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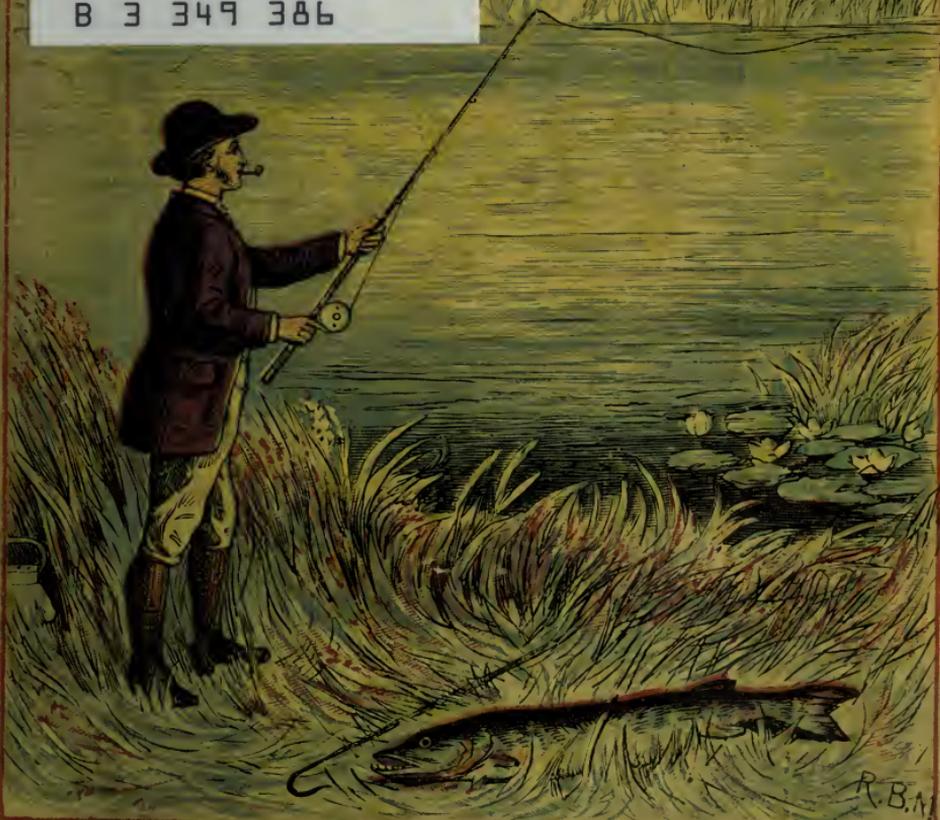
# THE NOTTINGHAM STYLE of Float Fishing & Spinning.

By J.W. MARTIN. (The "Trent Otter.")  
Illustrated.

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Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 188, Fleet St., E.C.

OUR F. G. ALBUM OF ANGLERS.

No. 14 (New Series).

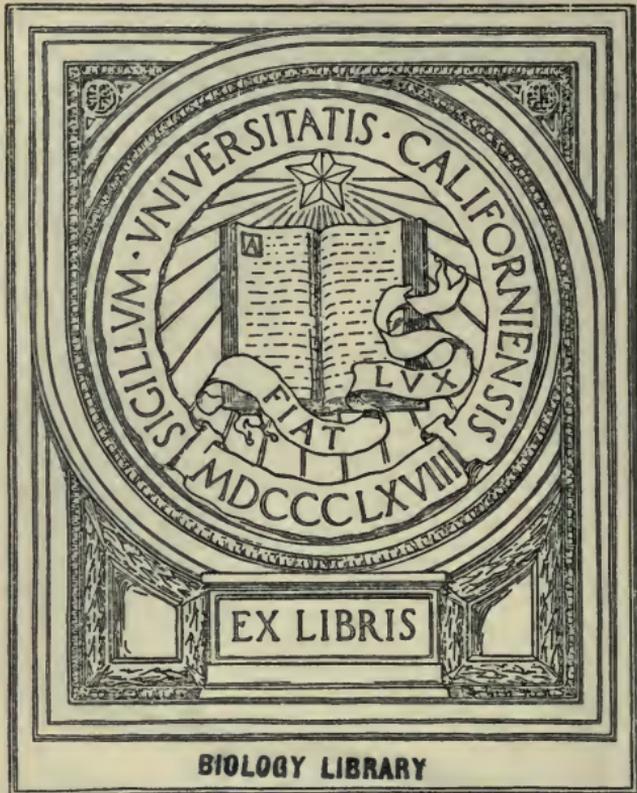
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MR. J. W. MARTIN.

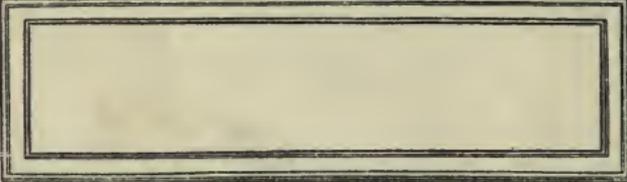
MR. J. W. MARTIN was born in the year —; but no, I must not give a brother angler away. In spite of the vicissitudes of a life which include such varied occupations as canal-boat horse-driver, bricklayer's labourer, and blacksmith, Mr. Martin, the sole support of a widowed mother (hats off to him!), managed to keep alive the keen love of angling which was born in him, and certainly no one ever was more careful not to miss an opportunity of "wetting a line." His book, "The Nottingham Style," published by Sampson Low and Co., was his first literary effort, under the *nom de plume* of "Trent Otter." A good start truly, but since that time he has others, "Roach, Rudd, and Bream Fishing," which shows the practical angler on every page. His last book, "Pike and Perch Fishing," is noticed in another column, but now that Mr. Martin has started as a tackle maker in London, having taken the old-established business of Mrs. Price, of Seymour-street, Euston-road, the indisputable evidence his books give of his practical experience should help him in his newer venture, in which I, for one, wish him the best of success.





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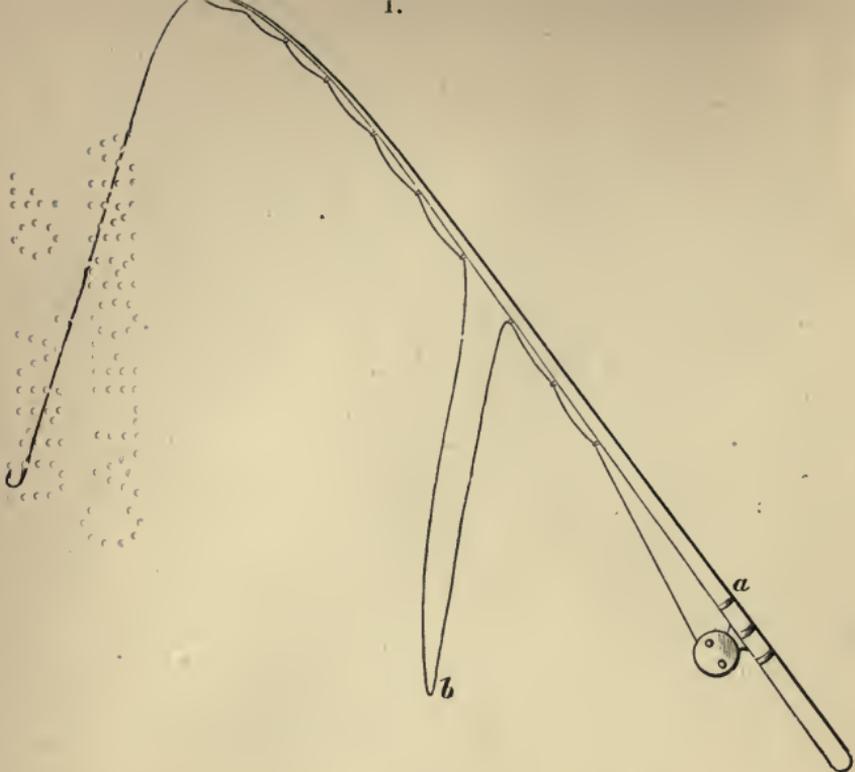
FLOAT FISHING AND SPINNING

IN THE

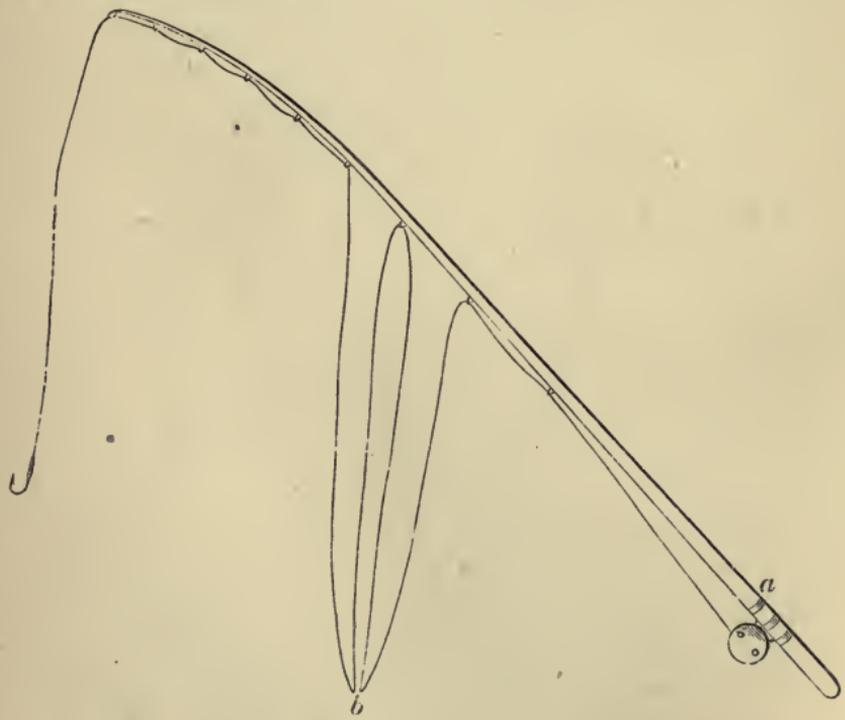
NOTTINGHAM STYLE.

LONDON :  
PRINTED BY GILBERT AND RIVINGTON, LIMITED,  
ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.





- a.* Angler's right hand holding rod just above the reel.
- b.* Angler's left hand pulling down line in order to make a cast with light tackle in Nottingham style. Page 34.



- a.* Angler's right hand holding rod just above the reel.
- b.* Left hand pulling down two lengths of line in order to make extra long cast. Page 34.

# FLOAT FISHING AND SPINNING

IN THE

## NOTTINGHAM STYLE.

BEING A TREATISE ON THE SO-CALLED COARSE  
FISHES, WITH INSTRUCTIONS FOR  
THEIR CAPTURE.

INCLUDING

A CHAPTER ON PIKE FISHING.

BY J. W. MARTIN,

THE "LEFNT OTTER."

"Ye who stand behind the counter,  
Or grow pallid at the loom,  
Leave the measure and the shuttle,  
To the rippling stream come, come "

*The Invitation.*

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

London :

SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, & RIVINGTON  
CROWN BUILDINGS, 188, FLEET STREET.

1882.

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## P R E F A C E.

WILL you, my dear brother angler, oblige me by reading this preface before you proceed to dip into and pick out pieces in the various chapters, for in the preface the writer generally explains the reason for his work. Some may say that there is no valid reason for another book on fishing, there being so many already, but I would explain in justification that there is a vast army of bottom fishers in the kingdom, and the great majority of them are working men who can only get a day's fishing occasionally, and that it is to these working men anglers I am more particularly addressing the remarks contained in this little volume. I myself am a working man, but I have had very considerable experience in Trent angling when I could spare the time from my work.

The large books upon angling treat so fully of salmon, trout, and grayling, that they do not do justice to the so-called "coarse" fish, and these books, moreover, cost so much that a working man, as a rule, cannot afford to buy them. I must confess, being a working man, I am in the same swim as my fellows in regard to these, and I have a notion that a book which contains the whole art of bottom fishing would be gladly welcomed by those to whom I have referred, or by the would-be anglers generally, if it could be published in a cheap form. Now I am confident enough to hope that this volume will meet the requirements of such persons.

The instructions given here are the results of carefully conned experience, and as the Trent angler is supposed to be the most scientific of bottom fishermen in the kingdom, I trust the tyro will derive some profit from the principles I lay down. I have expended a good deal of time in the prepara-

tion of this work, but this has been given willingly, the whole task in fact having been a "labour of love." I have added a chapter on "Pike Fishing," under the impression that it also may be interesting.

The extent of the pocket of the working man angler has been constantly before me when describing his outfit, and there is nothing mentioned that cannot be bought or made cheaply. Perhaps, also, the better class anglers may derive some instruction from this little book. The plainest possible language has been used, so that the veriest novice can understand what I mean, and I have been very particular in my description of the tackle, baits, &c., &c. I respectfully request the reader to carefully read Chapter II., for in that will be found a full description of the outfit of a Nottingham angler; how to make his tackle, and how to use it, and some recipes that are very valuable to the fisherman. Chapter I. contains some facts connected with the history of fishing, both ancient and modern, and also some notes on the natural history of the fish. I am indebted to various sources for the latter, but principally to cuttings from various papers, &c. I regret I cannot give the source in all cases from whence these were taken, but I hope I shall be pardoned where I have quoted without an acknowledgment, as the fault must be set down to inadvertence rather than design. However, I have mostly gone by my own experience in the matter, and shall say no more by way of an apology, allowing my little work to stand on its merits. Please Mr. Critic, remember, nevertheless, that I am only a poor working man, with a very moderate education.

