingenuity which makes him such a worthy foe, took advantage of my misfortune to wrench off the desired object without touching the hooks, and in a flash he had returned triumphantly to the bottom, to explain his methods and boast of his dexterity to his less adventurous companions. I prawned vigorously for some days after that, but the news of the danger had got abroad in the river, and I caught nothing.

So much for the seamy side; the other accidents were less exasperating, and the relation of them is free of any moral, unless it be that you should always make the best of a bad job.

I was using a large split-cane rod which, with all the British enjoyment of a bargain, I had secured at a low figure because the ornamental gloss had been to a certain extent dimmed by too long a sojourn upon the market; and although it had been weakened palpably by a

severe course of worming in Scotland with heavy leads, it was still to all appearance a very serviceable tool. My reel was purchased from a friend who said he was reluctantly parting with it because it was too large; but we shall have another conversation about that when we meet, and if I can sell him the patent casting-reel, or a second-hand bicycle, I shall do so.

It was a bright August morning, with a suggestion of thunder; and although the river, which had risen nearly a foot the day before, was rapidly falling, it was not yet in good order, and the outlook was unpromising. However, the oldest rule in the book says that you never know what luck you are going to have; so I ordered my cart and rattled off up the valley, along five miles of a road which was evidently made for tobogganing. The sun sent slanting lances of brilliance through the firs and birches, lit up the vivid moss at their feet, and sparkled on many a brook as we passed through dells and glades plainly designed for happy gnomes, and looked back upon the valley intended as plainly for happy men; and having wound

through two or three rich homesteads, we came to my favourite pool ("same which" I lost the fellow on the prawn), where we took out fly-books and considered the situation. Anders looked at the sky, swept a doubting eye along the river, shook his Rufus mane, and set about baling the rain-water from the boat.

A rapid stream rushed high over great boulders into the grand majestic pool which is to other pools what the river is to other rivers, or the lion to other beasts: that day it was full, lying brown and deep beneath its overhanging ledge of grey rock, or making a wide still back-water under the giant firs on the opposite side. At the lower end the sun glittered on the broad, smooth, swirling tail, and beyond that the great river swept over more stones, and clattered down a straight quarter of a mile or so of rough ground to its next angle.

The stream above is fished from the bank, though the pool itself can only be reached from the boat; so, while Anders was too engaged with the baler to insist on any particular fly, I assumed an air of colossal independence, put on a large *Black Dose*, poised myself upon a

convenient but slippery rock, and began to fish. I was not particularly hopeful; but existence on that spot, and under those conditions, was happiness in itself: so why worry? I delivered a short cast, and nothing happened.

At the second attempt, however,—Anders was not looking, but he will bear me out that it was only the second,—the fly travelled out to the neck of the pool, and in a moment I was fast in a fish: as much to his surprise as mine, I make no doubt. He rushed below, remembering early maternal warnings, and then, receiving no sympathy from the lady to whom I paid some attention later, he tried the upper air, and gave an exhibition of amphibious gymnastics. After twenty minutes of healthy exercise, he bowed to inexorable fate and a tight line, and held up his hands, so to speak: the bright gaff quivered at the victim's side (to adapt the bard), and he laid his ugly red head peacefully on a flat stone, Anders gleefully airing his English sporting vocabulary by saying "No blank!" which does not mean "you need not swear," but is a gladsome foretaste of our not unsuccessful return at eventide for congratulations. A decent interval for

tobacco having elapsed, we took to the boat, and I began to cover the head of the pool, where it could not be reached from the bank, with the patience and keenness which naturally follow an early success. I suppose the lady I have referred to concluded that a *Black Dose* and a subsequent mad gambol were things equally fit for both sexes, for in three minutes she was imitating her late lord, only more so. She evidently weighed something beyond his fifteen pounds, and her rushes were terrific: after three or four leaps she went off like John Gilpin with the post-boy at his heels, and then, when she had taken fifty yards at a go, the check of the reel broke. Just at that moment I should have heard of its former owner's death from starvation with complete indifference.

I had previously landed, and, being therefore on the stones at the time, was able to plunge forward, holding the rod over my shoulder, so as to have a yard or two to spare for the next jerk; but the fish paused, in fatal ignorance of my difficulty, or equally fatal indifference.

I need hardly say that I briefly and forcibly conveyed an intimation of the difficulty to the

Norseman, who was leisurely taking the brass button from the point of the gaff; and when its disgraceful nature dawned on him, he almost screamed with rage. "This reel not going?" he gasped, his brows buckled in a concentrated fury; and seizing the offending winch in both his ample paws, he forced the handle round so as to crash completely what remained of the checking apparatus. After a few moments' energetic pushing and swearing, the ruin was accomplished; and when the red lady again started on her course, the line ran out silently and easily, though, of course, much too rapidly. I stayed it as well as I could with my finger; and the fish, being well-hooked in the upper jaw, was in due time drawn within a yard of the boat, from the covert of which Anders prefers to use his weapon. The moment she felt the steel, however, she gave such a prodigious bound that she bent it quite out of shape. Barring the fact that (as Shikspur says) she was multitudinously incarnadined, she was a very nice nineteen-pounder.

We lunched cheerily that day, and I chaffed Anders a good deal about his thunder and his

gloomy prognostications generally; but he was too cheerful to mind, and offered to carry home four fish like the last, if I would catch them.

The question was which reel was to be used, the one with the uncertain check or the one with none at all, and we reluctantly decided on the latter, fishing down two more pools in glaring sunlight with a *Jock Scott*; a giddy young trout impaled itself, and we descended lower to another splendid pool, where a fresh-run fish took the fly and unsuccessfully tried to tie the line round some floating balks of timber; however, the broken reel was good enough for him, and I freely forgave the vendor as I helped Anders to embed the four fish in a basket of fresh alder leaves. The journey home was a slow triumph, which we took by easy stages; for although I carried the salmon rod, tackle-bag, and my own ample macintosh, the boatman had to stagger beneath a weight I could hardly lift—fifty pounds of fish, a coat, and a heavy waterproof. There was rejoicing in the match-boarded loghouse that August evening.

The reel was duly mended; but when we next started on the trail, it appeared that the

rod was in a sickly state: it was decidedly weak in the middle and top joints, and an hour's casting made it distinctly worse: however, it was no good grumbling or going home, so we did the best we could, and mishap number two resulted. The varnish of the country had been applied by Eric to the ferule of the middle piece, and the only effect of this potent fluid was to prevent the top from being firmly fixed in its proper place. After a morning's unrewarded work, the latter began to show symptoms of a new disease; for it threatened to break off close to the base, which made it very difficult to get out a long line, and, as no fish were moving, the day seemed lost. But now and then I managed to send the fly to a sufficient distance, and was at last rewarded by a strong pull. Anders joyfully noted in his usual manner that it was "biggest fish you catch," even before the salmon took his first jump and showed himself; but I was despondently absorbed in contemplating the ruin of the machine, for the top point had evidently decided to form an angle of ninety-one or so with its neighbour, and it seemed unlikely that any-

body could kill even a sea-trout on such a miserable collection of sticks. The sapient will have already guessed, however, that I did not lose that fish: the cane was too tough to break quite off, and, by giving the fellow a great deal of butt I got him in at length, and found that he weighed over the score. If he had not been in the river a long time, he must have broken me altogether; but he was somewhat lethargic, and from his appearance we judged that he had lost six or seven pounds at least, and was perhaps weary of life.

When you cannot afford to buy a good rod, borrow the needful from somebody who can; and when you are in a knot, sit tight and don't let on.

THE BEST POOL.

XVIII.

Anders.

"Here stand a pair of honourable men."

Dogberry. . . . *"our watch, sir, hath indeed comprehended two aspicious persons, and we would have them, this morning, examined before your worship."*

Much Ado about Nothing.

To no men, not even to tackle-makers, owners of fishing-rights, or patient teachers, are anglers more indebted than to those sympathetic and enduring companions who carry their gear, gaff their salmon, and share the toils of pleasure. If we could follow the business of life with half the zest of these hardy sons of labour, we should be happy indeed; but then, to be sure, their work is essentially pleasant, and, according to the Stevensonian philosophy, art is paid in the doing, and their task is partly the exercise of a kind of art, animated, moreover, by the excite-

ment of the chase. The Norwegian boatman may not be essentially superior to the Scotch gillie or his English equivalent, but I have had less experience of the latter varieties, and, reflecting on the two I have mentioned in these papers, I cannot hope to meet their superior in any country; and I fancy that the Norseman provides more amusement than Donald or William, on account of his super-comic attempts at the language of his masters, and the little outlandish customs that he practises: for these are all his own. If my friends Eric and Anders are not in any way typical, they deserve all the more to be celebrated in print, so that their virtues may, by a gradual process of filtration, become traditional. Firstly, then, Anders, for a time my own special bodyguard and henchman, is six feet high, soldierly, and as plain as an unshaven rustic can be. Capable of bearing any amount of fatigue without a complaint or a sulky glance, incapable of hinting at the gift of so much as a drop of whisky or a sandwich, he is more of a comrade than a servant, and, except in that little matter of the choice of a fly, open to argument on any subject, con-

cluding every discussion with the invariable "what you like best."