JOHN WM. MARTIN.

*Newark, May, 1882.*

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# BOTTOM FISHING IN THE NOTTINGHAM STYLE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

AN old fisherman tells me that thirty years ago, you might count the anglers of my native place on the fingers of one hand, while at the present moment they may be counted by hundreds; and the same may be said of the other towns and districts in the kingdom. We may safely say that anglers have increased a thousandfold during the last half-century; and there is no other branch of sport or pastime that has made such rapid strides in the same time, and 'tis well that it is so. Civilization in its onward strides has not even spared the fish; and they, as time has rolled on, have become cunning and crafty, and so craft and cunning has now to be resorted to in order to capture them. Fifty years ago it was comparatively easy to make a good bag of fish; but now in such well-fished rivers as the Trent and Thames, it is only an artist in the craft that can do so. Then, an angler was a rarity, met only occasionally, and looked upon as a sort of *rara-avis*; now we see him upon every length and reach, from the youngster with his cheap rod and primitive tackle, to the grey-haired patriarch who sits silently ledgering for roach, and yet the vast army of British anglers are steadily

## 2 BOTTOM FISHING IN THE NOTTINGHAM STYLE.

increasing, as is shown by the ever-growing demand for rods, lines, hooks, and gut.

The great majority of our anglers belong to the working class. Thousands who toil in our workshops and factories stand by the flaming forge, or busy shuttle, and are slowly poisoned by the foul, smoke-polluted air, are glad to get away to the river side, and breathe the pure breath of heaven. These are the men who feel the blessings of the river side, and there is no wonder at it, after being "cabin'd, cribb'd, confined" in unhealthy workshops in the heart of our large towns. These men see the beauty of the country in their brief sojourn by the water side, where country-bred people would fail to observe it. Probably they often wondered why the poet priest wrote—

" Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood  
Are clad in living green,"

when there are such beautiful fields, and sweet scenes in this vale of tears, without having to cross the mysterious borderland to find them. What health and vigour again have they not drawn into their lungs, and how invigorated do they not feel! and how much better can they not cope with the cares of the world, when they go back to its duties after a day's fishing! These are the men, I say, who feel the benefits of the water-side, and it is to these thousands of my fellow working-men anglers to whom I am more particularly writing. I am one of yourselves, only my lines have been cast in pleasant places, and a splendid river flows as it were past my door, so that I have had every facility for following my favourite pastime, and I am willing to convey a little of this knowledge to my less fortunate brethren; in fact, it will be their own faults if they do not know as much as I do after following me carefully through these pages.

Most works upon angling, I have heard, are nothing but

learned discussions on the natural history of the fish (which are all very well in their way), and when our tyro has read them carefully, he does not know then the best way of taking the various fish. Moreover, most works upon angling, as I have before hinted in my preface, treat so fully of salmon, trout, and grayling, that they don't do justice to the so-called coarse fish. Salmon, trout, and grayling are utterly beyond the reach of thousands of our humbler anglers. Let my readers bear in mind that I shall avoid mention of either salmon, trout, or grayling in these pages, but that the so-called coarse fish will be dealt with in a most complete manner. Little things connected with the natural history of the various fish will be referred to, and they will, I think, instruct and interest the tyro, so that he may be able to know the habits and haunts, and also recognize the fish when he sees it. I would also have him bear in mind that the instructions laid down here are the results of careful experience, from which, perhaps, the better class of anglers who only get an occasional day by the river side may also derive profit.

We will look for a few minutes at Sheffield, as I believe it will be interesting to many anglers at that town, which is the very stronghold of bottom fishers, and it is necessary to go back twenty years or so. A busy and clever community of nearly 200,000 souls existed then, which had made its home in a position of unrivalled healthiness and natural beauty; hill and valley gave Sheffield a variety of surface, which lends its aid to sanitary arrangements, the rivers Don and Sheaf meet here and mingle their waters, the town was then not crowded, it spreads itself over twenty thousand acres of ground, stretching ten miles in one direction and four miles in the other. There was then actually an inhabited house for every five inhabitants of the town. Add to this the fact that Sheffield possessed even then a public supply of pure water, unequalled in quality by any other town in England;

#### 4 BOTTOM FISHING IN THE NOTTINGHAM STYLE.

and any one would have said at that time, "Surely here is the place where the working man may enjoy life, uncantered by disease, and stretching out to its natural length," yet, what was the state of affairs then? There was a death-rate of thirty-four in the thousand, ten or twelve per thousand more than London with all its overcrowding, and double that of the percentage of country districts throughout England; two or three thousand souls were killed annually in Sheffield by unsanitary conditions, as certainly as though that number had been gathered once a year in some horrid "black hole," and suffocated in their own poisoning exhalations. One could see the alleys from which reeking and undrained cess-pools spread the pestilence which walks by night, and rests not by day from its mysterious work of destruction. We heard of young men growing prematurely old, with dirty white and sallow faces, with "dropped wrists," with an ever present feeling of illness, strange blue lines encircling their teeth, shortness of breath, stooping and bent frames, and of consumption and paralysis. We heard of children driven to the "hulls" to learn to work before they had time to learn to play; we heard of death in certain trades when the workers reached thirty or thirty-five, and in others though they lived somewhat longer, they were robbed of twenty or twenty-five years of natural life. All these things make such a picture that we never forget it, and we have or seem to have a vivid conception of the strange results of British freedom and civilization, and we could seem to see then baby faces in the agonies of premature death; sixty-one poor innocents out of a hundred under five years of age dying in one year in Sheffield was a ghastly chorus to the song of that empire on which the sun never sets. But now we find a great change has come over Sheffield, though there is still room for improvement. We cannot wonder that the men of Sheffield with such a picture as I have described thrust before their faces,

should try by every means in their power to better their condition, physically speaking, and we cannot wonder that they should take to fishing to counteract the evils I have just spoken of. But great difficulties lay in the way of the Sheffield anglers. There was no stream near that place in which they could ply, or that fish could live in, and so they had to go further afield, and a vast majority chose the Trent and the Witham as their hunting-ground. In spite, however, of all the difficulties they had to contend with, perhaps in no other town in England has angling and its attendant associations made such rapid progress as in Sheffield, we hear that there are over two hundred and twenty angling clubs there, and that the anglers themselves have been estimated at nearly ten thousand. This fact alone speaks volumes for the popularity of angling; the social and sanitary condition of Sheffield have altered for the better since the time of the gloomy picture I have drawn, and one of the brightest signs of the social elevation of the workers of Sheffield are these numbers of angling clubs that have sprung up in all directions, in which they can tell one another of their various exploits, and plan some fresh adventure. Now as I pointed out further back the vast majority of these anglers are bottom fishers, and some of them are considered to be the best roach and dace fishermen in the country, and they spend a lot of time in their avocation. But by far the greater number are those who can only steal a day occasionally, and with these a visit to the river side is like the visit of an angel, remarkably infrequent.

Not only Sheffield boasts of this, but most other populous towns share in the general advancement, from "John o' Groat's" to Land's End, and from the coast of Lincolnshire to the Isle of Man.

I am afraid I have made a terrible digression, but my readers must forgive me, for I could not help alluding to the

## 6 BOTTOM FISHING IN THE NOTTINGHAM STYLE.

social condition of Sheffield and its connexion with the angling world.

The history of angling seems to go a long way back, and to be nearly lost in the mists of antiquity, for we read of it in the earlier sections of the Bible, and in the records of ancient Egypt and Assyria, the seat of powerful empires and a civilized people. The story of Antony and Cleopatra is of course known to most anglers, wherein Cleopatra sent her own diver down to hang a dried fish on Antony's hook, which he pulled up to his utter confusion. Shakespeare, it will be remembered, immortalizes this incident in his play, "Antony and Cleopatra." I have read also somewhere that the Chinese practise this plan habitually. The rocks and stones at the bottom of the sea on the Chinese coast, it appears, are covered with small shell fish; two men go out to fish—one holds a line, attached to which is a baited hook; the other, a diver, takes the hook and a hammer, and dives to the bottom, and there he begins cracking and knocking to pieces the masses of shell fish. The fish draw round to feed; the diver selects his fish, and literally thrusts the hook into its mouth, and his friend above pulls it up.

It seems to be difficult to determine when angling really did not exist, for in the Book of Job we read, "Canst thou draw out leviathan with a hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down? Canst thou put an hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn?" (By this last word we should presume that hooks were then made of hard wood, or at least some of them.) In the prophet Habakkuk also we find fish being taken "with the angle," and in Isaiah of "those that cast the hook into the river."

The ancient Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans certainly were anglers, for passages from the writings of some of the most ancient authors indicate the fact. Homer tells us

“Of beetling rocks that overhang the flood,  
Where silent anglers cast insidious food,  
With fraudulent care await the finny prize,  
And sudden lift it quivering to the skies.”

It would thus appear that the tackle used in those days was very strong, or it would not have stood this sudden strain which the lines quoted above would give us to understand occurred.

(It is of course a familiar sight to see youths just beginning their fishing career, when they have hooked a small fish, heave it out as though their very lives depended on sending it flying into the next meadow.)

Oppian says also,—

“A bite! hurrah! the length’ning line extends,  
Above the tugging fish the arch’d reed bends,  
He struggles hard, and noble sport will yield,  
My liege, ere wearied out he quits the field.”

And the ancients, too, were fly-fishers as well as bottom fishers, as the following interesting passage from Ælian shows:—

“The Macedonians who live on the banks of the River Astreus are in the habit of catching a particular fish in that river by means of a fly called hippurus. A very singular insect it is; bold and troublesome like all its kind, in size a hornet, marked like a wasp, and buzzing like a bee. These flies are the prey of certain speckled fish, which no sooner see them settling on the water than they glide gently beneath, and before the hippurus is aware, snap at and carry him as suddenly under the stream as an eagle will seize and bear aloft a goose from a farm-yard, or a wolf take a sheep from its fold. The predilection of these speckled fish for their prey, though familiarly known to all who inhabit the district, does not induce the angler to attempt their capture by

impaling the living insect, which is of so delicate a nature that the least handling would spoil its colour and appearance, and render it unfit as a lure. But adepts in the sport have contrived a taking device to circumvent them; for which purpose they invest the body of the hook with purple wool, and having adjusted two wings of a waxy colour, so as to form an exact imitation of the hippurus, they drop these abstruse cheats gently down the stream. The scaly pursuers, who hastily rise and expect nothing less than a dainty bait, snap the decoy, and are immediately fixed to the hook." Indeed, hundreds of years before Antony and Cleopatra amused themselves by angling, the craft was practised in different countries, for representations of fish and fishing have been found upon some of the oldest temples, and most venerable remains. In savage and uncivilized countries also instruments of angling are found very rude, but still effective for the wants of those employing them, thus showing that the various arts used in fishing must have had a primitive and almost universal invention. Enough has been said about ancient angling, and I will now therefore turn to a more modern period. Angling can claim the distinction of being one of the first subjects treated of in a printed book, for within ten years of the first book printed in England by Caxton there appeared the famous "Boke of St. Albans," attributed to Dame Juliana Berners, or Baines, Prioress of Sopwell, near St. Albans. It was published by Wynkyn de Worde in A.D. 1486, and contained chapters on hunting, hawking, horses, and coat-armour, and also one on fishing, which was thus introduced,— "Here begynnyth the treatyse of fysshynge wyth an Angle." This was the first contribution to angling literature; and I believe it was not until an interval of a hundred years that any other work made its appearance, which came then in the shape of Leonard Mascall's "Booke of Fishing with Hooke and Line," about

the year 1590. A few more writers of more or less note followed Mascall, until the year 1653, when the well-known work of Izaak Walton was first published under the title of "The Compleat Angler, or the Contemplative Man's Recreation." During Walton's lifetime five editions of his book were published. (A few years ago, at a public sale, these five editions, the five copies being perfect and in good preservation, realized 100*l*.) Since Walton's time his book has run through a vast number of editions, and is still printed at intervals, and I suppose will be; for we must take it for granted that the "Compleat Angler" is likely to remain a standard and popular work among Englishmen as long as will the works of Dickens or Scott.

And now, after the fifth edition of Walton had been published, very few works on angling made their appearance until another hundred years had passed away; although Walton's book during that period progressed to the fourteenth edition. After that time writers of angling literature came thicker and faster, volume after volume coming in quick succession, and continuing up to the present time; and I read that there are something like 600 different works on angling in existence; and the literature of angling is one of the richest branches of literature in England at the present time. As the writers have increased, each one adding his quota to the common stock, so has the art progressed towards perfection, until we almost wonder that there should be any fish left in our rivers, lakes, and ponds. As, however, the fishermen have become learned, nature or instinct has ordained that the fish should become learned too, and so rods, reels, lines, gut, hooks, and baits have been robbed of part of their destructiveness; and our old friend and father Izaak, could he revisit this earth, would perhaps find it very considerably more difficult to fill his creel with fish (using the same tackle now as he used while on his earthly pilgrimage),

## 10 BOTTOM FISHING IN THE NOTTINGHAM STYLE.

for the purpose of awarding its contents to "pleasure some poor body."

It is not absolutely necessary that an angler should be a naturalist, but still the more he knows of fish, and the more he studies their natural history, the more pleasure he will get out of his intercourse with the river side. He will find himself amply rewarded for his trouble in acquiring this knowledge, and his studies will show him that fish are among the most interesting of all the classes of the animal world.

Fish belong to the great vertebrate division of the animal kingdom, and comprise one of its classes. Some naturalists divide the vertebrate division into six, while others divide it into nine, or even more classes. Our business just now, however, lies with one of these classes, viz. fish; and this has been divided and subdivided into numerous orders and sub-orders, families and sub-families. Various, too, have been the principles on which fish have been divided and subdivided, some dividing them according to their bones and some according to their scales, viz. flat-scaled, polished-scaled, tooth-scaled, and circular-scaled; but it is only in the two last that we are particularly interested just now, for to the tooth-scaled class belong the pike, the perch, and the ruff; while to the circular-scaled belong the chub, the barbel, the carp, the roach, the dace, &c., &c. It is also said that the age of fish may be ascertained from their scales when examined under a powerful microscope. Many valuable characteristics of fish may also be ascertained from the formation and disposition of their teeth, which are respectively situated upon the jaws, the palate, the tongue, and in the throat, and constructed for prehension, cutting, or crushing, thus indicating the character of food mostly taken by the several species.

Of the different fish that are treated of in this little book, it will be sufficient to divide them into two orders, viz.

“spiny or prickly-finned,” and “soft-finned” fish; to the former belong the perch and the ruff, and to the latter belong the chub, the carp, the roach, &c., &c. Under these two orders we must range the respective “families” of fish; there are many, but only three concern us here, namely, the Percidæ family, to which belong the perch and the ruff; the Esocidæ family, to which belongs the pike; and the Cyprinidæ, or carp family, to which belong the carp, the barbel, the chub, the roach, the dace, the tench, the bream, the gudgeon, the bleak, and the minnow.

The structure of fish and their animal organization present endless subjects of interest; though they live in the water, yet air is as necessary for them as it is for mankind. Says one writer, “Just as our warm red blood is purified and restored to its vital and arterial qualities by air passing through our lungs, so is the cold red blood of fish by passing through their gills; and as by the process of breathing we extract the oxygen and so vitiate the air, in like manner do fish, taking the water in at their mouths, extract from it the air held in suspension, and pass it out under the gill-covers in a vitiated state. A man submerged in water cannot extract air enough from it; a fish submerged in distilled water, which is water minus air, can get none at all, and the result is the same in both cases; and as most anglers know, or should know, a fish drawn down stream is simply drowned, because the water is thus prevented entering its mouth in the usual way and escaping through the gill-covers.” This is the reason then, I should suppose, that fish making their way down stream for any distance travel tail first. How admirably, too, are fish formed—their elongate, smooth bodies suiting them exactly to the element in which they live; and observe the fins, how well they are suited for their various purposes.

I will just describe these fins, for an angler, or would be

## 12 BOTTOM FISHING IN THE NOTTINGHAM STYLE.

angler, ought to know at least their names : there are the two pectoral, or breast fins ; the dorsal, or back fins (some fish have one and some two back fins) ; the ventral, or belly fins ; the anal fin, situated between the belly fins and the tail ; and the caudal fin, that is the tail itself. These fins give the fish their different movements in the water ; the caudal fin gives them their chief means of getting along ; the dorsal and anal fins effect their lateral movements ; the pectoral fins promote their elevation and depression, while their suspension in the water is caused by the ventral fins. Perhaps I ought also to say that the air bladder, which is capable of compression or expansion according to the will of the fish, is their chief means of raising or depressing themselves without any apparent use of the fins at all.

There are many questions connected with the natural history of fish, that would be very interesting to the observing working man angler ; I have often heard questions like the following raised by some one in a party of anglers : Are the fish very quick-sighted ? Can they see objects at a great distance ? Is their hearing very acute ? Do they go to sleep ? Can they feel pain when hooked ? &c., &c. On all these questions interesting discussions might be raised, but it will be sufficient for our purpose if we only just give them a passing glance. First then as to their sight, some naturalists say that the eye of a fish is very perfect, and of all the senses they possess, that of sight is the most acute of them all, and that a shadow, or a rod flash on the water is sufficient to scare them ; while on the other hand, others aver that fish are remarkably near-sighted, and cannot behold any object distinctly, however large, unless within the range of a few yards, so it will be seen that on this question there is a great difference of opinion. I, personally, have a strong conviction that fish must have a keen vision, for I know that chub will take an artificial white moth, when night fishing, when it

has been so dark, that you could scarcely see the rod you held in your hand, much less the fly on the water; therefore I advise anglers when fishing to keep as much out of sight as possible. There seems to be a doubt on this subject, and so we will give the fish the benefit of the doubt, and say that their vision is comparatively perfect. There seems to be a great difference of opinion also as to the sense of hearing in fish: one says he has repeatedly tried the experiment of firing a gun near fish, when only a few inches under water, without any effect on them whatever, from which we should almost fancy that fish could not hear at all; in fact, another writer says, "They have no sense of hearing whatsoever." On the other hand, some naturalists say that fish have a most acute sense of hearing. I have also read that fish in a pond may be trained to come to a person when called by the sound of a bell, or of the human voice; here is a great difference of opinion on an important question to anglers; still I think anglers when fishing, need not fear indulging in a little friendly chat. What they want to particularly observe is this: Don't stamp about on the bank close to the water where you are fishing; that operation is fatal to a roach swim. Can the fish hear the noise? or does it cause a vibration in the water? perhaps the latter, but one thing is certain, roach will forsake a swim, if the angler indulges in an impromptu Irish jig on the water's edge. Can fish sleep? or do they go to sleep? is perhaps more correct? I have had this question asked me by various anglers; my answer has been, "I don't know for certain, but I should suppose they do; sleep is necessary to man and animals, and why not to fish?" No one, as the song says, "ever caught a weasel asleep," and I think nobody ever caught a fish asleep. I have been by the water side all night during the summer, and I could hear fish rising till nearly midnight, and then for a couple of hours or so, or till nearly daybreak, they ceased; and no fish except eels

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were to be taken during that time, so I should suppose that was the time they enjoyed their nap.

Can a fish feel pain when hooked? is another question that has often been discussed by anglers and writers. Fish certainly seem to feel no pain from hooks stuck in their mouths, for I have caught the shy and cautious chub with a hook and little bit of gut attached to their mouths that looked as though some one had hooked and broken off only a few hours before. We have often heard of jack being hooked, played, and lost, and yet take a bait again on the same day. Cold-blooded animals do not feel pain in the same manner that warm-blooded ones do, and the lower the animal organization the less sensibility to pain it has. I once read two or three lines which ought to be set down as a complete untruth :—

“ The poor beetle which we tread upon,  
In corporal sufferance feels a pang  
As great as when a giant dies.”

That is a tale that won't wash with me ; when a fish is hooked, and is bolting about, and struggling for his liberty, perhaps the only feeling he has at that time is a feeling of indignation at having his liberty interfered with. What the sensations of a fish are when he is jumping about on the grass, after being drawn out of the water, we cannot tell ; not very pleasant perhaps, and it would be as well for the thoughtful angler just to give him a tap on the head directly on landing him, and so, as the old saw goes, “ put him out of his misery.”

Are fish gifted with the senses of taste and smell? is another question which is often asked. We must presume that they are, although some naturalists aver they cannot smell at all, while others say, “ they can smell their food at a singular distance, and will track it for many yards.” Ronalds

speaks of trout that took dead-house flies when plastered over with cayenne and mustard. This would tell us that their senses of smell and taste were not very acute, but then on the other hand, I know that fish can be attracted by scented pastes, and chemically flavoured worms. Some fish also are attracted long distances by salmon roe, prepared in a peculiar manner. I am inclined to the opinion that fish can both taste and smell; for a chub will take a piece of high-smelling cheese, when he will take nothing else, and the more it smells the better he likes it.

Enough, however, has perhaps been said on the different senses of fish, and now just a few more remarks, and I must bring this introductory chapter to a close; it has already drawn itself out to a much longer length than I had intended, though I think I have mentioned nothing that will not interest and perchance instruct the working man angler.

We in England cannot boast of having such strange and queer fish as are found in some countries, such as the "flour fish" of China, or the strange variety of carps, or the "crying fish," or the "tree-climbing perch" of that country, but it is said we have a one-eyed fish in the Carnarvonshire lakes, and a peculiar "blue roach" in a pond on the marshes of Kent.

I have read, too, of the "booming" of the bearded drum-fish, of the "noisy maigre," and of the "grunt fish" of the Gulf of Mexico, which "can express discontent and pain, and when touched with a knife, fairly shrieks, and when dying makes moans and sobs disagreeably human." We have nothing as I have said like these in England, although in Wales they have a peculiar "croaking trout," which is found in the Carraclwddy pools, and which when taken utters a sound something like a "croak."

Some fish are very tenacious of life, such as pike, perch,

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tench, &c., and will live a long time out of water ; indeed I have had chub that have been six hours out of the water jump from a shelf on to the pantry floor. There are fish in India that will remain some days out of water, during which time they travel overland in search of more suitable lodgings, when their own rivers are "drying up." I have heard that eels in our country will travel overland from one pond or river to another, but though I have been by the river side at all hours, I have not yet met an eel on his journey, nor seen anybody who has. Fish, too, suffer a good deal from parasites, both internally, and externally ; "thorn-headed worms" are very common in the intestines of roach, and tape-worms are found in most fresh-water fish. Specimens of these tape-worms are sometimes found as long as the fish from which they are taken, and barbel are very much troubled with an external parasite. Fish, too, are able to live a long time without food. I have read that a herring, no matter where it is caught, has nothing in its stomach, and gold fish in a globe will live for weeks without any food being given them. Still, however, they do eat, and that most greedily at times, as any one may soon see, who takes the trouble to open some of the fish he catches.

The digestion of fish is very good and quick, and the gastric juice of the jack is very powerful. Solid food is reduced to a pulp soon after being taken, and I have read that it has been proved by experiment that carp, chub, bream, &c., can digest food given to them in metal tubes. The strength of fish, too, is very great, and writers agree in saying that they are, for their size, the strongest of all vertebrate animals, indeed one of them says that the screw of a modern steamship is but a toy compared with the caudal fin of a barbel, taking them size for size.

In closing this chapter I hope I have not wearied my readers with the many details it contains, and I trust they

will study out the subject for themselves, for there is endless amusement in the natural history of fish. I shall be amply repaid if some of them take up the study, for I am sure their pleasures would be all the greater and their angling excursions all the brighter, for an extended knowledge of this branch of the Great Creator's works.

## CHAPTER II.

## TRENT FISHING.

AT the outset of this chapter, we will suppose that all anglers, no matter where they hail from, are sportsmen tried and true, from those who wave the long rod over the great salmon streams of Scotland and Ireland, or capture the dashing trout in mountain stream or Scotch loch, to the more humble follower of old Izaak, who must needs be content to follow his avocation by the side of the less pretentious stream or canal, and who thinks himself well rewarded if he only succeeds in capturing half a dozen roach and dace. I am aware there are black sheep in every flock, and there are some—well, shall I call them anglers?—who are not particular to snaring or snatching a jack, or netting a few barbel and chub out of the weeds during scouring time; but we will say that ninety-nine out of a hundred are sportsmen in very truth, each one of them having his own peculiar notion or means of capturing his finny prey. A Thames angler thinks his style is the style *par excellence*; and some of them would be apt to look on any other style with supreme contempt; but I have read that the introduction of the Trent, or Nottingham style of angling on the Thames marked a new era in the history of that river and its fishing. Before, however, I proceed to describe the rods, reels, lines, and tackle of a Nottingham bottom fisher, and the method of using them, perhaps a slight digression, in the shape of a few

words on a style that was practised in a remote country district will be interesting, as bearing on my present object, A remote village in the Fens of Lincolnshire, where the country round was intersected with canals and a few drains was the place of my nativity, and where the earlier portion of my life was spent. These canals and drains abounded with small roach and perch, with a fair sprinkling of large ones, and some good jack. There were not above two or three rod fishermen in the whole district, and it was from one of these that I received my first lessons in angling. The tackle used was of a very rude and primitive character. The rod was a willow stick cut from the nearest tree ; line, a few yards of whipcord (the ropemaker's apprentice next door spun my line from shoemaker's flax, with the same wheel and bobbins with which he spun cart-ropes and clothes' lines) ; but oh ! the strength and thickness ; it would do for the cord of a drag hook. The float was made out of a piece of wood, and was of a very rude and original shape, and took nearly an ounce of window lead to balance it, which latter article was wrapped round a foot of coarse gimp, from the end of which was suspended a hook, on which was stuck a worm just dug out of the ground. Scouring worms was unknown there ; and as for jointed rods, reels, fine silk lines, quill floats, gut, and horsehair, my wildest dreams never imagined such things. Nevertheless we could and did catch fish with the rude tackle mentioned above. I have often wondered if I were to revisit those scenes for a few days with my improved tackle and baits, what sort of a havoc I could make among those uneducated fish. Perhaps, however, civilization in its onward march has crept down to that remote district, and the natives have got wise in their generation, and Nottingham rods and tackle are as well known to them as they are to me.