He is never tired of giving or taking a lesson in conversation or natural history, and would rather carry home the heaviest bag of the year on his ample military shoulder than leave it at a cottage to be sent for by the cart. All day he rows, through rapid and shallow, making use of every current and "beckwater" with perfect knowledge and noiseless dexterity, saying softly now and then, as occasion arises, "Dis very good plas," or "We'll have enoff of it," or "Too shellow he-ar; we go *low*er down; you reel oop," which I do obediently, and on we glide.

He takes a great interest in tackle: "Is it new? How much it cost? It is good rod. Very good rod in Throndhjem 40 krone;" and when a fish is hooked he says, "I hup good tak," which means that he desires the prey to take hold firmly. His first remark, however, as I have said elsewhere, when the tug is felt in fishing from the boat, is, "You sit down"; and he repeats this oddly-sounding order firmly and persistently, in spite of queries and com-

ments, until I comply. He generally continues, "Do not hold him too strang," and then sets about preparing the gaff, after rowing to a convenient landing-place. "Come to shaw" is the next *mot d'ordre*; and when the critical moment arrives, there is no bungling—one clean stroke, and all is over.

At first I thought him rather slow with the steel, and generally urged him, with shouts of encouragement, to have a go at the fish before the proper moment had arrived; but he was imperturbable, and no speculator in off-chances. On one occasion he made me roar aloud in irresistible laughter amid intense excitement. The sun was dazzlingly bright on the brown water, a fifteen-pounder was having a few last exhibition kicks at the end of my line without properly presenting his side for the operation, and the boatman sturdily refused to take an uncertain shot. "Gaff him! gaff him! Why don't you gaff him?" I shouted again and again to the stooping figure by the boat, until his patience gave way, and he cried out, in ludicrous exasperation, with a wave at the bright upshot of the sun, "I do not know him! I cannot look

him! I cannot gaff him unless I know him; and I do *not* know him!"

Eventually he knew him.

The origin of some of his oddities of expression was sufficiently obvious; he could not, for instance, understand the difference between look and see, ask and tell, lose and loose. "How big is this fellow, Anders?" "Oh, I dough nut: I cannot look him." "Why do you think the top pool will be too high?" "Oh, Eric ask me so." He surprised me one morning by stopping to "go to shaw" in the middle of a journey from one pool to another. "What's the matter?" I asked in some surprise. "These *shmall ladish* going 'cross," he answered; and then I perceived two peasant maidens standing on the bank, whom we presently ferried over. To a chivalrous mind, like his mind, there are few social distinctions, and all in petticoats are "ladish," despite kerchief and homespun. When I first made his acquaintance, he was not very proficient in the lingo of foreign sportsmen, and met every question with an urbane smile, a doubtful shake of the red locks, and "Oh, I dough nut"; but by degrees he improved wonder-

fully, and would respond to such commonplaces as "This looks a good pool; I hope we shall catch something here," by saying "I hup so," or "I should like it"; and when I was fast in a fish he would murmur, "I wish we had him i' boat," "I hup we not loose him," and so forth. On the rare and painful occasions of a loss he would ejaculate apprehensively, "Fish not coming? or-r-r fish going? Dis ting bery bad dat," which was his favourite form of objurgation, and frequently occurred during storms of rain and rumbles of thunder. He unaffectedly told me his hereditary and local names, and those of his father, wife, and children, and explained the convenient system upon which such titles are arranged. He had lost all his four brothers, who, I fancy, were attacked by consumption, the scourge of Norway (save one drowned amongst the pine logs); and so I was never comfortable when he was getting wet; but his heavy "meshintosh" was too cumbersome for ordinarily wet days, and only burdened him in "washing rain," when most people would have stayed at home.

At the luncheon halt I always shared my

sandwiches with him, though he made a practice of never seeming to expect such a condescension to happen again, and, having brought me the best water obtainable, took up his position at a little distance, to munch brown bread from a neatly-tied crimson "pocket chief." He could be blindly trusted with the flask, for he never took a drop more from it than the dose I had allowed to myself, and I rewarded him by an extra nip when we had been particularly successful. The Local Veto is suspended in our valley.

On Sundays he was very gorgeous (although he never wore a coat on that festival), for his new red shirt, best trousers of broadcloth, and embroidered vest—the black diamond-shaped front being worked in green silk—made a fine appearance; and he also distinguished the blessed day of rest by scraping the front of his chin with a razor: it would be hyperbolical to call it shaving. I fancy that he was contemplating the possibility of cultivating a pointed beard like that of the handsome Eric, for I twice caught him examining his Newgate fringe and stubbly chin in a minute brass-

bound pocket mirror, and the solemn vanity with which he pressed a horny finger against a bristly dimple made me shake with hastily-disguised amusement.

On the fjeld, as on the river, Anders was indefatigable; for on the way up through the steep, narrow gullies, he carried everything, gun included, and only showed the nature of his exertions by the freedom of his perspiration. When he was dry, he knelt over a sparkling spring and quenched his thirst at Nature's fountains; and when he was hungry, he contentedly munched his oaten loaf: his keenness never relaxed, even when he had been rowing me about in a thunderstorm and was chilled to the marrow, and he only feared an empty day. It gave me constant satisfaction to hear his cheery congratulation ("No blank, oho!") when the first fish was netted or gaffed, or the first rype picked up; and I may truly say that while he more than halved the labours of pleasure, he greatly added to the gaiety of our expeditions. His friendliness was universal; and he never passed man, woman, or child without a kindly greeting. I wondered what he found

to say, and, in the pursuit of anthropological knowledge, was impertinent enough to question him upon some of these wayside exchanges, and he obligingly translated his sentences, which certainly showed the simplicity of his mind: for instance, he had said to three acquaintances walking down the hill to the next *gaard*, "Are you going on down?" to which they gave the natural monosyllabic reply: not otherwise do Oxford undergraduates greet each other after the Vacation, "How d'ye do, old chap; when did *you* come up?" And when I thought he had been boasting to a haymaker about our success, he had only said, "It's a fine day for the hay."

I do not think we ever passed "a lady" upon the river-bank without the genial offer of a free passage, whether she was a stranger crossing from one farm to another, or a cottager going "to make the corn"; and Anders was welcome to the best the larder afforded in every *sæter* we ever called at. When, in the fulness of time, such a man shall pass away, it will surely be no more than justice to say of him the hackneyed and often misused words,

" beloved and regretted by all who knew him," or, in the language of the humane and gentle-minded Steele, " With that breath expired a soul who never indulged a passion unfit for the place he is gone to." And his pale-faced little son, the *gut*, may thoughtfully reflect as he tills the paternal acre, " No legacy is so rich as honesty."

ERIC.

XIX

Eric.

"I knew him, Horatio; a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy." Hamlet.

ERIC is of medium height, with sloping shoulders, and, as described by the lady who fished in the pocket spate, forms a strong contrast to his fellow in mind and person. The grey in his neat beard accords well with the possession of a grandchild, for "me tochter" has been married to "me tochter's man" for half a dozen years; but the elder of the two boatmen is blessed with something more than the larger experience that belongs by right to seniority, for he is endowed, in addition, with a truly marvellous versatility of talent. The chief superficial difference, however, lies in the gift of speech; for although,

on our expeditions, Anders had a word for every passer-by, we could not carry on a sustained conversation with each other, and notwithstanding my continual efforts I found that a sudden question, especially one beginning with "How" (a word he never fully grasped), frequently puzzled him altogether. One day we came across some sheep at a distance from a farm. I wondered how the farmer would secure a half-wild animal if he wanted to sell it, and this was the result of my inquiry:

"Anders, how do you catch a sheep?"

"Oh, ship; yes, very good," he said approvingly, reminiscent of chops.

"How do you *catch* him?"

"Oh, I dough nut."

I explained the meaning of the word "catch," arguing from fish, the known, the catchable, to sheep, the unknown, the uncatchable, and then returned to my original question; but the Norseman only laughed and said:

"Catch, oh yes; catch ship, yes," which caused me to shout interrogative "How's" at him until the birch woods rang again.