London anglers are proud, and justly so, of their grand

old river, "Father Thames," and never fail to expatiate upon its natural beauty whenever or wherever occasion offers itself. It may have more capabilities than our Midland river, the Trent, I will allow, but still the Trent is a splendid river, and has a good supply of all fresh-water fish. As the Londoners love the Thames, so do I love the Trent. Sitting in my den here at home, thinking of our grand old river, what a host of pleasant memories rise up before my mental vision. In fancy I seem to see it winding through the pleasant meadows, and each pool and gravelly shallow has some pleasant episode connected with it on which my mind loves to dwell: and if perchance some old friend drops in to have a chat on matters piscatorial, how eagerly we fight our battles o'er again, how we recall that splendid day's sport among the barbel, or that one we had with the chub, or bream, or roach; or how in fancy we again fight that big pike we had gone after time after time, and which would not be seduced by our most alluring bait till one lucky day, which will always stand on our calendar as a red-letter day. Did we not spin a tempting gudgeon that proved too seductive for his lordship to resist, and after a struggle, the remembrance of which even now makes our fingers tingle, bear him home in triumph? "Once an angler, always an angler," I believe to be a true saying, whether we are of Thames, Trent, or any other river; and the impressions we receive from our fishing excursions are never effaced from our memories. Whether we have good sport or not the chances are that we shall go again at the first opportunity. No bottom fisher perhaps has a better field for his sport than those who live, as it were, on the banks of the Trent, for the great majority of the fishing is bottom fishing, and the river abounds with fish.

The Trent takes its rise from the north-west part of the county of Staffordshire, about ten miles north of Newcastle-



## II.



- a.* Angler's left hand holding the rod close to reel, with finger on the edge, to stop the bait.
- b.* Angler's right hand holding rod, for making cast from the reel in Nottingham style; rod point brought behind at an angle of  $45^{\circ}$ , and then brought smartly over the water; as soon as bait strikes the water, the finger is pressed tightly to the edge of reel, and butt of rod pressed closely to the body. Page 108.

under-Line. At first it makes a circular turn towards the south-east, bending to the south, as far as within ten miles of Tamworth, where it receives the Tame, flowing through that town. Afterwards the Trent runs north-east, towards Burton-upon-Trent, a little beyond which it is enlarged by the waters of the Dove, which flow from a north-west direction. After this the Trent receives the Derwent, which descends from the mountainous parts of Derbyshire, and the whole of these waters collectively flow towards the north by Nottingham and Newark to the Humber. The Trent has an entire course of two hundred and fifty miles, and is navigable for one hundred and seventy miles from the Humber, and, by means of canals, has a communication with many of the most important rivers of the kingdom. This long river flows through a country rich in natural beauty and splendid scenes. None but a contemplative angler can thoroughly enjoy the beauties of its landscapes, and the river itself, flowing along in its silent majesty, except where it tumbles and boils over some weir, or dashes along over the stones of the shallows, suggests to the mind of the angler some of those delicious trains of thought which all who have practised this glorious art experience.

How the Trent obtained its name has been a question that has been discussed many times, and never, I think, satisfactorily explained. The origin of the name seems to me to be a long way back, and to be nearly, if not quite, lost in the mists of antiquity. An old legend connects the name Trent with "Trente," meaning thirty; and perhaps that solution of the question may be the correct one; for we are told that "thirty streams flow down the Trent;" that "thirty abbeys used to stand upon the banks," and that "thirty different fish are found in its waters;" and perhaps with these thirties staring us in the face we may come to the conclusion that it really does mean "thirty." I will not,

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however, commit myself on this subject, but leave it an open question.

As this little book more particularly relates to the Nottingham style of fishing, it may be as well here to describe the method and the various appliances required for its successful practice. In the first place we will take the rod. Now, a Nottingham bottom fisher's rod is an article on which he very much prides himself. It has to be tapered, from the butt to the point, to a nicety, and be as light as possible, with a spring in it that will hook a roach by a single turn of the wrist. No heavy clumsy rod is found in the hands of a first-rate Nottingham fisher; it has to be nicely balanced, or else he discards it at once and selects another. My favourite rod was made expressly for me, so if I explain its construction you will see at once the sort of rod used by a Nottingham bottom fisher. It is made in three joints; the butt is of the best red deal, the middle piece of the same wood and lancewood, spliced together about one-third the distance from the top ferrule, and the top piece is made entirely of lancewood. It is a little over twelve feet in length, and it combines lightness, with strength and balance, to a remarkable degree. It will hook roach in a moment by a single turn of the wrist, and the most powerful barbel and chub have been brought to bank by it, and even the lordly salmon has succumbed to its spring. The reel fittings are placed nine inches from the butt end, and there the rod is  $1\frac{1}{8}$  in. in diameter, the ferrule on the top of the bottom piece is five-eighths of an inch in diameter inside, and the one on the middle piece is five-sixteenths of an inch inside. The rings on the rod are placed in the following order:—The first ring is immediately under the ferrule on the bottom piece; and the others measuring from that ring are at the following distances from each other:—17 in., 17 in.,  $14\frac{1}{2}$  in., 10 in., 10 in., 9 in., 8 in.,  $6\frac{1}{2}$  in., and 6 in. The ring or loop at the extreme point of the rod is made of steel. If

this were not so the line would cut it, to say nothing of the line being chafed in turn through the ring being worn rough. The rod I have just described weighs eighteen ounces. Nottingham rods are made in two, three, four, five, or six pieces, according to fancy; but I prefer a three-piece one. I can most cordially recommend this rod as the bottom fisher's rod *par excellence*; and as I am more particularly writing to working-men anglers, to whom money is an object, the price will just suit them: it is only 8s. 6d., partition-bag and all, and will be found just the kind for barbel, chub, bream, roach, and dace, &c. For those anglers who fish for roach and dace only, a rod a little lighter than the one just described would do. I have recently had a sweet roach rod made; it only weighs ten ounces, and is beautifully finished and balanced, and the price the same as the other.

I shall probably touch upon this question again in the chapter on roach; but one thing I will say to the young angler, don't buy a common, cheap rod; they are a delusion and a snare, for you may be in the midst of a good day's fishing, and the fish biting nicely, when suddenly, from some cause or other, your cheap rod snaps under the ferrule or elsewhere. You then have to sit down on the bank, and spoil your pocket-knife in trying to extract the piece of wood out of the ferrule, and find after an hour's work that this is impossible, only thereafter to have to pack up and go home in a not very amiable frame of mind at your fine bargain of a rod. The best plan in such a case would be to throw the pieces in the river, and go to the tackle-maker, and buy a good one. These are the cheapest in the end; tell him what you want, pay a fair price, and leave the matter in his hands, and ten to one you will be suited nicely.

Nottingham reels are usually made of wood, and are in two-pieces; the barrel of the reel upon which the line is

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wound turning on a spindle, fixed in the centre of the portion which forms the immovable part of the reel ; and this is contrived so that the barrel shall spin round with the utmost freedom at the slightest touch. These reels are made in all sizes, and nearly at all prices. I should prefer a good stout reel made of hard wood, with what is called a solid cross-back to it. One that is about four inches in diameter will be found the very best for general work, as you can pay out line with it more rapidly when fishing a swift stream, where a small one would be apt to check the float and bait. The two parts of the reel are joined together by a small brass nut on the front, which can be easily unscrewed for the purpose of oiling the spindle. The nut and screw have been improved by the introduction of what is called the "centre pin" reel, which merely requires the touching of a spring to part the two pieces of the reel. These centre pin reels are as true as a hair, and run very smoothly and quickly at the lightest touch ; they are dearer than the ordinary reel. The Nottingham reels I have described are admirably adapted for throwing out a long line with only a very light float and tackle.

In the fashion pursued by the Thames fishermen, the line is drawn off the reel, and laid loosely in coils at his feet, unless he happens to be skilful enough to gather it up in the palm of the left hand as some do. Suppose the angler to be fishing from a reed bed, or an osier holt, and his line to be coiled at his feet, it would be constantly catching in twigs, or pieces of rubbish, and a tangle at the rings of the rod would be inevitable at every cast. If we add to this the fact that the Nottingham style requires the very finest and lightest of silk running lines, made of what is called Derby twist, and scarcely thicker than cotton, it is manifest that if it were laid in coils or gathered in the palm of the hand, it would tangle up into inextricable knots. Hence my reader

will see it is necessary that the line should be able to run off the reel with the greatest freedom, and that there should be a minimum of friction. Indeed, it not unfrequently happens when throwing out a long line, or a heavy tackle, that the reel runs with too great a freedom. It spins round quicker than the line can run through the rings, and if this happens, a sad tangle will be the result. This difficulty can easily be obviated by a slight pressure on the edge of the reel, with the forefinger of the hand that grasps the rod close to the reel. A little practice will soon make one master of this operation. It is said that the whole system is more difficult than the one in ordinary use on the Thames; but then it is very much neater, and more deadly when once acquired.

The line that I should recommend for general bottom fishing would be one of medium strength and thickness; the very fine roach and dace lines would be scarcely strong enough for barbel, chub, or bream. The next gauge would be the best. I like one of Walter Well's (of Nottingham) chub lines; they are fine but strong, and are capable of killing barbel, chub, or bream, while they are not too coarse for roach and dace, and are very reasonable in price. I only gave 1s. 3d. for mine, and it is eighty yards long. Be careful when purchasing these lines to examine them closely; for, remember, there are lines and lines; buy those that feel nice and soft to the fingers, and are not too tightly twisted. Don't have those that feel sharply rough to the fingers and are twisted very tight, for they rot with the action of the water a deal sooner than the others; and remember also when you come home from fishing, and your line is very wet, to dry it carefully and gradually in front of the fire. A piece of cardboard, about a foot square, is the best for this. Unwind as much line from the reel as is wet, and wrap it around the cardboard, and set it upright on something, about a yard from the fire, and turn it about until it is dry on both

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sides. Don't, in short, put a line away wet, for that rots them sooner than anything else.

And now having glanced at the rod, reel, and line of a Nottingham bottom fisher, we will just look at his floats. These are for the most part composed of good sound goose, pelican, and swan quills, with a cork float or two of different sizes for fishing in a heavy stream for barbel. A ring is whipped to the bottom of either sort for the line to pass through, and a cap made of quill is put on the top, which said cap must fit tight to the float, to hold the line firmly at the right depth where you first place it. If the cap were loose, the float would slip up and down the line, and as the float is fixed to the line, in order that the bait should be at the exact depth required, the float slipping up or down the line would counteract that arrangement. Some anglers do not use a cap to their floats, but simply fasten the line to it by two half-hitches. This is a very good plan, but I like a cap better. These floats are in all sizes, from the smallest goose quill that will only carry five or six small split shots, to the pelican or swan quill, which will carry a dozen large ones, or the big cork float to carry even more ; but the angler must regulate the size of his float according to the strength of the stream, the depth he has to fish, or the distance he has to throw.

The angler has now got his rod, reel, line, and float, and so we will now look at another very important article, namely, the bottom tackle, and this he can either make himself or buy ready made. If the former, when he buys the gut he should see that it is round and smooth drawn, and perfectly level from end to end ; the gut that is flat in places and unequal is useless for a good tackle. He should have his gut in various degrees of strength ; the finest for roach and dace tackle, and some a bit stronger for chub, barbel, or bream. I advise him not to buy coarse, common stuff. I

should recommend him to buy the finest he can find, for he will be surprised at the strength there is in fine, smooth, round drawn gut. When he proceeds to make his tackle, he draws from his hank of gut as many lengths as he requires, and cuts off the waste or fag ends : steep it next in lukewarm water, or it will be too brittle and will not tie ; half an hour or so will be quite sufficient to steep it. If the gut presents a bright and glossy appearance, it will be necessary to stain it slightly, and for this purpose common writing ink mixed with a little water and warmed will be one good thing,—a little in a teacup will do. The gut should be moistened in lukewarm water, and then put in the mixture for a few minutes ; when you take it out, dip it in clean water a time or two, and it is then ready for use : this will give it a bluish tinge. Strong coffee lees, in which a bit of alum has been dissolved, will give it a sort of brown or peat colour ; these will be found to answer every purpose. Having steeped the gut, and got it to the required pliability, the tyro next proceeds to tie it into lengths to suit his requirements, and there are various ways of tying a knot, so that it should be firm and strong, without any danger of the joints slipping asunder. The best knot that I know of is called the “fisher’s” knot ; it is very easily made. At the end of the gut you, as it were, tie a single knot without drawing it tight ; you then take another length of gut, and put one end through the small loop thus made on the other piece, and then the straight piece that you have just put through you put round the other, and tie a single knot the same as before, both knots can then be drawn tight, and pulled together. The short ends should then be clipped off, all except about the eighth of an inch or so. This is a capital knot, and will be found to be all that is required in tackle-making, it cannot pull asunder, it will break sooner than come undone.

When you make your tackle be sure and have the stoutest

lengths of gut for the top, and the finest for the bottom length whereto the hook is whipped. Tie then a loop on the topmost piece of gut for the line to be fastened to, and now you want a hook. I think the best are the straight round bend bright Carlisle hooks. You will require an assortment, in sizes from four to twelve, to suit the various fish and tackle. These hooks must be whipped to the gut with slightly waxed silk. Some anglers use shoemaker's wax for this purpose, but I don't like it, for no matter what colour your silk is, the shoemaker's wax turns it nearly black, and when your hook is whipped on, it looks as though it were put on with dark silk, and a dark whipping does not look well with a white bait.

Now, the drapers sell small spools of fine silk in different colours, at one penny a spool. I should recommend the angler to buy four of these different coloured silks, white, pink, yellow, and green; the white for paste, pith, &c., the pink for worms, the yellow for maggots or gentles, &c., and the green in case you should meet with some fish that are vegetarians; but more of this anon as I proceed with the different sorts of fish. For these different coloured silks you will, of course, require some colourless wax, and a very useful, hard, and tenacious wax may be made for a trifle in this wise:—Take two ounces of the best resin and one quarter of an ounce of beeswax, simmer them together in a small pipkin for ten minutes; then add one quarter of an ounce of tallow, and simmer again for a quarter of an hour; then pour the mass out into a vessel of water, and work it up with the fingers until perfectly pliable. The ball should then be put for several hours in a bucket of cold water; and when you take it out put it in a tin, and keep it in a cool place out of the air or sun; it will last an angler two or three years. When he goes fishing he will require to take a small piece with him, and a little flat tin-tack box will be just the

thing to put it in. It will take up very little room in his tackle pocket. The small spools of silk could also be kept in that pocket, and also his loose hooks and hanks of gut, for such things are all the better for being kept out of the damp, the sun, or the air; and as for the wax I should not take much of that out at once. A bit a little larger than a hazel nut, in the small box just mentioned, would be amply sufficient; keep the larger lump at home in a dry cool place, out of the air. I have just mentioned the tackle pocket, and this is an important article in an angler's outfit. These are made in various designs, and may be bought at any tackle shop; I, however, prefer a home-made one, about nine inches long and six wide is a very useful size, the cover of brown leather, and opening like a book. It should have in it numerous pockets, for the purpose of keeping everything separate and snug; I don't like to see gut, loose hooks, wax, silk, thread, needles, floats, &c., &c., all mixed up in confusion in one pocket. "A place for everything, and everything in its place," ought to be an angler's motto. This book ought to contain a long leaf of thin leather, or waterproof cloth, with a couple of strips of parchment stitched lengthways down it, for the purpose of holding a dozen floats, a pair of scissors, a disgorger, &c. (which latter useful little article I might say can be made out of a little bit of thin wood or bone, about four or five inches long, and about a quarter of an inch thick, with a small forked slit cut in the end; it is used for extricating the hook from the throat of a fish, the fork being put in the bend of the hook and pushed down, and then both hook and disgorger drawn up together). This latter article saves the disagreeable process of opening the fish when the hook is rather further down than it should be. The tackle pouch should also contain a special pocket to hold a frame to wind your bottom tackles upon; this frame should be made of thin hard wood. There should

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be three pieces of flat wood, about half an inch broad, fastened about an inch and a half from each other by thin round pieces; this, when finished, should be about five inches long and three wide. It is a very useful article for keeping the tackle straight; hang the hook upon one of the thin cross-pieces, and wind the tackle round the entire concern. When the whole of that tackle is wound on, hang another hook in the loop of the first, and go on again until the whole of your tackle is wound on. By this means you can keep the different sorts of tackle separate; roach, chub, or barbel having a separate coil to themselves. This plan is a deal better than coiling them up separate and stowing them in envelopes. The long leaf of the book, with the floats, &c., on, can be folded up inside the covers, and then closed and fastened with either a tongue and loop, or a buckle and strap. The angler will also require a cocoa-nut shell and a pair of scissors for the purpose of clipping up worms for ground bait, a drag-hook and cord, and a clearing-ring will also be very useful articles; this latter is used in clearing the tackle and hook from weeds, roots, sticks, or any encumbrances occasionally found in the bed of the river. It is made of iron, and need not weigh more than an ounce or so; there is an eye at the top end for the cord to be knotted to, and it is bent in a circular shape until it nearly touches the other side, leaving only a small nick for the line to pass through; it need not be above two inches and a half inside. With the cord this is guided down the line, over the float, and down to the obstruction, when by pulling the cord the hook and tackle may be saved. A landing-net is also required in the outfit of a Nottingham angler, and the frame of this should be made of jointed brass, so that it can be folded up and the net itself wrapped around it, that it may lie snugly in the basket when not in use. It should be made to screw into a brass socket, which latter is fitted on

the end of a staff, or handle, about four feet long. The angler can please himself as to whether he has a wicker basket or a mat one, or whether he has a waterproof haversack; all three sorts are found in the outfit of a Nottingham angler; he also has bags for his worms, tin boxes for his gentles, bags for his fish, &c., and a pair of flat-nosed pliers will also be found a useful article.

And now having described a Nottingham bottom fisher's outfit, it is time to hark back to where the angler has made his gut "tackle," and got it ready for the hook. Supposing this to be done, he now takes a piece of the coloured silk, and waxes it slightly, and, taking his hook in one hand, he winds the waxed silk two or three times round the shank; he then draws the end of the gut through his teeth to flatten it slightly, and lays it on the shank, and binds it tightly and closely as far up the shank as he requires. This operation should be done as neatly and as closely as possible, or you may have a difficulty in threading on a fine worm or gentle, to say nothing of the curious spectacle you would present to the fish. The split shots are now put on the tackle, the bottom one not less than a foot or so from the hook; the others are placed on up the tackle, at distances of five or six inches from each other, till you get as many on as you require. This plan is a deal neater than that sometimes practised on the Thames, where all the shots are crowded together in one place, about six inches from the hook. With a fine line, quill float, and thin tackle weighted with some half dozen split shots, the Trent or Nottingham anglers fish for roach, dace, chub, bream, and sometimes for barbel, although we have a set of heavier apparatus, called "light corking tackle," for fishing in a heavier stream.

I think I have made it pretty clear to the tyro, or the would-be angler in the Nottingham style, the kind of the various appliances required for its practice. A very formid

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able list of articles is sometimes given as being necessary for an angler's outfit, which would suggest the necessity of having a room to itself, in which to store and label the several items, but they, or at least very many of them, are not required. I have given what will be sufficient for every purpose of the bottom fisher.

Angling, we are told, is becoming more and more a science every day ; fish are becoming more scarce, and more difficult to catch, while the sport is becoming more and more popular ; new lines, new hooks, new baits, and tackle are being so constantly invented, that they puzzle the most practised angler to become acquainted with them, much more the fish, cunning as they are ; but the fisherman may have one consolation amid all these new inventions, the old skill and the old appliances have not yet lost their charm, but will secure a basket of fish when some of the modern inventions are completely at fault. I have seen good sport obtained with a willow rod, a yard or two of string for a line, and a bit of stick for a float, when the most expensive outfit was useless for the purposes of sport ; attention to minute details are of more value than an expensive outfit. Skill is of a deal more importance than costly tools, and even theory itself is not of much value without experience.

Having now given the outfit of a Nottingham bottom-fisher, it will be as well to give some idea as to the method of using it. Now the tyro must bear in mind that the motto of a Nottingham angler is "fine and far off," the chief object being not to let the fish see or hear him if he can help it. If he has not already selected a swim, he walks along the bank until he sees a spot that looks likely to yield sport, where the stream is steady and not too strong and which looks about the right depth. The first thing he does is to ascertain how deep it really is. Now, a London angler would drop in a lump of lead, and work it up and down all over the swim,

and scare the fish to begin with. A Nottingham fisherman, however, adjusts his float at what he thinks to be about the right depth, and casts his tackle out to the exact distance from the bank at which he intends to fish, and allows his float to travel down the stream. If it floats in an upright position without either dragging or bobbing, he is not deep enough, and so he loosens the cap on the float and increases the length below it. If now the float bobs under, the shots are on the ground, and the line must be shortened under the float. After he has had a swim or two, he can by this means hit the proper distance between hook and float, which allows the bait to trip along the bottom without any of the shots coming in contact with it. Should the bait during its passage down the swim at any time hang, the raising of the rod point will loosen it.

Now, having found the exact depth and had a swim or two down the entire length he intends to fish (for a Nottingham angler's swim is very often twenty or twenty-five yards in length), our fisherman throws in his ground bait so that it is distributed over the swim. Considerable judgment is required for this, according to the strength or set of the stream, for it is necessary to fish over your ground bait, and you must calculate carefully whereabouts your ground bait is likely to fall. If it is thrown up the stream too high it will ground too soon, or if too low, it grounds out of your reach below the swim. There is a good deal in this, and many a bad day's sport has been ascribed to any other cause but the right one in consequence of a miscalculation on this important point. We will now suppose the swim the angler has selected is from twenty to thirty feet from the bank, and he is fishing with very light tackle, too light to be cast from the reel (for the reel would not revolve sufficiently for casting with such a light weight), and that he cannot coil it on the grass at his feet, nor allow any to hang loose from the reel ; the fine line

he is using would twist and tangle up. He cannot reach the swim with the rod, and what line there is is hanging from the point. What is to be done? A Nottingham angler holds the rod in his right hand, and with his left takes hold of the line as high up the rod between the rings as he can reach, and draws down as much line as he requires. He then has some four or five yards of line in his left hand, and with what is hanging from the point of the rod, he can then throw the distance he requires, which he does by bringing the rod away from the river at about an angle of  $45^{\circ}$ . He then sends the point of the rod smartly over the river, at the same time letting go of the line he held in his left hand, the line will now go fair and neatly to its destination without tangle or catch. Some Nottingham anglers, when they want to cast extra long distances, draw down two lengths of line from the rod, the rings of course parting them, and throw in the same way as before. By these means, after a little practice, one can throw to nearly any distance he likes.

Now that the float is cast to its destination, the angler changes his rod to the left hand, and with the finger and thumb of his right he takes hold of the line close to the reel, and pays it off gently and continuously so that it shall run freely through the rings and never check the swim of the float. By this means the line between the float and the rod point is tight (but not too much so, or the float would lay nearly flat on the water), and enables him to strike the very moment he perceives a bite. Failing in getting a bite, he allows the float to travel down stream until he has completely covered the space where he supposes the ground bait to be, when he winds up the line and repeats the cast. Sometimes the hole to be fished is from twelve to twenty, or even more, feet in depth; and when this is the case, it is difficult to fish it with the ordinary floats, and for this purpose a float called a "traveller," "slider," or "running float" is used. As may

be supposed from its name, this float slides or runs up and down the line, and can be easily made from one of the ordinary swan quill or cork floats. A small upright rod ring is whipped about half an inch or so from the top, and a very small ring about an inch from the bottom. This ring can be made out of a piece of very thin copper or brass wire, as follows:—Wind the wire two or three times round a small knitting or stocking needle, and then draw it off; cut off each end to within three-eighths of an inch, which must be left for the purpose of whipping it to the quill; this small ring will just allow for the passage of the line. Thread the line through the rings on the float, and when you have got the exact depth, knot a little bit of line or wood or straw in the line above the float. When the float is out of the water it drops down to the loop of the tackle, and when it is thrown in the water, the shots or sinkers carry the line through the float rings until it is stopped by the little bit of wood, &c., mentioned above. If the Nottingham bottom fisher uses a cork float and a heavier tackle, he mostly throws his bait from the reel, that is in a manner somewhat similar to that of jack spinning. He winds up the line until the float nearly touches the top ring of his rod, and then gives it the desired swing over the river. I have seen baits cast by this means thirty, or even more, yards. This plan is chiefly used in barbel fishing, and the swim is a good distance from the bank, and I shall touch upon it, as well as on ledgering and plumbing in the chapter on Barbel. I ought to just mention that when the slider float is used, the little piece of line that is knotted in the line should be so contrived that it will run with freedom through the rings of the rod, so that when winding up or playing a fish, it does not catch. The different baits used in bottom fishing, when and how to use them, will be fully explained in the chapters on the different fish.

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I have now, I believe, described the outfit and the general *modus operandi* of the Nottingham bottom fisher. He is not beholden to punts and puntsmen for his sport; he can wander along the banks, select his swims, and fish them in the deadly and scientific style I have been attempting to portray. He pursues his avocation amid scenes of natural beauty; he follows the windings of the river, and becomes acquainted with its course. He knows the solitude of its silent depths and the brilliancy of its shallows; he is confined to no seasons; he salutes Nature with the budding spring, the rustling leaves make music in his ear before the mist has rolled from the water, or the dew been kissed from the grass by the rays of the sun. He throws his line when ruddy autumn, with its wealth of fruit, hangs heavy on the bough, or the corn-fields wave in golden abundance on the slopes of the uplands, the storm and the tempest scarcely checks him, and he can pursue his sport when winter's winds blow cold over the meadows, and the trees glitter like diamonds, with a wealth of hoar frost. If he is an ardent sportsman, he cares not for the rude blasts of winter, for now is the time for pike and chub; he can tramp over the snow to his sport with as much zest as though the meadows were clad in the gayest garb, and when the big pike seizes the glittering spinning bait, and when the thin, tapering wand is bending double from his powerful rushes, the angler forgets that the day is cold, and that there is snow under his feet. Let none say this sport is ignoble. "Ignoble," indeed. Let him answer who has felt the powerful rush of a ten-pound barbel on the fine tackle of a Nottingham bottom fisher. What hopes and fears he has had, what a time of pleasurable enjoyment until, wearied out, the grand fish lies in the landing-net. Such, then, is the tackle and sport of a Nottingham bottom fisher. I wish to initiate the tyro into

this beautiful art ; and although it is impossible to teach it thoroughly in a book, yet much may be learned this way ; and as I am more particularly writing to working-men anglers, I have used the plainest possible language, so that the veriest tyro shall have no difficulty in understanding what I say.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE CHUB.