With Eric it was very different. He never stopped talking when on his feet, and even in the boat he would occasionally pour out torrents of narrative, cataracts of half comprehensible description, and streams of racy comment. His knowledge of English was extensive and quite peculiar, and the only time he ever was at fault in language or natural history was when he first saw a heron winging its majestic way over a distant reach of the river.

There is no boorishness in the man's rusticity, and he is equipped with all the sterling qualities which make Norwegians successful in a new country like the United States, where so many live in exile: it goes without saying, therefore, that he can live on the minimum of food and sleep, lie on a hard bed, smoke rubbish with contentment, and turn his hand to anything; but he can do more than this, for he is an expert in many trades.

First, he is a master smith; and between his evening farewell, after his modest glass of *aqua-vitæ*, and his morning greeting to you through the gunroom window, he will turn

you out a gaff or a hunting-knife which will shame all the gimcracks in Piccadilly: nothing is too large or too small for him to tackle, and he can put an iron shoe on a lady's walking-stick or pony with equal willingness and success; but these things are mere trifles to what he would describe as "a good mekanik," a title of honour that he has earned by showing that he can doctor a gun or a salmon reel as if he had devoted a life's attention to nothing else.

The next point in his catalogue of objective virtues is his intimate acquaintance with the haunts and habits of fish; every boatman worthy of the name can splice a rod, manage a pair of sculls, and carry home a salmon, but no one knows a river or the ways of things that swim therein like a converted poacher; and there is a story—but such slanders are out of place in the eulogy of Eric: why rake up the past? Suffice it to say that he has the management of the fish-house, is godfather to all the fry in the river, watches over the Homeric battles of the males and the spawning of the females in the convenient

shallows which are haunted by great piratical grey crows, and can tell at any hour, by private marks in the pool below his log-built house, what the water is like in every turn of seven miles, what places are fishable, and what are temporarily useless. As he rows himself across in the early morning, he makes up his mind what it will be best for the fishermen under his charge to do during the day; and having once come to a decision in private, nothing short of an earthquake will move him. He advises his master upon a certain course of action much in the same way that Her Majesty's Ministers, House of Lords, or Privy Council advise their Sovereign. It is no use arguing; and, besides, he is always right.

This despotism is benevolent, and its edge is tempered by a charming urbanity; indeed, Eric's manners and demeanour under all circumstances are the wonder of friends and strangers, and would be the envy of courtiers and diplomatists if any such cattle ever strayed into the valley. He looks you in the face with his kindly grey eye, and, using that silent language which can only be spoken by

friend and friend, has a sympathetic and humorous smile for every incident or accident of the chase. When I lost a fish with Anders, we relieved our feelings in unison by bilingual imprecations of sulphurous intensity; but when anything tragic occurred on the rare occasions on which I had Eric to myself, he always said something which changed irritation to merriment, and plucked the flower of pleasure from the nettlebed of mishap.

Like Anders, he calls the ladies by their Christian names without any prefix, because, in his noble mind, a woman needs no empty title to imply respect; but the gentlemen are treated more conventionally, and two, father and son, are respectively spoken of as Mr. Old Jackson and Mr. Young Jackson, to distinguish them from each other and from the sons of the soil.

Eric has not quite the lithe activity of the younger and taller Anders: he does not walk so fast, for at fifty-five it is impossible to simulate the elasticity of a lost youth; but he never shows fatigue, and sets about preparing tea when we are all dog-tired as if he had not

been rowing hard all day and carrying heavy fish for miles in the lengthening shadows at a steady jog-trot pace. The cheerful afternoon refreshment which the ladies have gradually forced upon us is taken at some prearranged rendezvous to which they and the anglers converge: tea-cups and kettle appear miraculously from some secret *cache*, and neat little impromptu spoons are deftly cut from birch twigs to stir the fragrant beverage.

"Where you get this tea?" asks Eric with a shake of his wise grey head, as he puts the gauze-covered packet of it into the kettle, which is also teapot. "It is not China or Congo. No, we cannot buy it *sam' size* here." He values no present of whisky or *aqua-vitæ* like a packet of Ceylon, and always preserves the exhausted leaves for use at the family table, where we hope the second brew may not prove too strong for the digestion of "me tochter's child."

Though a far better linguist than Anders, he is not infrequently obscure, and often unintentionally comic; but every novel expression is delivered with such a merry twinkle, that it

is difficult to believe that he is not doing it on purpose, while it is impossible to reproduce the true inwardness of that rich humour. "You going on," he says to me, when he is packing up. "I running *strax* following immediately after;" and the same form of speech occurs in conversation on slippery rocks: "You catching the garf-handlé and not slipping;" and when Anders reports a heavy bag at the end of the day, he smiles approval and says, "Mr. Young Jackson must have a prize, I s'pose." On hearing of our complaints that rype were unapproachably wild on the fjeld, he announced that a dog would arrive in a few days, "then you bring home more than you can carry, I am safe"; and after modestly presenting me with my knife, he refused all payment, and turned the subject in the most delicate manner, by a glance at my lately unshaven chin, and the remark, "It is good for the beard, I am responsible."

One Sunday he came upon us sketching near his house, and his polite admiration, as he stood and watched us, was most entertaining; for my part, I was convinced that if he

devoted a couple of days to that untried branch of art he would have beaten us all.

He is the handy-man and universal genius of the valley; and when an unfortunate labourer showed signs of insanity, it was Eric who was immediately sent for to act as doctor, nurse, and guardian until proper arrangements could be made for the man's safety. He is also a trapper of birds and beasts, and lightened that memorable long wet tramp from Grana-fossen by describing to me how to snare the capercailzie in the winter darkness. "It is sam' you call trap; yes, it is trap." He also on that occasion gave me a history of his difficulties with his landlord, who enforced his ancient right of service on the most inconvenient days of the year. "He not liking my getting so much money, he not liking my being boatman to the gentlemen." He deeply regretted that we could not have a sheep belonging to "me tochter's man," not because of the loss of profit to the family, but because it was such a good specimen. "It is good, very good ship," said Erik, with the characteristic and eloquent shake of the head;

"I knew him in the spring!" But the perverse animal was irretrievably lost, and would probably have to be hunted on the fjeld in the winter, killed with a rifle-bullet, and brought home on a pony.

Having been at one time (of course) a boot-maker, our friend heard with real concern that the ladies occasionally came home with wet feet, and so he thoughtfully brought in a young man one evening to measure them for some jack-boots which should for ever defy the element which has no terrors for Norwegians; his only regret was that he had not time to do the job thoroughly himself, so it had to be undertaken by "me tochter's man." I am wandering from the river, but I hope that I have made it plain that Eric's qualities of head and hand and heart make him a most acceptable companion to a fisherman; and I have endeavoured to show why I think he is far more than this, and how it is that he inspires a feeling of strong affection in the minds of those who come in contact with him. We all respect and like Anders, who, I am sure, is better appreciated by his compatriots, but

he leaves me cold. Eric I love. It is not that his skill or knowledge are greater than those of his pupil and fellow, as they are acknowledged to be by the honest Anders; it is not that he is cleverer or more intelligible: there is in him some subtle quality of the heart which evades analysis, but appeals direct to other hearts,—a rare gift of nature which men may seek like the Holy Grail, and find when they find that treasure buried at the rainbow's end.

Even when no fish are "yoomping," Eric knows to a yard where they lie, and how they change their customary resting-places with every change of the depth of the river. If a skilful stranger cannot kill a salmon in his company, there is no salmon to kill that day.

Like all good sportsmen, he prefers the fly, but he knows when the spoon, minnow, or prawn will prove the better bait, and is, I am told, a clever hand at worming when he has the river to himself at the close of the season. The *salmonidæ* have no secrets from such a careful and diligent student of their

ways; and I daresay he could write a very useful appendix on spawning and the nursing of parr to the best of angling manuals. I have hinted that he is obstinate: neither he nor Anders would willingly allow you to try a fly of a size or colour which did not first recommend itself to their more experienced minds, and I had great difficulty in prevailing upon them to allow me to tie one to the casting-line in my own way. My knot, the old Dee-side knot, was new to them, and therefore to be regarded with suspicion; but having elicited from one of them that "Mr. Old Jackson," their most respected master, had once spoken of a new knot with favour, I mendaciously assured them that mine was the same, and, after a few trials, converted them to saying, "It is good knot; oh, very good: it is Misser Jackson's knot." I regard this as a triumph of policy.

Holidays must end, or they would not be holidays: the brief northern summer runs quickly out, the first snow falls in the valley, and we must be going southward. With keen regret we leave the rushing, roaring, brown

river we have learnt to love so dearly in a few short weeks, and turn our backs on the valley for a year, for a lustre perhaps—not, let us hope, for ever; and as the springless karioles bear us from Eric and Anders through the early mist, we feel we could more cheerfully part from many lifelong acquaintances.