BEFORE the would-be angler in the Nottingham style proceeds to read the following chapters on the different fish, he would do well to carefully study the preceding one. Minute details, as I have before remarked, are very important, and should be regarded with strict attention. No one can expect to be a very successful angler unless these small matters are observed, and there is nothing recommended but what I have proved by experience.

I approach the subject of the chub with feelings of very great respect, if not of actual veneration, for the chub with the white spot on his tail was the first fish that our "father" Izaak introduced to us. I remember how after I had, metaphorically speaking, swallowed that chub, how eagerly I swallowed the rest of his grand old book; and then, like Alexander, who mourned because he had no more worlds to conquer, I mourned because there was no more to swallow!

Although the chub does not enjoy a very good reputation from a culinary point of view, yet he is a tolerably handsome-looking fish, and when he is in good condition and hooked, he will fight hard for his liberty. When we consider that it is absolutely necessary to fish for him with fine tackle, he is just the fellow to try an angler's patience and the strength of his tackle, especially if the fish happens to be

a good-sized one. The chub is found in most of the rivers of England, and likes deep, quiet holes, under overhanging banks, or willow bushes, the foundations of old walls, retired nooks, or where old piles and posts stick up out of the water, providing the water is tolerably deep, though he is not confined exclusively to such places as those. He will be found in strong rushing streams, and contending with the most rapid waters; and during very hot weather they may be seen basking on the surface of the water, over some deep hole, sometimes in considerable numbers. The moment they become sensible that some one is looking at them, down they sink to the bottom in an instant, being perhaps, with scarcely any exception, the shyest of all fish. They spawn about the first or second week in May, and deposit their eggs on the gravel in very shallow water, and the operation is supposed to occupy them about ten days. The chub is a gross feeder, and will take kindly to almost anything in the shape of a bait, if it is only delicately offered him. He will swallow worms by the hundred, devour any amount of scratchings, gobble up all your ground bait, and still wish for more, even if that same bait happens to be rotten cheese; and I have read that the French fish for them with a ripe cherry. He will take almost anything, from a fly to a small frog, or from a grain of creed wheat to a bunch of lob-worms; and I have known him even to dash at a spoon bait when pike fishing; but whether this is done in sheer greediness or not I cannot say. His bill of fare is a very lengthy one; nothing seems to come amiss if he is only in a biting humour. He will take the artificial fly or natural insect on the surface; a bunch of lob-worms from the bottom, or gentles and grubs from midwater; while the black slug, a small frog, cheese, pith, paste, or scratchings, all come to swell the list of attractions for our leather-mouthed friend the chub. At nearly all seasons he will bite; hot weather or cold makes no

difference to him ; he can be taken by anglers knowing his habits and haunts in the winter months as well as in the summer, spring, or autumn ; only he seems to me to be a bit of an epicure, for the bait that he will take one month he utterly ignores during the next. I don't mean this in regard to all baits, but in some particular instances. For example, he will revel in the luxury of a nice bunch of gentles, and then perhaps one may go a few days after, and the fish will have none of them, but just drop a wasp grub over Master Chub's nose, and your float will disappear with a rush.

In England the chub seldom exceeds the weight of six pounds, though odd ones of seven or eight pounds' weight may exist. I question, however, if there are a score of fish of the latter weights in the whole of the five hundred miles of the Trent and the Thames. Indeed, if an angler is fortunate enough to capture a chub of six pounds, supposing he can afford it, I should say by all means have it preserved. It will be an ornament to his room ; and every time he sees it, it will bring back to his recollection the glorious bit of sport he had with it before it was grassed. The largest chub that I have as yet taken out of the Trent weighed five and three-quarter pounds—a splendid fish, short, thick, and well fed, who fought hard for his liberty. I was fishing the locust in a smart stream, when he took with no more break than a four-ounce dace. The largest that I ever saw is one that was taken by Mr. Cubley, Crown Street, Newark, out of the Muskham waters of the Trent. This gentleman is a first-class angler, and the chub just mentioned is now in a glass case, as a trophy of his angling skill, and measures twenty-five inches in length, sixteen inches in girth, and weighs a little over six pounds ; a splendid fish in the opinion of all anglers who have seen it. I have had also authentic information about the capture of a chub, that I

should suppose to be the largest ever taken out of the Trent with rod and line. A few years ago a Newark angler, named Frank Sims, was fishing below Newark, at what is called the foot of the lawn at Winthorp, when he was lucky enough to hook and safely land a monster that weighed eight pounds. I believe this grand fish suffered the indignity of being either baked, boiled, or stewed, when it ought to have been made beautiful for ever, and not only it, but Frank himself ought to be in a glass case. I should very much like to handle such an one myself.

I remember once fishing for roach with creed wheat, in a good swim on the Trent; a youth, a very devoted angler, was with me. We had been having fair sport, when suddenly the fish went off the feed. I was just beginning to puzzle my brains as to the why and the wherefore, when the lad suddenly had a bite. I saw by the bend of the rod that it was something unusual, but the fish only gave a lazy roll or two, when it was brought to the bank without much resistance. As I slipped the landing net under it I saw that it was a chub, but such a chub! It was the longest, leanest, and most hungry-looking wretch that I ever dropped across, with a head and mouth that would not have disgraced a twelve-pound cod-fish. It was twenty-eight inches in length, and only weighed three and three-quarter pounds, though had it been in good condition, it ought to have weighed seven at the very least. Still, if an angler takes one of four, or four and a half pounds, he may congratulate himself that he has got hold of a very good specimen; and if by a bit of very good luck he should happen to take, in a day's chub fishing, twenty fish that will weigh forty pounds altogether, he will find that to be a very good average, for large chub are not so plentiful now in the Trent as they used to be. I have heard that thirty years ago anglers used to think nothing of taking three or four fish out of one hole that

would average four pounds each, though it must be confessed I have seen nothing like that during the last few years. The best I have seen were four fish taken out of one hole, that weighed altogether eleven pounds. Now-a-days here a four-pound chub is a rarity, while, as I said before, in a day's chubbing, two pounds each fish would be a very good average weight.

What pleasant recollections I seem to see in my mind's eye at the very mention of the word "chub," ay! as vividly as though they only happened yesterday, for some of the pleasantest hours of my life have been spent by the riverside in my search for chub. The roach has a book of his own, and so has the pike; but the chub has not. I don't really see why he should not be thus honoured; for I regard him as one of the most interesting of our coarse fishes. In spite of what has been written or said against the chub, in spite of all his faults, I love him; but when the cruel net is put around the weed beds in the scouring time, and he is dragged to bank, or when the night-line has done its work, and he is hauled out without a chance of showing his fighting power, my love is mingled with pity for his ignominious fate, for he is a foeman worthy of a sportsman's steel; although some writers speak with contempt of him, and call him all sorts of names, some of which are libels on him and his character. If I have a special weakness it is for "chub fishing," for I have been told that it really is a weakness; and one or two have gone further, and called me a "fool," after I have had an adventure something like this. I am standing by the river, rod in hand; the twilight of the summer's day has deepened into that semi-darkness that is so peculiar to our country districts, where the air is free from smoke; strangely quiet seems Nature in her peaceful repose, a strange quiet that is only broken by the harsh grating croak of that peculiar bird the cornerake, or the splash of a

rising chub. Away in the distance I can see, though dimly, the tip of a village church spire, trees, bushes, and hedges seem to merge indistinctly together, while the river flowing past seems, on the opposite side, to be dark and mysterious. Putting my hand carefully down my line and cast to feel if my white moth is all right, I sweep it out into the river, and wait, for I cannot see it. Ha! a brave tug, and the next moment a chub is gallantly fighting against odds for life and liberty. In a few more minutes, however, he goes in the bag to join some three or four more of his comrades in distress taken by the same means. But hark! what is that? The village church clock is striking, clear and distinct through the stillness of the night sound the strokes—eleven; time to pack up, thinks I, and trudge home, for I am a few miles away; and when I arrive there, I am called by the before-mentioned classic name, “What a fool you are to stay until this time of night, just for two or three brace of those things” (chub), is the observation; but I can forgive them, for they don’t know of the sweet intercourse I have had with Nature in her midsummer night’s beauty. None but sportsmen can enjoy these things as they ought to be enjoyed; and I am weak enough to say that fishing on a summer’s evening, with the moth for chub, is a sport, for me at least, of the highest order.

The chub is a member of the carp tribe, and his scientific name is *Cyprinus Cephalus*. Izaak Walton used to call him “Cheven,” “Chevin,” and “Chevender,” and by some of these names he is still known in certain districts. Michael Drayton, writing nearly three centuries ago on the Trent and its fish, says, “The chub (whose neater name which some a chevin call), food to the tyrant pike (most being in his power), who for their numerous store he most doth them devour.” The chub seems to be set upon by more than one writer; even the good and gentle Izaak Walton says of him,

“Oh, it is a great loggerheaded chub,” and this name has crept down to more modern times. One writer, in a recent article in a daily paper, has actually the impertinence to call him “chuckle-headed ;” where he got the term from I don’t know, In some districts the chub is called “the large-headed dace,” the Scotch call him “Skelly,” the Welsh “Penci,” and the Swedes “Kubb,” which latter means “a lump of wood.” Now, if we look at these names, we can see that they are most of them alluding to the head of the chub ; but why he should be called big-headed, &c., &c., I cannot imagine ; for if we take a splendid, well-fed specimen of three pounds or so, and lay him broadside on the grass, really his head does not look at all out of proportion to his body. The shoulders are broad and vast, belly deep and rounding off, back a trifle hollow, and ending in a fairly broad spread of tail ; look at him from that stand-point, and his head is not out of proportion. If you stare him in the face, perhaps he does look a little full-faced, and he has rather a large mouth, but he does not deserve the names of “loggerhead,” “chuckle-head,” &c., that are so often applied to him. I maintain that he is a handsome fish, and as a sporting fish in all weathers, he has not his equal amongst the coarse fishes. True, when you come to cook him he is not worth much, for he is woolly and watery, and has such a plenitude of small bones, that to eat him is almost to run the risk of being choked. As some anglers, however, *will* persist in eating their spoil, the best plan is to clean them as soon as possible, split them open, and rub the inside with salt or lemon ; some put stuffing in them, something like veal stuffing ; but one thing must be remembered—if they are kept all night without being cleaned they are absolutely uneatable.

Very small chub, of say half or three-quarters of a pound, when crimped and fried dry, are eatable. The French call

him "un villain," because they can do nothing with him ; and if they are beaten in making a toothsome dish of him, we may safely say these fish are *not* very edible.

As I have before remarked, various methods are employed for the capture of the chub ; and as this little work more particularly relates to bottom fishing, I will commence with that. The rod, the reel, and the line described in the preceding chapter will be just the things for chub, and your bottom tackle should be as fine as you like, the finer the better consistently with strength. Remember, you have to deal with a very shy and cautious fish. Your tackle for bottom fishing for chub should be about four or five feet long, but it will be as well to have some not more than a yard in length, in case you should want to fish in rather shallower water. Pale blue gut, or that stained a brown colour (a recipe for staining gut these colours was given in the preceding chapter), is in my eye, and is the very best sort to make your tackle of. For a float, if you can help it, never employ one larger than a goose quill—one that will carry eight or ten split shots ; for summer fishing, when the water is low and bright, never have one of the split shots less than eighteen inches from the hook. For successful chub fishing, your tackle, &c., should be as neat as possible. It is a downright insult to the intelligence of a chub to drop a lot of big split shots and heavy leads on coarse tackle over his nose. Your hooks may be of sizes Nos. 6, 7, or 8, according to the bait in use ; and remember when you whip your hooks on to have your waxed silk the colour of the bait you intend to use. Chub may be ground-baited for beforehand in the same manner as barbel, if you like, but I do not think it pays very well, as a general rule. More chub may be caught by "roving" for them. Half an hour in a place is quite sufficient in my opinion, unless the place is very productive of sport. Keep throwing a little ground