XX.

Luck.

"Now the fair goddess, Fortune,
Fall deep in love with thee."

Coriolanus.

THE Fly-Fishers' Club, or some other representative body of anglers, ought to commission Mr. Onslow Ford to design and execute in silver a tasteful embodiment of their fetish, and the Goddess of Luck, when thus handsomely realised and adequately honoured, should be carried round at dinner-time, after the Egyptian manner, and solemnly toasted with the homage of song and incense. For we are all the votaries of Luck, and it is idle to disguise the fact. Money, mere brute cash, will provide you with the best rod, the best line, the best accessories, and (possibly) the best water in England; but

when the duke is returning from the riverside smoking his eighteenpenny cigar, the first person he meets will ask him what luck he has had, and, if fish were not moving, will commiserate his Grace very heartily. Wilton, the callow undergraduate, will execrate the fickle goddess to his great-uncle Smith, who has failed, with all his thirty years' experience, to get a rise. Smith knows the game, and keeps on saying nothing. Indeed, it is within the knowledge of every schoolboy who has read his *Punch* (and most of them are "bookworms" enough for that) that the ragged urchin catches trouts with rudimentary appliances, while the up-to-date, well-equipped angler looks on exasperated, and can only pluck the Dead Sea apple of disappointment.

I am perfectly aware that my observations on the worship of Luck might be held to apply equally well to many other branches of sport. The game of golf—"that d——d Scotch croquet"—rises before the mind's eye, the glorious uncertainty of cricket, partridge-driving on elephants, and other examples; but I do not happen to be writing about them just now.

Those who follow after such are, it is true, generally orthodox in their creed, but they are not such *dévots* as we of the hook and line.

When you meet a friend going a-fishing, whatever the day and whatever the water, you wish him (of course) a tight line, but, before all things, you commend him earnestly to the favour of the fetish, knowing that without her smile all else is foolishness and vanity. The very uncertainty of her temper is in itself an attraction. The sky is lowering, there is a suspicion of thunder; the water is too high or too low, too bright or too cold, yet something tells you that all the rules that ever were made are subject to some higher, unknown law, and it may be that to-day you will land your monster. So, also, when the spring flood is nicely fining down, fish are running, and you are confidently assured by all the *quidnuncs* in the village that you will bring home a cart-load, you modestly reflect that these things are on the knees of the gods: that you cannot "know the end of this day's business ere it comes," and may, quite possibly, have only your labour for your pains.

There is, or was, in the days when I read Ballantyne, a certain tribe of Africans who fought under the auspices of a mop-headed divinity whose name only a native could pronounce or a professor of philology spell. When victory crowned their arms, they got hilariously drunk on *arrack* and forgot him; but when they fled before their foes, they never failed to visit their natural resentment on what they chose to consider the responsible party, and sought a measure of consolation in pulling their fetish to a boiled owl. Anglers are singularly like these illogical negroes. What we catch we are content to think we catch by skill, and what we lose we put down to evil fortune. In fact, the only incense we burn before the shrine is of a sulphurous quality; and when we hold a regular service, it savours strongly of commination.

To show my superiority to this unamiable weakness, I will here set down a confession of how I landed a salmon by luck rather than skill, and thus I hope to propitiate, instead of brow-beating, the goddess.

After six days of pleasant travelling, includ-

ing one of those nights on the North Sea which act as an impassable barrier to the Cockney tourist, and was only "pleasant" on that account, I found myself again in the happiest position in the world, that is, *beginning* a fishing holiday. What did it matter that the river had been galloping away rapidly for a week, and that the run of fresh fish had entirely stopped? The prospect might have seemed a blank one to our predecessors, who had had magnificent sport earlier in the season, and might well have become fastidious; but we had not travelled eight hundred miles or so to be baulked by sinister predictions, so having, like Abraham and Lot, divided the boatmen and the river, my companion and I parted for the day.

I took cart and drove some five miles up the valley—it is usual for those who write about Norway to call a small country cart a *stolkjaerre*, to show their acquaintance with the language, and to throw a glamour of local colour over the narrative; but as my pen was once more about to write the word, my hand was palsied by a sudden recollection of Mark Twain's vitriolic satire on the practice.

"Is *hoggle bum gullup* (alleged to be Chinese for 'weather') better than the English word? Is it any more descriptive?" he says to Harris; and that distinguished writer is forced to admit that "it means just the same," and that he only "does it" "to adorn his page." After that recollection, "cart" is good enough for me just now.

After the drive, which would require a Stevenson to describe it adequately, I thridded the sombre boskage of a wood and stood once more by the pool which had cheered me in my dreams through many a weary London day. But the best places are sometimes unfruitful even in good water, and I fished all morning without any more result than I should have got from the Terrace at Westminster. I was pained to observe also that the top joint of my old split cane again showed a strong tendency to burst, though it had been properly put to rights in the spring; but instead of marking this down to bad luck or clumsiness, I chalked it up against the tackle-maker, while the faithful but brutally honest Anders remarked in his best English, that if what I said was true, you

could get a better rod in Throndhjem for half the money. A box of sandwiches quieted my nerves and renewed my energy, and I set to work in the third pool, determined to catch a grilse that I saw jumping there, even if I had to light my pipe with my top afterwards.

Here my first piece of luck befell me, and I acknowledge it gratefully; for if I had succeeded in my endeavour I should certainly have captured nothing over four pounds just then, whereas, having shot at the pigeon, I killed the crow, or, to be more precise, having cast over the grilse, I saw a subaqueous eruption, the exhilarating whack of a big tail, and I was fast in a salmon. The pieces of cane remained sufficiently united to hold the fish, which was well-hooked on a silver-bodied brown, so that, after ten minutes' kicking and plunging, he began reluctantly to come in. I handed the rod to the Norwegian, who was rather too deliberate with the gaff to suit my hasty temper, and, in a brief space, a fine fresh-run salmon of about seventeen pounds was in the unenviable position of Napoleon on board the *Bellerophon*. I remarked that thunder was bad for fishing, and that we had better have

stayed at home; to which pleasantry Anders responded, "Oh, very good; no blank di."

We then ruefully examined the rod, and decided that, though there might be enough of it left to beat the maker with, there was not sufficient to cast a fly; and it had to be abandoned for a shorter weapon, a Malloch reel and a soleskin phantom. The minnow was new, expensive, and of an enticing transparency; it was, moreover, made with what is known, I believe, as a pin-head swivel, the only kind worth the trouble of using in clear water. This book will not have been written in vain if the intending salmon-angler who seeks for information, and would buy experience cheap, takes the hint.

The gut to which the triangles were attached was strong enough (I had been assured by Eric) to hold a donkey, and in a few minutes I was gaily spinning for that grilse.

A second time fortune befriended me; for when the bait went over the temporary home of the lesser fish, he was not attending—idling away his time, doubtless, in some boyish pursuit,—marbles or hopscotch,—and the boat was

soon drawn too near him to leave a single chance to the fisherman in the unequal contest. I was sorrowfully realising this when the electric moment arrived at which the line tightens and the boatman pauses in his steady stroke to inquire, "Fish?" With excited hope I made the stereotyped non-committal reply, "I think so," and twenty yards of line ran out, which is unusual, to say the least of it, when you hook a rock.

The salmon, which seemed a strong one, was evidently well-hooked, as ten minutes' determined wrestling, jigging, and sawing did him more harm than good, and everything seemed to tend normally towards capitulation and a good end. We landed on a sandy little beach by the silver bole of a birch tree; I held the enemy's head up, the gaff was uncorked, and due notice served to surrender unconditionally.

I had decided again to do the gaffing myself, and was about to hand the rod over when the salmon gave a monstrous plunge and ran out a quantity of line. I coaxed him in again, and he came heavily, like one in sorrow. He seemed now quite exhausted. The boatman

took the rod, but as he did so he exclaimed, "It is foul-hook."

"Humbug," I replied urbanely; "foul-hook your grandmother."

"It is foul-hook in taal," said Anders confidently; and truly, as the prize was towed into port, it seemed to be progressing backwards. It was no time for a divided mind, however, so I postponed inquiries and explanations and gaffed the fish first, a thirteen-pounder securely hooked in the tail fin. Then a regular autopsy was held and the apparent mystery explained; for in the fish's mouth I found the triangle on which he had been originally hooked: the thick, new, twisted gut being torn to shreds, it was plain *salar* was not like Eric's "donkey"; and there could be no doubt that the very wrench by which he had successfully freed his head had accidentally rehooked him more firmly in the tail. Perhaps, to get the right purchase for that heroic effort, he had curled himself up like a boiled whiting, and doubly hooked his extremities together. If so, it was, of course, only a question of where the ring must snap, when the kicking operation was artistically completed.