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bait in as you go along, or just before you fish another place. If the water runs tolerably fast, throw your ground bait in a dozen yards above where you are going to stand, or the stream will carry it clear out of your reach. If, however, the stream glides more slowly, one need only throw the ground bait in a little above. If you are fishing with worms, a nicely scoured maiden lob-worm is as good as any on a No. 6 or 7 hook, and for this bait fish as near the bottom as you can. A small bag of sawdust will be very useful in baiting your hook with a worm. In baiting you can either break about half an inch off the head end of the worm, and stick the hook in the end thus broken, or you can leave the head on and put the hook in about three-eighths of an inch from the end. Dip your worm in the sawdust, and work the hook nicely down the worm to about half an inch from the tail, taking care that you do not bruise or cut it by allowing the point of the hook to protrude from it during its passage down the worm. Treat the worm tenderly, for rough handling spoils its attractiveness. I think it is an improvement if the point of the hook be brought out about half an inch from the tail of the worm, and a small cockspur stuck on the point, for the ends of the bait will then wriggle about in a most lively manner. If you notice an eddy under old roots, or by the side of an overhanging bank, with a sharpish stream outside, and there should happen to be six feet of water, don't pass a place like that, but take two or three coarse worms and break them up small, and throw them in; drop your carefully threaded bait in, and ten to one, in about a quarter of an hour, you will have caught a brace of nice fish. I should then advise you to leave that place, for chub are a fish that are easily disturbed. Before going, however, break up two or three more coarse worms and throw them in; when you, perhaps, come back again in another hour or two, you can then try the place

again. Keep your eyes open when you move away from the first swim, and when you see another likely place, treat it as before. Of course gentles or scratchings can be used in the same way as worms, only a very little at once is quite sufficient. This is a style of fishing that I like very much. This wandering along the bank for a mile or two, drawing a brace of chub out of this, and another brace out of that hole, is very pleasant. A bit of a submerged bush or its roots will sometimes hold a good fish or two, and ought never to be passed by. Sometimes you may drop your bait in a very unpretending-looking spot, and your float has hardly time to steady itself before it goes down with a rush; and after a few minutes a three-pounder, perhaps, lies gasping on the grass. This sort of fishing is a good deal practised by the more experienced anglers of the Trent, and worms are a bait that is often used. Indeed if I were to be tied to one particular bait, and not allowed to use any other, I should instantly choose worms. I cannot say when would be the best time to use worms for chub; you can scarcely be wrong any time. September and October are good months to use scratchings, and gentles may be used with effect any time during the summer and autumn, just for a change; these baits are the best used as near the bottom as possible. I have sometimes caught chub when roach fishing with gentles, but mostly at the extreme end of the swim. If you think there is a chub about, a swim of a few yards further will very often fetch him. Brandlings, cockspurs, and blood worms may all be used with effect in this method of angling, and to enable the tyro to recognize these worms, I will describe them. The brandling is marked from head to tail with alternate bars of red and yellow; when handled, there exudes from it a yellow fluid of a very nasty smell; it is found in old dung heaps, and almost in any old heap of decaying vegetable matter. The best are, however, found in old

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rotten tan heaps, where they sometimes attain a large size, even to three and four inches in length, and the thickness of a dew worm. Brandlings of this size are not very common, two inches in length is the general size. I have caught barbel with the largest size, when they would take nothing else; and they are the very best bait for bream. The cock-spur is a worm of a bright red colour; it is about one and a half inches long, and has a light-coloured knob about half an inch from the head; it is found in similar situations to the brandling, and is a capital bait, but more especially for roach, dace, &c. Blood worms are found under the excrement of horned cattle, they are a small worm of a deep red colour, and are a capital bait for chub. Before using any of these worms they should be scoured for about twenty-four hours in some clean moss; two, three, or four of these sorts of worms, according to their sizes, on a No. 8 hook, make a capital chub bait, especially in the months of February and March. At the beginning of the season, say about the latter end of June, and all through July, the caddis will be found a deadly bait for chub. These curious-looking insects are found sticking to the stones, on the under side, next to the bottom of the river. I have found them in the Trent from May to August, and sometimes in September. In gathering them carefully pull up a stone, and as carefully turn it over; and sometimes you may see as many as a dozen sticking to it. They are protected by an outside shell, this shell is about three quarters of an inch long and a quarter of an inch thick, it is composed of very minute pebbles and shells on the outside, while the inside looks to me to be composed of sand and slime from the insect. When you have gathered a quantity of them, they are ready for use at once, the sooner the better, for they become soft and flabby if kept any time. I have tried various dodges to keep them for a few days, and have put them in a vessel of water, changing the water two or

three times a day, but they soon become soft and useless. Damp moss will keep them good for a few days. Once I left some hanging in a bag just as I gathered them for nearly a week, and forgot all about them ; when I saw the bag again I thought they would be dry and withered, but judge of my surprise when I found the grub to be alive and well, although the shell was as dry as a stick. They were smaller, however, than they were at first, so the best plan is to use them the same day that you get them ; the fresher they are the better. When you use them for bait, carefully open one end of the shell and draw out the grub ; a good one is a bright yellow colour with a black head, but some of them are a dark colour, and some green ; these are useless for the hook, the yellow ones are the best. Some of them are a deal larger than a wasp grub. Being the larvæ of various water flies, they are rather tender, so that you must be careful in putting them on the hook. Nevertheless, they are a grand bait for all sorts of fish, two of them on a No. 8 hook are a bait that a chub cannot resist. Rove about and drop them in all likely-looking spots, and if the fish are on the feed, you will not only take chub, but barbel, bream, dace, &c. ; in fact, I have seen some grand bags of all sorts of fish taken with this bait (and with shame be it said, some of them taken in the month of May, when the ova has dripped from the fish, as they have been bagged). A fine tackle about three or four feet long, with a quill float that will carry six or seven small split shots, is the very best for this sort of work, and with the same tackle can be used another deadly and irresistible bait, namely, the wasp grub. This is generally used in August and September. If the angler knows of a wasp's nest, let him proceed to take it after this fashion. He procures an ounce or two of common fine gunpowder, and works it up with a little water into a stiff paste, it is rolled in an oval shape, with a point at one end. I need not say that the

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angler must operate on a wasp's nest with a good deal of caution. Carefully note the hole from which the wasps pass in and out, and cut a sod that will fill it nicely, then walking boldly up to the hole light the thin end of the gunpowder paste, then thrust it into the hole, which hole must be instantly stopped up with the sod already mentioned. Stamp your heel on this to force it in tight. After a few minutes, when the wasps have become suffocated, the angler can dig the cakes out with a spade. Brush all the loose wasps from the comb and pop it into a bag and make "tracks" away from the spot in case of the return of any wasps. These grubs are very tender, and cannot be used very well without some preparation. Some anglers bake them in the oven for a few minutes, but I think the best plan is to put the cakes in a jar, then put the jar in a saucepan of water and steam them over the fire, but don't let any of the water get to the comb. This renders them tough and enables them to hang on the hook. A few minutes of this treatment will render them tough enough. Now take the grubs that are *uncovered* and with the embryo wasps put them in a bag with some bran for ground bait.<sup>1</sup> The good grubs are carefully picked out and put in a tin for the hook bait; they will keep good for two or three days prepared as described. This is a very killing bait, and I have known bags of from twenty to forty chub being made by its means in a day's fishing. Chub will also take a lump of paste or a bit of cheese, and the more the cheese smells, or the more gamey it is, the better the chub likes it. A piece the size of a small gooseberry is a very good bait, or a bit of rotten Cheshire cheese mixed with a little bread makes a very good chub bait for a change; even a

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<sup>1</sup> When chub fishing with wasp grub, put five or six grubs on the hook, and let them go down the stream forty or fifty yards; and do not be afraid of a rattling stream, for there, very often, the big fish lay.

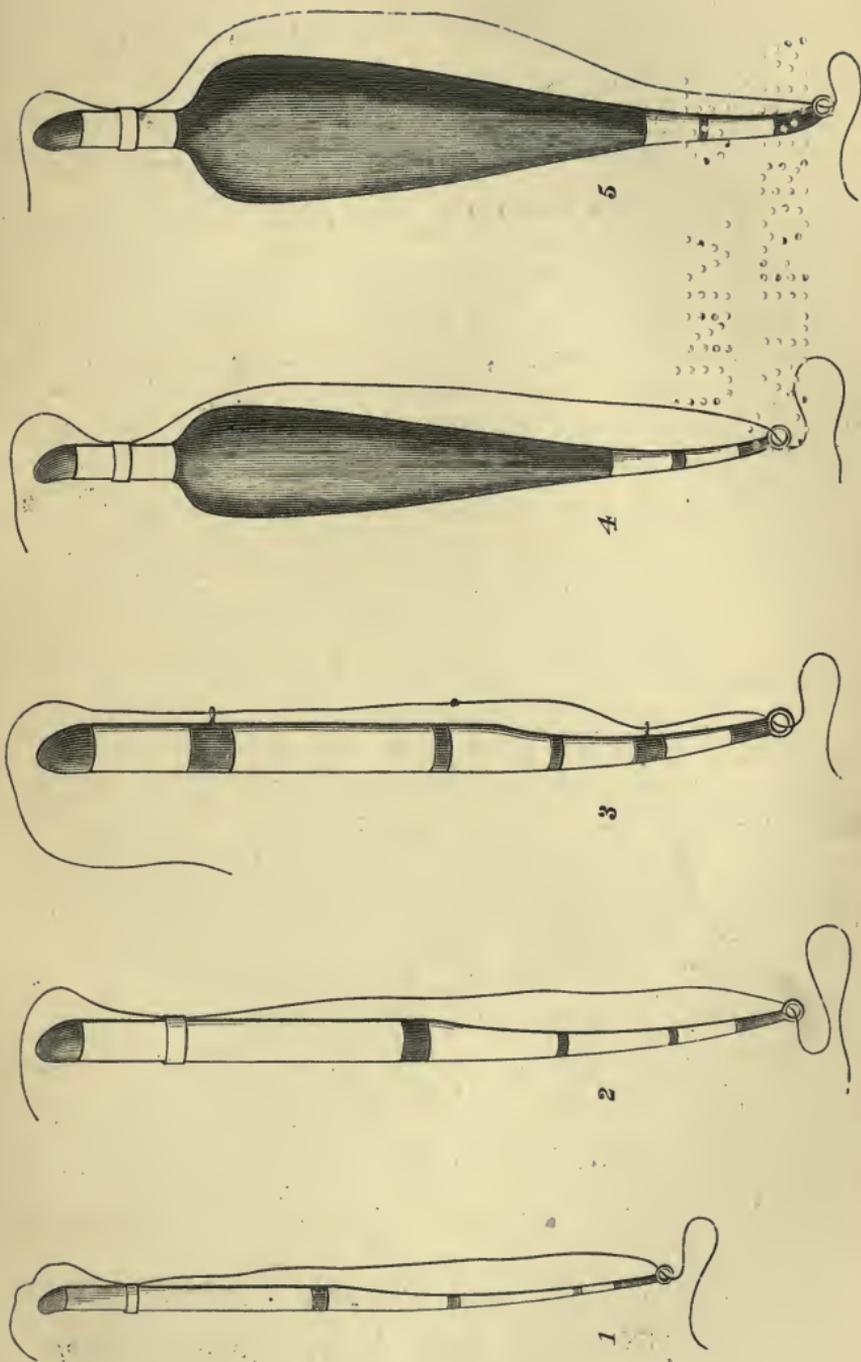
boiled shrimp will not be refused. A black slug with the belly slit open so that the white is shown is also a very good bait for chub at times.

And now we will look for a few minutes at a bait that is used during the winter, and is in my idea the winter bait *par excellence* for chub ; I allude to pith and brains. The pith is the spinal chord of a bullock ; your butcher will draw you a piece out when you want to use it, the brains are used for ground bait, they must be washed perfectly clean, and well scalded, or else boiled for a few minutes in a bag. They can then be either chewed and spat out in the river, or else cut up very small with a knife and thrown in. Don't, however, be extravagant in this matter, a very few pieces are quite sufficient. The pith itself when you first see it looks a very dirty and disagreeable affair ; the pieces are about as thick as your fore-finger, and I have had them a foot long. The skin must be slit from end to end with a pair of fine pointed scissors, carefully pulled off, and thrown away, being useless. The pith must then be carefully washed two or three times in clean water till it is perfectly clear from blood and all other impurities, and as white as curd. Some anglers recommend that it should be scalded, boiled, &c., but I say don't be deluded into doing anything of the sort, for I have tried it and boiling ever so little makes it very soft, and it won't stop on the hook at all. I say do nothing more to it than what I have recommended above. After it is washed clean, it is ready for use ; and for this bait a No. 4 hook is the best. Cut off a piece of pith about the size of a hazel nut and put the hook through and through it several times till you have worked the pith up the shank, it will then stop on the hook very well. When you have a bite with this bait play your fish very carefully, for I have found that two out of three of the fish so caught have only been hooked by the skin at the side of the mouth ; handle them roughly, and you

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will be sure to lose them. I have tried triangle hooks, double hooks, and single hooks of the sizes of 6, 7, or 8's, but I find I lose the least fish with a single No. 4, and what I find to be the best myself, I shall in all cases recommend to others. This is a clinking bait to use in the depth of winter, when the snow lies deep on the ground, and when the thermometer indicates a few degrees below freezing point. Indeed, I think it is nearly useless to try it unless there is a little frost. I have taken fish with it from November round to March, but if you want a change of bait during the winter you can try the flat wriggling tail of a nicely scoured lob-worm. Chub do not, as a rule, bite freely at a worm during a frost, however, and therefore the angler will find the pith the best. Let him bear in mind that the clearer and finer the water is the better for pith, but if the water is discoloured let him try the worm, also let the angler remember that the finer he fishes the greater is his chance of success with this fish. When the angler has a bite the next thing is to hook his fish, and this operation should be done as neatly as possible, a single turn of the wrist will be quite sufficient, for a heavy tug and rough usage will result in the loss of both fish and tackle. I don't like to see an angler strike his fish as though he were trying to drive a whole flight of hooks into a bony old pike, with a mouth like a carding machine. When first hooked, Mr. Chub makes a desperate effort to escape and bolts for his hold ; he must be kept away at all hazards, if it be under old roots, a steady pressure will accomplish this. He fights well for a minute or two, but soon gives up ; and when you have drawn him to you, and he lies on his side, he can be run up on a shelving bank, or the net slipped under him. I think I have said as much as I need say about float fishing for chub, and I will now turn to another branch of chub fishing, namely, fishing on the surface with live and dead insects, &c. This is a very important branch of angling, and is commonly called dibbing or

III.