If I had been out of luck, it is needless to say the fish would have got clear away, as it was—

With thirty pounds of salmon in the birch leaves which are picked fresh for each fish before putting it into the basket, I conversed didactically and sententiously with Anders on the subject of the fetish. I pointed out, first, that it was a bad day. He shook his head, laughing, as he fingered his empty pipe. It became necessary to explain the difference between an apparently bad day, an unpromising what-a-fool-I-was-to-come-out sort of day, and a *really* bad day; that is, a blank day.

He evidently understood me, for he said appreciatively, "No blank—not bad luck that"; whereat I handed him my pouch, and upon the soft grassy bank of that little sandy bay where we had landed, in a temple of woodland saplings fit for the great god Pan himself, we solemnly and silently burned the perfume of the sacred plant before the unseen shrine of the Goddess of Luck, feeling within us

"A peace above all earthly dignities."

XXI.

A Flood.

"Oft expectation fails, and most oft there
Where most it promises; and oft it hits,
Where hope is coldest, and despair most sits."
All's Well that ends Well.

RAIN at last! Rain like that produced by the twelve fakirs all praying at once—swishing, washing, deluging, delightful rain; misty on the mountains, drifting in masses through the pine-tops on the nearer hills; drenching in the valley: rain all night, rain at dawn, rain all morning, all afternoon, all evening. It is not only in the tropics that the variations of moisture are sudden and considerable.

The splendid, passionate river rose with astonishing rapidity, and its translucent emerald and amber pools were united in one roaring brown torrent of muddy water, crested here and there with small angry-looking breakers.

The spirit that had seemed to sleep so calmly by the "rocks in rest," as Ruskin calls them, was roused like some furious giant from his slumbers, and dashed along with uncontrollable impetuosity over the path by which he had been content to meander so peacefully a few short hours before.

Clumsy, buoyant, country-made boats were torn from their moorings, or filled with water and emptied of oars and gear; huge pine logs, that had been stranded high and dry all summer, were now "bumbling in the water like some calf," in the *patois* of the boatmen; the pools were filled with drift-wood and wreckage; and all the beds of stones which mark the currents and eddies at low-water were overwhelmed and buried as though they had never been there.

When it rains in Norway, it does rain.

It is needless to say that we wanted it badly; for it was the end of August, and there had been a serious drought, amounting almost to a water famine in some parts of the country, and we would willingly have employed any number of fakirs if we could have found them;

but there came a time when, like those Indian villagers who punted about on barn doors in the ruined streets of their native town, we thought the thing was being over-done. On the third day, however, the waters abated, the rain ceased, the sun shone out brightly, and the metaphorical dove returned with the legendary "olive leaf pluckt off."

The first day after a flood is not one to choose for fishing, for, however ready and willing the salmon may be, they complain with mute pathos that they really *cannot* see a fly at a reasonable distance when the water is like an infusion of chickory, and tree-roots are their portion to eat; so we decided to postpone our operations until noon, when we hoped that some degree of subsidence of the suspended matter might have taken place. It was a forlorn hope, but, being the best we had, we made the most of it.

"Kings it makes gods, and meaner creatures kings."

I drove seven English miles up the valley, past the stolid haymakers setting out with constitutional patience the sodden hay, past dripping stooks of barley piled on tall poles,

past the painted homesteads, and through the well-known pine woods, glittering in the welcome sunlight with their encrustations of watery gems, to the precipitous cliff which overhangs the farthest pool of all. How I love the memory of that fairy pool! It seems like wearing one's heart upon one's sleeve even to describe it. The comfortable farm, that gives to it that soft, enchanting, little name, which I will not write for strangers' eyes, stands so far above it on the crag that, as the angler creeps down the hillside through bush and bramble to the water, he feels that he has left humanity far behind, and is coming face to face with the eternal solitude of Nature. The spell that draws us from the city to the desert is strong upon him, and the consciousness of his utter insignificance, the clear vision that he is but a passing shadow and will be cut down like the flower he crushes, softens him involuntarily into a strange humility. He feels, like St. Peter on the mountain, that it is good for him to be there, and, unless I am strangely mistaken, it is for a similar reason; but there comes no vision to make him "sore afraid."

Across this pool no maidens are ever ferried: there is no path on either side through the primeval forest of murmuring pines, and no patch of cultivated ground is visible from its banks. The upper end of the glen is so narrowed by the sharp bend of the river, that, if it were not for the rippling of the current, it would have all the appearance of a secluded mountain tarn; at the lower outlet the waters swirl round a great grey rock, by which there sometimes rests a goodly salmon.

We found a boat tied to an alder, but only the rowlocks stood out above the flood, so it cost us some trouble to get it ready; and while Anders was finishing the operation, I was at leisure for sentimental reflections. I was congratulating myself on his being a Norwegian, and therefore not an obstacle to this form of æsthetic enjoyment, when he interrupted me by holding out my very largest silver-bodied *Jock Scott*, and intimating that the opportunity had at last come for using it. I did not object, partly because I thought the fly was as good as another, and

partly because it would not have been of the slightest use.

The water was desperately thick and muddy; and if one only fished to kill fish, I should have gone home at once, for it was all Lombard Street to a china orange against my getting a rise that day. I revolted against Anders' hopefulness, and tried a Colorado spoon because he said it was not as good as the ordinary kind.

We lunched on the prominent rock which juts out in the way I have described, and found the river-water unfit even for human food; then on we went, carrying our rods gingerly through the thick branches of the trees on the bank, over gigantic moss-grown boulders, fording with difficulty a swollen rushing stream which had been a mere trickle three days before, to the next accessible pool, where another boat had to be beached and emptied.

Here a very large blue and gold minnow induced a trout to bite it on the head; but he quickly relinquished the metallic fraud, and nothing more important gave a sign of life.

"Too t'ick," said Anders sadly, as we landed. The next boat was padlocked to a sunken rock, and being not only half-full but also stranded on a shallow reef of sand, gave us a lot of trouble, especially as the baler had been washed away. We got it afloat, however, by tremendous "Yo—heave—yos," took nothing by our motion, and proceeded down stream, somewhat damped, physically and morally, by a heavy shower.

Some pool-names are common to all salmon rivers, and the confidence reposed in a guest is not betrayed by his mentioning Stone Pool, Boat Pool, Grilse Pool, Big Fish, and the like, even in a book designed for the million; so I feel that I am not abusing the laws of hospitality, or giving a clue to the identity of our hidden valley, by saying that it was generally agreed before we started that the best place on the river (if any) would be the pool called "Grilse." As we toiled up the valley, watching the muddy flood with falling hearts, and, later, when we were trying pool after pool fruitlessly and almost in despair, we whispered that inspiriting name to each other;

but when we reached the desired spot, I, for my part, felt rather cold. Last time there was no water at all: to-day the bushes of alder on the rocky banks were knee-high in the dirty flood, and it was at least doubtful if the old silver-bodied "ever-reliable" would be visible to the residents at all.

We took to the boat with some misgiving, and fished all down the near side till the tea-bell rang without seeing a sign of anything in the water except snags; then, when the boat was reluctantly nearing the great, sweeping, brown tail, the most delicious sound in the world crackled and buzzed along the water, the scream of the outraged salmon reel—*Jock Scott* had gone home.

The fish at first behaved with such mildness that we made up our minds it was Zoar, a little one.

"Fish," said Anders; "small sell-mon."

"Yes," I answered; for, like the dear old *Spectator*, "I hate long speeches."

He began to come in, which was good, and I welcomed him with unaffected cordiality, for I had a lot of line out; but after a few minutes

progress at the rate of a South-Eastern excursion, the procession stopped, and a severe course of jigging set in, followed by a couple of decidedly reactionary rushes down stream.

There were breakers ahead in that direction, and they had recently proved fatal to a brother angler, whose line was sundered by a big invisible rock. Anders was alive to the danger, and let fall a volume of emphatic warning

"In a soft undercurrent of sound."

Once, at least, I thought I should share my predecessor's ill-starred fate, but, bringing all the pressure I dared to bear on the tackle, I managed to keep the fish up, and the boatman at length was able to land and tie-up. Then a bad ten minutes began: the books all tell you not to be surprised if you lose your fish at this period of the battle, but I was fully determined to keep that useful but lugubrious piece of experience for another occasion. Still, the enemy was evidently "not so little," and fought unexpectedly hard for life and liberty. I gave Anders the rod, and crouched in the stern of the boat with my seven-foot gaff; but it was only after a number of futile attempts,

which quite made my forehead ache (like the king's in "Alice"), that the cool and patient Norwegian was able to bring the great silvery-red object within my reach. "Defer no time, delays have dangerous ends." I gave him the point, and the score stood one—love.

We congratulated each other after the manner of the gladsome.

"No blank!"

"Good old 'Grilse'! not bad that?"

"Not so bad, oho; not so small, ohè"—Fifteen pounds.

Whisky, just a drop; tobacco, half a pipe.

Of course I fished the whole pool over again from the other side, and also, before leaving, thought it worth while to try once more with the minnow; for the curiosity of a fish which has been long in the water, and is proof against hair and feathers, will sometimes be roused by the metallic gleam.

Patience was once more rewarded, for, after yet another "last cast," almost at the bottom of the pool, the phantom stopped dead, and Anders inquired wrathfully if it was on "the button." The fish replied in the decided

negative, and, being nearer to the rapids than the previous one, and more decided in its mind, immediately made off down stream. Despite all our endeavours, he was soon in the first wave, and we had to follow apprehensively down a broken stretch of water, tumbling and roaring between half-drowned trees, where gaffing was a sheer impossibility. The salmon was so well-hooked, however, that he could not get away very far, and gave us time to go steadily down to a better place, land the fly rod, drift another twenty yards, and gaff him from the boat. He then explained that even a plucky thirteen-pounder cannot do himself justice with a couple of treble hooks firmly embedded in his head.

At seven o'clock, amid the sunset glory, we drove off home in the best of spirits, feeling that pervading sense of personal satisfaction which all anglers will appreciate who have fished in a thick August flood.

XXII.

Eric Again.

"Let our old acquaintance be renewed."
2 Henry IV.

ANYBODY can go to Norway; anybody can catch a fish there, or shoot a reindeer, or cross the Jotunheim, but to few, indeed, is it given to know Eric. To be sure, I have introduced you to him to the best of my poor ability, but you cannot "look" him, you cannot "know" him; and if you are a person of discernment, you will go down to your grave with unavailing regret at the omission.

He might be elaborately described with brush or pen, from his old white felt hat, his leaden earrings, his twinkling grey eyes, right down to the soles of his home-made boots, but to those who have fallen under his fascination

A Likely Spot.

the picture would be conventional and unsatisfactory.

However, before I forget the whimsical oddities of his speech, I will for the moment assume the pen of Boswell, and place a few more of them on record by way of a rider to my former proposition; they will, perhaps, serve to cheer some of us in the rheumatic shades of the dim future.

It has been said that, like Cæsar's wife (who supplies our platform orators with such an excellent analogy), he is all things to all men, and even figured once as keeper and nurse to that unhappy lunatic down the valley,—poor frenzied mortal, he had a subsequent attack: "He has been again sick," says Eric, "and is now *on the chain*,"—and I have told something already of his many technical accomplishments: I must further add that I found out how his fame as a vet. had spread far away among the nomad band of Lapps, so that they sent a highly picturesque deputation to him to beseech his aid; and how, nothing at all surprised, but only a little apprehensive about the accommodation of those unupholstered barbarian

homes, the man of the merry heart set off at once to doctor their cattle; and all for love.

He was charmed with the experience, and told me all about it, though many of the details were obscure. "I like these little trips," he said, and the food was really not at all uneatable. He would only have said, "Oh, well," if they had offered him raw flesh and sawdust pudding: of that "I am safe."

It is curious that although he is such a good scholar, and so superior in his knowledge of English to Anders, he is still the more amusing. For once that Anders' words raise a smile, Eric tickles your fancy a dozen times; he is, of course, a subtle humourist, and the very tone of his rippling voice quickens the power of enjoyment in the listener. He expected us to laugh, whereas Anders did not, and probably never attempted to trace to their source the springs of foreign mirth.

Here let me insert a vignette illustrative of Anders' contributions to the gaiety of nations.

"'Twas brillig," or thereabouts, and we had fished for hours in the hot sun without hooking anything except a boulder. I was fast in that,

however, and the boulder was up stream, and just below it was a very fast, lumpy, shallower bit of water, down which we had glided easily enough a few minutes before. I looked at Anders, who was rowing a steady stroke to keep the boat stationary, and he looked at me.

"Bodder dis ting dat," he said with emphasis, and, sadly recognising the fact that we must go back against the current, began to row up with all his might. We made little progress, however, and the sandy-haired boatman puffed and blew, and got redder and redder—"crossed the rubicund," in fact, as a certain schoolboy once understood and wrote that phrase. Still, we could not get above the rock, and I began to make up my mind to lose a most choice *Durham Ranger* and a quantity of Christian temper.

Suddenly Anders stopped rowing, as I feared he must, and, holding the oars in one hand, seized a spare one from the bottom of the boat, and, greatly to my surprise, forced it into my arms. I had put down my rod to relieve the strain on it, and was holding the line in my fingers.

"You!" he gasped breathlessly, as he hurriedly reseated himself; "*it is for digging.*"

So I dug and he tugged, and the boat was forced up by our united efforts, and we recovered the bright-hued *Ranger.*

Next time I see the Oxford champion punting on the Upper River (if ever I do), I shall think of that "digging."

Before starting in the morning with Anders, I generally used to have a talk with Eric, so that I might better understand the remarks and opinions of the younger and more obscure countryman when at a distance from the interpreter; and during one of these Cabinet Councils Eric was advising us as to the best places available for the day, and described a particular bit of water he was anxious we should not overlook.

"You will look it," he concluded, after a minute geographical direction; "it ling—look *like some cellar; very dark pool.*"

He added that there was a "fish ling on there" of undreamed-of magnitude.

"Farvel! I calling 'Hurrer!' when you bring him into house to-night."

Of course, no mere amateur could compete for a moment with his highly-trained faculty of perception: he pointed out a fish to me one day as we paused in our walk to peep through a screen of leafy bushes at a pool of almost impenetrable darkness, with a baffling surface glitter. Again and again I strained my eyes in fruitless search, and could distinguish nothing.

"It is grilse," he said, with quiet confidence; "small grilse, four pounds, ling on button, his tail moving."

Still I saw nothing, although he indicated the exact spot by blot and shadow and ripple.

By and by, as we stared, a new *salar* "swam into his ken"; and then there were two.

I came away incredulous, for I can tell the time "by Salisbury clock" as far off as most people.

"Oh, well," said Eric, laughing, "it is not good to look; oh no; but I am safe of the two fish ling on there."

And at this distance of time, although I never saw them, "I am safe" also.

Two of his favourite expressions are: "for example," which he introduces without refer-

ence to the context, and "almost," in quite a new meaning.

The latter caused the ladies some natural embarrassment during a drive: the man was standing up behind them in their *stolkjaerre*, and jumped down to ease the pony up a steep hill: on one side of the narrow road was a high bank, on the other a sheer fall, guarded by a few great rocks at intervals.

Suddenly a posting kariole was seen coming at a brisk rattle down the incline, and Flora asked apprehensively, measuring distances with her eye, "Eric, can he get by?"

Eric laughed reassuringly.

"Oh yes; well," he answered, "*almost.*"

One happy day I went with him on "a little trip" to a distant lake, and we had a long talk together; at least he did. The weather was perfect for driving, but for the salmon-hunter derisive; even the shower which actually did fall seemed only to emphasise and mock at the general drought, but Eric's motto was *Nil desperandum!*

"I shell not spoil my hope," he said, shaking his grey locks, and adding one or two smiling

details, the precise meaning of which escaped me. "It will rain, I have good hope of it, before all dog-days are over."

"But what if it does not?" I asked.

"Oh, well, the river will get dry, I s'pose," —he gave me the merriest twinkle,—"then we can catch him on the hand; we shall catch him on the finger, I specks."

The mention of dog-days led us to talk of dogs, and I inquired if he knew of an animal that would be handy for the fjeld. It was a hopelessly bad year for rype, but the views from the mountains repay.

"It is a bad dog," said Eric doubtfully.

Upon cross-examination, the witness explained that "it" was the dog on the farm of a "natbone," or neighbour, and could, of course, be borrowed.

"Why is it bad?"

"Oh, well, if you take him in string it kips on bark, bark, and (otherwise) he running too long way off."

I sighed. I have been after birds with just that kind of beast.

He said it was very bad that Nellie was

gone to Throndhjem. I knew Nellie as a reliable setter, so I acquiesced.

"She very good dog to look bird," said Eric; "she standing on her three legs, and holding out udder, *and not going on*."

If any sportsman has a crisper definition, I want to hear it.

From dogs we got to horses, and Eric told me of a narrow escape he and a cousin had had when driving home after a wedding at a village we were passing through: the *heste* was a skittish animal of a "dark-white" colour, and had shied at something or other (I could not make out what) coming out of the stable-yard, and nearly threw them over a plank-bridge into a stream.

"It is not very tame," was his comment on the animal's fitness for the service of man; but I reflected silently that it might have been the cousin's post-nuptial driving that was "not very tame."

I led him on to talk of his family, which he did with the most confiding willingness, telling me how he had first met his wife at a "dilling-shop" in another valley (where she was one of

"the ladish"), and what had befallen each of his many children. I observed, as he ran over the list, that two of the girls and three of the boys appeared to enjoy the same names, and all were alive; so I thought, in my ignorant insular way, that he must be making some mistake, either in number or title; but it seems that when a man loses brother or sister, or brother-in-law or sister-in-law, he calls his next child (of the same sex) after the last-buried relative, regardless of the fact that an older child, or even two, may have already been given the same name. It may be confusing, but it is the custom, and custom governs the world. He gave me several instances among farmers and children whom I knew as "nat-bones."

It was altogether a memorable expedition: I also "like these little trips."

. . . . .

The great river, I need hardly say, is the mainspring of a boatman's life, and we who know it a little can dimly guess how entirely his mind must harmonise with its ever-varying moods; for when he first rises in

the morning, he turns his eyes towards the water:

"I getting outside my house to 'look' it *strax* when I have my trousers."

And it is the last thing he sees and hears before turning in at night; and this, remember, is during three hundred and sixty-five days in the year.

"Happy man be his dole," say I.

. . . . .

Strax is the most useful word in the Norwegian language for travellers to know, and means about twice and a half as much as "immediately." There is a well-known fourth-form jest expressed in the words, "Bring it at once, or sooner, if possible": in Norwegian the one short word says all that. It is a talisman, a word to conjure with, and must be used with caution. I remember once issuing a peremptory order containing the word, whereupon a more experienced friend hastily corrected me, and shouted "*Ikke* strax" to the departing waiter, thereby (as he explained to me) saving the poor fellow from risking his neck down the stairs. Similarly, in the early

days of our first struggles with the language, we arrived at an inn one afternoon, unpacked our travelling-baths, and indicated to a couple of stalwart maids that we intended to start very early in the morning, and should therefore require some bath-water *strax*. The effect was magical: those girls fairly ran for their lives, and, before we could get them to listen to a suggestion of tea, they struggled at racing speed with brimming pails of water up steep stairs, until the house was slopped with pools from top to bottom, nor did they desist until the indiarubber pans were far too full to use, and we were all spent with ineffectual laughter at our blunder.

So, when there was a rumour of a thief having been reported somewhere down the valley, Eric said he would "like to beat him some and give him a little prison strax."

We complained to him that our letters were not delivered with the customary despatch implied in that useful little word, but he explained that though not "strax," the postman was "a steady man," that is, regular, *and* a partial lunatic; the advantage of the latter qualifica-

tion we failed for the moment to perceive, but he went on to explain that the man whom he superseded was sane, and therefore not "steady," for he was liable to be called away without notice "to make the grass," or the corn, or the road—no aspersion was cast upon his moral character.

. . . . .

I must confess that I did not quite grasp the details of the story, which seemed to give Eric the largest amount of personal gratification and incommunicable amusement in the relation. It was in the evening: we had collected from our various beats, and were enjoying the peaceful, contented, "we've-done-well-enough-to-day-anyhow" sort of feeling which precedes changing for dinner, and I was leaning my elbows on the gunroom window-sill, talking to Eric in the garden about his doings since breakfast. It appeared that he had "gaffed" a fish with his "pocket chief," as it was "so little" (a two-pound sea-trout, I think), and this reminded him and Anders of an adventure, "oh, very long ago," when "the net" was "not high enough," and a twenty-pound salmon came near

to being "loosed"; realising this, he had seized its great tail in his mouth, and so "gaffed" it.

I inquired if they were netting the river, or simply landing a fish on the line, or how it was; but the question appeared unintelligible or impertinent, for they both laughed simply, but with evident relish, and said—

"Oh yes; very long ago!"

I thought of the perspective of morality hereinbefore discussed, and I smiled too.

Another puzzler occurred over one of my boots, which had been scorched when being dried before the fire. Eric offered, of course, to get it mended ("Me tochter's man will make it; he shall make it better"); but he could not understand my idea of how it had got burnt, and I failed altogether to interpret his suggestions. At last, however, I guessed that his theory was that the cow providing the leather had been branded, and a fraudulent cobbler had used the injured part of the skin for my sole.

"Yes, it is a burning stamp on the body when he is alive," was his last attempt to be intelligible; "when he mending it, you shall feel a good difference, for example."

I must conclude this fragmentary attempt to give you Eric "little by little," by setting down his warning against stormy weather on the mountain tarns, when we wished to exchange the shrunken river for the wind-swept fjeld on a breezy day (and he did not).

"Oh, well," he said doubtfully, "the licks are very bad, I s'pose: you kennot fish him. Mr. Old Jackson go up one di to the licks, and it is too rough, oh very rough; he cannot use it."

He laughed at the recollection of the poor gentleman's discomfiture after that toilsome march.

"It is like some tide sea: it come on washing the boat."

So we gave up the idea of "the licks," and turned yet once more to the river, even as I turn in fancy now.

THE CUSTOM-HOUSE MOLE.

XXIII.

The Angler's Library.

"A thousand suns will stream on thee,
A thousand moons will quiver,
But not by thee my steps shall be
For ever and for ever."

TENNYSON.

I ONCE read of a book slightly similar in scheme to this (but in execution and interest, alas! far otherwise), that it was one to thrust into the fishing-creel for spare minutes on the bank, when an enforced period of idleness bids the angler rest awhile from toil to refresh his spirit; and I wondered at the criticism, for such trifles surely are not for the holiday or the open air. They are for the foggy London day, the crawling suburban train, the miserable afternoon, or the dull cold evening, when all the shepherds are blowing frozen finger-nails,

and it is folly to face the outward world; when summer is only a name, and "the very birds are mute"; when rods are laid aside; when business and the worries of human existence wear down the tired nerves; and the impatient soul longs to flee away, as on the wings of a dove, and be at rest.

Whither? it is needless to ask: to the wild woods and the downs, to moor and crag and fell, to stream and river and fjord. And if, on the pinion of fancy, you could be lifted for a brief instant to the happy hunting-grounds, to smell once more the burning pine chips, to taste delight of battle with a heavy salmon, to see the summer sun dying over the majestic fjeld, or "firing the proud tops of the eastern pines,"—if any breath of mine could waft you thither I should be crowned, and "my crown is called content." And so

"God send every one their heart's desire."

What volume, then, shall we thrust into the bag with fly-book and sandwich-box, to brighten the long bright morning by the water, to gild the refined gold of the day's happiness? I have made it plain, I think, what my choice

falls upon. It is not Plutarch's *Lives* which schools the mind to greatness, or Walton's *Angler*, that old familiar friend, but the treasure-house of jewels which we love with an appetite that grows by what it feeds upon,—that score of books packed into one cover, and called simply by the playwright's name—SHAKESPEARE.

I fancy I see mothers of sporting sons smile their condescending approval, as they picture me on the bank pencilling my impertinent reflections in the margin of my duodecimo, so I hasten to add that I am no student, much less a teacher, and only read because it gives me pleasure. Indeed, it scarcely can be called reading at all, but is more like the silent enjoyment of the companionship of a silent friend. I have him there by me, and a few lines taken at random serve to direct a day-dream with the magic of that green paste served to M. Franz de Quesnel, Baron d'Epinay, in the grottos of Monte Cristo, that wonderful *hatchis* which turned statues into houris. I hook a fish, the only one, I am persuaded, which will show himself to-day, and

he kicks himself off, upon which my natural depravity bids me to

> "Fall a-cursing like a very drab, a scullion,"

and no amount of political respectability or decorous church-going can raise a barrier to prevent my complying; but my book says softly—

> "I am sure care's an enemy to life";

upon which I smile instead of frowning, cease fretting, and read a bit of *Twelfth Night* to Anders, "he not caring one blow."

> "A merrier man
> Within the limit of becoming mirth
> I never spent an hour's talk withal.
> His eye begets occasions for his wit,
> For every object that the one doth catch,
> The other turns to a mirth-moving jest.

I tell him that reminds me of Eric, and he promptly replies, with a fine irrelevance, that Eric is a very good "*mek*anik."

Most anglers, I am persuaded, leave their books behind them on the shelf, and concentrate their faculties on the practice of their art. Or perhaps "trees shall be their books," or they find appropriate literature "in the

running brooks," or construct romances for themselves as they go along, much as a young lawyer of my acquaintance addresses impossible speeches to imaginary juries whenever he takes a walk.

It is not, I know, considered sportsmanlike to pay too much attention to the view; but this is an affectation which should be ridiculed out of existence.

"You will never make a fisherman with your insane love of scenery," said the late Archbishop of York to a volatile friend; but surely he jested, though his biographer does not think so. Answer, brethren of the angle, you "that love vertue and quietness," was it a true word? Answer, you enduring float-watchers, who travel forty miles on a Sunday to forget

"The great town's smoke and roar,"

would you be as happy on some muddy canal or bald bleak reservoir, as in the leafy groves of the Wey? Do you care nothing for the kingfishers, the meadowsweet, and the willow bowers, the windings of the mazy river, and the sunset glowing over purple rims at even-

tide? Perish the thought! You were vegetable else.

And how much greater is the happiness of the favoured few who have the opportunity of dwelling for more than one fleeting day among the rocks and roaring of a salmon river; of seeing the sun rise and decline over some valley where no other stranger wanders! Is it only that a score or two of fish may be yearly added to the tale that men go so far from home? Is it nothing to carry your rod through a forest where no axe is ever heard, where you may chance upon the capercailzie or the bear, and where the gnomes live undisturbed by impious men?

The *soi-disant* sportsmen who profess to have no eye for scenery—"a bad eye to look it," Eric would say—are the very same, I am convinced, who compile those anglers' diaries at which the souls of intelligent men positively sicken. Of what interest, even to the writers, could such entries as these be—

> Wednesday.—Test; cold wind; two brace and a half.
> Friday.—Hampton; sunny; nothing.

Yet such things are done in a Christian

country, and I have seen them done in print.

What *do* they think about, these diarists? I knew a fisherman once who devoted the leisure of a lifetime to sitting on river-banks, and neglecting all the duties of existence except those pertaining to his profession,—he was a porter in the City,—that he might give himself up to that one absorbing pastime. Jacob Norton neither read nor talked, he ate little and drank nothing, but was perfectly happy. My restless curiosity prompted me to study him, and to find out how he escaped rheumatism, curtain lectures, and *ennui*. The day that I decided to begin my secret inquiries, the old fellow was seated, as usual, on his square box on the bank of the river, not far from my house, and nodded to me with his usual taciturnity as I approached. I noticed that he had with him an illustrated paper, which was carefully folded by his side, so that he could cast his eye at will upon the principal picture.

It was an extremely hot August Bank Holiday; so I sat down in his shadow, and

made a few observations, to which he did not respond, except by nods and grunts.

I took up the folded paper, and saw that the picture exposed to view was a reproduction of an instantaneous photograph of the crowd on Margate Sands, what time the tuneful nigger attracts the merry and cheers the depressed. The melodists occupied the centre of the picture, and were surrounded by a dense mass of smiling humanity; scarcely a foot of sand was visible.

"You have been reading, I see," I remarked suggestively.

He shook his head.

"Looking at the pictures?"

"One; that one."

"Do you know Margate?"

Another mute negative; almost a shudder.

I thought I would stroll on and postpone further investigations, so I replaced the paper by the old man's side; but it was not folded in quite the same way. He turned it over again so that he could see the Margate 'Arries without moving, took his pipe out of his mouth, tapped the picture

lightly with the stem, and said, with visible relish—

"There, but for the grace of God, goes Jacob Norton."

No panegyric of the peaceful river scenery, no philippic against the manners of a Cockney crowd, no Timon-like bitterness could have expressed half so well as that simple sentence the man's inmost feelings, though Heaven knows how he picked up the bishop's apophthegm.

His happiness consisted in an abiding sense of moral superiority; and as he fished, he thought of less happier men, of 'longshore minstrelsy, and crowds on Margate Sands.

The same pharisaical reflections occur to many people who find themselves, by no personal merit, placed in a position from which they can look down on struggling fellow-creatures, and it is this very sensation which titillates the mind of the father of a family who hears that his neighbour's children have the measles.

I am by no means free from the taint as I

jump into my cart for the final day of the final visit to the great river. It is a day for prawns, the last refuge of the determined angler, when no one can suggest that the best pools may be spoilt for the rest of the season; for this is the ultimate throw—to-morrow we take the road. Eric was given a salmon yesterday, and I am to catch one for Anders to-day; "I have good hope of it," which I shall not "spoil," though the weather is against us. The sun is so lazy that he is not up in time to disperse the deep shadow in the glen below the cliff from which our moonlight view of the panorama is taken, and a chill of autumn strikes upon our hearts as we plunge into its moist obscurity. I am wondering whether life, even with the distant possibility of a Cabinet appointment, has anything to offer me in the future like the happiness of to-day; and Anders is, no doubt, speculating on the probability of my giving him my tobacco-pouch on the morrow, as it is "sam'" Mr. Old Jackson gave Eric last year; "sam' sort." Good man, he shall not be disappointed: he has often told me how dry his Norwegian rubbish gets in that

picturesque little brass box. He adds, as a general observation, that he has no cow, and milk is an expensive luxury in the dark months, when the river at last is silent and

"Barren winter with his wrathful nipping cold"

extends his sway, implacable, over the country-side. If Anders could express himself in the language of the bard (at whom he laughs so tolerantly), he would here interpolate—

"Summer's lease hath all too short a date";

but he would take more interest in the history of a day in the life of Sir Thomas Lucy (arms, three luces, or pike, hauriant) than in all the sonnets of the deer-stealer.

Nothing in the crowded pages of memory shows up more brightly than that solitary morning drive. I say solitary for reasons that are now apparent. The hour of jogging along over the rolling hills of that woodland road, russet-bordered with the spoil of squirrels and ants and such small deer, was a time for reflecting on the joy of merely living and the alluring prospects of the day, although the last journey was

necessarily tinged with a sweet autumnal melancholy.

The cows were all down from the *sæters*, and tinkled innumerable bells from their scanty roadside pasture, the birch-fodder hung in thousands of bundles on the trees, and even the goldsmith had abandoned his filigree for the duties of husbandry.

I made up my mind, as philosophers of the rod are wont to do, that, as the day was so pleasant, an empty bag would be an immaterial detail; but I was destined for one crowded hour of glorious life, which, as the poet sympathetically remarks, is better than a cycle of Cathay.

It was high noon when the resonant splash of a salmon first startled our listening ears: he was a hundred yards below us, in the long pool which we cross to reach the cataracts of Grana-fossen, and the hunters exchanged a glance of satisfaction, carefully noting the exact spot. Slowly the boat drifted downward, and a bright silver-bodied fly floated again and again over the home of the fish. Nor was it unnoticed; but after gambolling

once over the hook, the experienced red monster saw his danger, and lay irresponsive. We gave him ten minutes by the watch, and offered another fly. Nothing.

A prawn was deftly tied on the latest novelty in the way of hooks,—you cannot have too many, and they should be painted red,—we crossed the stream, and lowered the bait by successive casts until it was within six feet of the salmon's nose, when it was snapped by an undesired grilse. He kicked up no end of a dust, and gained his liberty by a tremendous bound, having, as we feared, fatally disturbed the pool; but I suppose his Hotspur temperament was well known, for his antics made no difference to the fish we were really after. Ten minutes more, a new prawn, a similar cast, and the old red fish was in his proper place—on the end of my line. Being more deliberate in his rush, he was better hooked, and in a few minutes the success of the day was secure. Two tall men stood on a sandy little beach, silently eyeing a dead salmon, as they slowly drew forth a couple of old briar pipes, and softly blew down them. I

handed Anders the coveted pouch, no longer wholly mine, but as yet scarcely his, and we blessed the day wherein we were born. I caught no more that afternoon: we drifted homewards over miles of changing water, taking leave of all the well-known places in the sweet sorrow of parting, silently rounding the many corners, floating over broad reaches of shallow calms, and boisterous seas of foam, which make the heart go pit-a-pat as the boat swirls bumping down; among the wild duck and the grey-backed crows, below the golden birches and the century-old black rafters of the upland farms; to the goldsmith's cottage by the tumbling burn, where all ends, and the boat is beached.

Farvel, Anders: here, the pouch is yours; and I will add to it, not only the tobacco you desire, but also one last quotation before the book is packed away—

> "Hereafter, in a better world than this,
> I shall desire more love and knowledge of you."

. . . . . .

A hundred years hence the new white houses will be weather-stained and black with

age, another hungry generation will be garnering the summer sheaves, and these human units will have given their bodies

"to that pleasant country's earth";

but the river will still be here, still tossing its unconquered crest, still bearing all before it to the sea, fit emblem of undying change, which alone, through all the whirling cycle of time, remains unchanged.

THE END.

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