1. Goose-quill float for Roach fishing. Pages 26, 82.
2. Pelican or Swan quill for Chub or Barbel fishing. Page 26.
3. Slider float. Page 31.
4. Light cork float for tight corking. Page 73.
5. Heavy cork float for Barbel fishing. Page 26



daping ; and for this branch of our art no better instructions have ever been given than those by Izaak Walton. The bottom fisher's rod, reel, and line, will do for this work, but the lower tackle must only be about a foot long, with a couple of big split shots as close to the loop as possible, and for baits all sorts of creatures are used, such as butterflies, humble bees, large blue-bottle flies, cockroaches, beetles, grasshoppers, &c., &c., and also a very small yellow frog. Caution, care, patience, and observation are also necessary in a daper. He must approach the place with the utmost circumspection, for the places where this sort of fishing is practised are where willow and alder bushes line the banks, or the hollow under an overhanging bank. I have crept up to such places on my hands and knees, and peered through the bushes into the water below. If it has been a suitable place, I have seen three or four chub about a foot from the surface, and sometimes while I have been looking a dried stick has snapped under my feet, and the chub have instantly bolted. It is, therefore, necessary that caution should mark your every movement. A No. 6 hook on the foot of tackle mentioned above will be the best, put your live insect or whatever it is on the hook as carefully as possible and see that everything is clear. You then wind up all the spare line until only your foot of gut with its two split shots hangs from the rod point, turn the rod round and round until the gut is entirely twisted on the rod top ; it is now ready for use. The rod is poked through an opening in the bushes until the top is perfectly clear, it is then turned the reverse way until the bait hangs clear, let the line run off the reel till the bait hangs about a foot or so from the water ; carefully mark then where the fish are and drop the bait over them, taking care that none of the gut touches or lies on the water. The two split shots are not used as sinkers, but merely to carry the line through the rings of the rod and to allow you to steer the bait where you like. If the angler has conducted his opera-

tions properly, and got his bait quietly on the surface of the water, a chub, perhaps, will rise and gobble it down instantly. If he does, then the angler must not strike instantly, but allow him to turn his head well down and then give him a very gentle pull. If the fish be struck on the very instant the chub bites, he will splash about on the top of the water and scare all the fish within yards. The fisher must then look for a handy hole close by, through which he can poke the landing net, and after carefully landing his fish he retires a few yards and rebaits his hook, and after waiting a few minutes until the chub have recovered their equanimity, he again pokes his rod through and repeats the operation. After a brace of chub have been taken by this means, they generally become disturbed in that place, and the best plan is to leave it and look for another. Small frogs are a very good bait for this kind of fishing. Hang a very little bit of the skin of the back on the bend of the hook, and put it gently on the surface of the water, as described before. As soon as it touches the water the frog will strike out and try to swim away, when if there is a chub within reasonable range, the frog will prove such an attraction that he cannot help taking it, and with it the hook. July and August, when the weather is very hot, is the best time for this class of sport, indeed good bags of chub may be made by this means, when the weather is too hot for anything else.

When you are fishing this method under an overhanging bank and no bushes line the bank, it will be necessary to crawl to the spot on hands and knees, or even on your belly. An old friend who once saw me capture a three-pound chub that had his home in a deep hole under a high over-hanging bank, termed it taking a mean advantage of the fish. The weather was very hot, and so after catching a big humble bee, and putting him carefully on the hook, I crawled to the edge and just poked the rod top and my own nose over. I dropped the bee carefully on the water. It began to buzz and

spin in a very attractive manner, and presently Mr. Chub came to have a look at him and swim round him a time or two with back fin erect. The attraction was, however, too strong, he opened his mouth and took his last bite.

When the angler operates from a high over-hanging bank, he ought to take notice that the bank is sound, for an old friend of mine one day thoughtlessly stepped on one, and the next moment he and part of the bank were in eight feet of water—rather disagreeable, you know, when a little observation would have prevented this. Whipping with a small frog is also a very good plan. The frog is thrown somewhat similarly to a fly. No float is required, nor shots on the tackle. A lip-hook and a double hook just below it is the best form of tackle, the lip-hook is put through the lips of the frog, and the double hook tied to one of the thighs with a little bit of yellow silk, it is thrown or pitched in all likely-looking spots and allowed to sink a little below the surface, being worked by a series of short jerks. At the symptoms of a bite, the angler instantly strikes. Artificial chub baits have also been made and used with effect, but natural baits, &c., are so numerous and deadly that for my part I think it is a waste of money to buy artificials. An artificial chafer is used with effect on the Thames, however, and this bait, which is garnished by two or three gentles, giving it the appearance of a natural insect with its inside squeezed out. It is thrown like an artificial fly, only it is allowed to sink under the surface for a few inches, and worked with a series of jerks. When I spoke against artificial baits just now, of course I did not allude to fly fishing, for that is a separate art. In some districts the tail of a cray-fish boiled is successfully used for the capture of large chub; the locust also is a most successful surface bait for chub, and to use it a special tackle is required. These so-called locusts are a peculiar-looking insects, on warm evenings they may be seen about tree-tops and hedges, sometimes in considerable numbers. They are

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about the size of a small humble bee, of a light brown colour, and are covered with a hard shell. When you have captured a quantity of them they can be kept in a perforated tin along with a few leaves, the leaves from an elm are the best, by this means they can be kept alive for several days. They can be used with the ordinary rod, reel, and line of the Nottingham bottom fisher, some anglers using a float with a few big shots close to it. The locust, of course, has to swim on the top of the water. I don't like a float myself for this bait, preferring to throw them out like an artificial fly. If the angler has a fourteen feet double-handed fly rod with a fly reel and line, these will be better for locust fishing than the ordinary rod. The fisher need not be particular about the fineness of his tackle, and for this about four or five feet of middling strong gut with a large loop on each end (one loop is to knot the reel line to, and the largest loop is at the bottom, to which the rest of the tackle is fastened). For the extreme bottom tackle take a longish length of fine gut and double it, it will then be a long loop (about six inches long), take then two No. 8 hooks and whip them back to back on the ends of the last-mentioned loop, so that the two ends of the tackle and the two hooks are perfectly fast together. The angler will require a baiting-needle, and for this purpose a stocking-needle about three inches long and as thin as you can get one, with a nick filed in the bottom of the eye will be the very thing; slip the loop of the bottom tackle in the nick that you have filed in the eye of the needle and then push the needle completely through the locust lengthways from head to tail. Draw the locust itself up to the bend of the hooks until the hooks lie as it were upon the shoulders of the bait. You must take care that the points of the hooks are bare, and not hid in the locust at all, as the hard shell will prevent you from hooking your fish. The two sections of the tackle now want fastening together, and this

is done by simply putting one loop through the other, the bait through the opposite one, and pull tight; they are perfectly fast, and can be easily undone when you want to rebait. This bait is cast on the stream as far as it can be thrown, and allowed to float down. It should then be held stationary until it works across stream to the bank on which you stand, and if there is a chub anywhere about the water over which the bait has travelled, he will most certainly take it. Here is one instance out of many where that bait has played a leading part in making a good bag of chub. Some years ago an angler went down the river below Newark to fish the water that ran beside a rather long field; he had forty-three locusts with him, and when he got down to the bottom of the field he had taken a chub with every locust but one. Forty-two chub with forty-three baits, in three hundred yards of water was not bad sport, and his tackle and method of baiting was exactly as I have described. Warm evenings during July and August are the very best times in which to use this bait, although years ago when the chub were upon the shallow spawning beds, during the latter end of May or the beginning of June, an angler using this bait has drawn out as many as a dozen chub without shifting a yard. These have been in a gravid state, however, and ought not to have been taken. The use of this bait properly is not generally understood by anglers, so I have been particular in my instructions.

Another good plan of taking chub is with the artificial fly. For this work some anglers use a single-handed fly rod, but I prefer a double-handed one. The rod that I use is fourteen feet long; the butt is of hickory, and the other two pieces are lancewood. It is of a medium gauge, neither too stiff, nor too whippy. A fly reel and a waterproof fly-line is necessary, and the cast should be about three yards of middling stout gut. Some use two or three flies on their

casts, but I have always found one quite sufficient. The flies, generally going under the name of "chub flies," are red, black, and grey palmers, and a big coch-y-boudhu; the best fly perhaps being the black, with silver tinsel. Whatever fly you use, they should be big, with plenty of hackle about them, and ought to have a strip of white kid attached to the bend of the hook by way of a tail. I have seen scores of chub flies that are sold at the tackle shops, and they don't seem to me to be dressed big enough; a good big fly that drops in the water with a flop so as to attract the attention of the chub is the best. Fine tackle is not needed for this work, indeed, some use a cast of salmon gut. If you are fly fishing in a boat under the boughs, where the water cannot be fished very well from the bank, stout tackle is necessary, for the hook very often gets hung across flags, rushes, or twigs, and a sharp haul is necessary to loosen it, hence the convenience of strong tackle, for if fine were used the boat would have to be taken into the boughs, and so spoil the spot. Besides, stout tackle is necessary to haul a three-pounder out of his fortress of old roots, &c.

Chub begin to get under the boughs about August, and I think that is the best time to go after them with the fly. Your fly should be thrown across the stream as far as you can; and allow it to work round over every eddy that curls round, and perhaps a bold rise and boil in the water will reward you.

As this work more particularly relates to bottom fishing in the Nottingham style, I think I have said as much as I need say about fly fishing for chub, and as chub is my favourite fish, I have given him the place of honour in this little book, it is rather a lengthy chapter, but I have said nothing but what the angler ought to know. I hope I have been very plain in my directions.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE BARBEL.

THIS fish is another distinguished member of the carp family, and derives his name from the peculiar beard or wattles that hang from his mouth. His scientific name is *Cyprinus Barbatus*. "With these beards or wattles," says Walton, "he is able to take such a hold upon weeds and moss that the sharpest floods cannot move him from his position," but of course this is wrong. His Roman nose seems to me to be peculiarly adapted for rooting among the sand at the bottom of deep holes and overhanging banks, and he is a well made, handsome, and powerful fish; still I think he is not quite so good-looking as the chub. The barbel is very active and vigorous, and quite the fellow to try the angler's skill, and the strength of his tackle. The mouth being situated very much underneath, that is, the top jaw being much longer than the lower, he is enabled to pick up food from the bottom, for he is for the most part a ground-feeding fish, although we hear of odd ones running at a spinning bait. There are, however, more often hooked foul than anything else. The upper scales of barbel are of a bright olive green colour, with a gold tinge towards the white belly, and a fish in good condition, of six pounds' weight or so, looks very attractive. The barbel is mostly found in the deepest part of the river, for he does not like the fiery heat or the extreme cold, although in the month of June it may be found in the weed beds or on

the shallows, where they congregate in considerable numbers for the purpose of scouring themselves. At this time they go rushing in and out among the weeds, and thread them in all directions. I have seen weed beds twenty yards long and five wide, that have been literally alive with them. Poachers, too, take advantage of this peculiarity of the barbel, and put a long net over the weed beds, and take them to the extent of stones, I might say "tons;" for a few years ago a party of three went every morning for a fortnight, and came back every time with as many fish as they could fairly stagger under. I am afraid this was a general plan in many districts on the Trent. It was grievous to see so many fine fish out of condition, to be sold for about one penny a pound as wholesome food, when it was anything but wholesome. I last year saw two or three lots of barbel and chub that had been taken by the same manner, but it was a few days after the fifteenth of June, and I have also seen numbers too that have been taken with the cad-bait during May and June, when they have been in a gravid state. Barbel spawn about the latter part of May, and retire to the deep holes about July; they should certainly not be taken before then. This fish delights in such places as old walls, where old piles and posts stick up out of the water, or in an eddy under a shelving bank, or about old sunken trees or timber, providing the water is tolerably deep; he delights, too, in the rushing boiling waters of the weir and other deep rapid waters, for his powerful fins enable him to stem the strongest current.

I have heard anglers again and again remark on the scarcity of the barbel in the Trent, there is no wonder at it when we consider the vast quantities that used to be taken in the manner I have described, but we must hope for better things. In my opinion netting ought to be stopped from the first of March till the first of August, and then we may hope for a return of the good old days in barbel fishing here, when a

hundredweight of fish was not considered anything extraordinary. The baits for a barbel consist of worms, slugs, gentles, grubs, scratchings, or cheese; although odd fish are sometimes taken by strange baits, such as bits of pudding, pieces of fat bacon, or strips of lean beef, &c., &c., while a piece of a lampern is a good bait for big fish.

In some continental waters we hear of the barbel reaching the extraordinary weight of forty and fifty pounds; but in England we have nothing like that, from sixteen to eighteen pounds being the top weight for a barbel in the Trent and the Thames, which two rivers, by-the-bye, are the best barbel rivers in England. The biggest that I ever saw was thirteen pounds in weight, but I heard of one that was taken on a night-line with lampern bait which reached seventeen pounds. Big fellows like these do not, however, often fall to the lot of the angler, he may be well satisfied with one of ten pounds and a nine or eight-pounder is not to be despised, indeed I should question if any angler during the last six years has taken a bag of barbel, of say, twenty fish that have averaged above three pounds each fish. An angler fishing Sir Henry Bromley's water at Stoke, about three years ago, caught, I believe fifty barbel, and the whole lot only weighed seventy-two pounds. An old angler also told me that the best day's barbel fishing he ever had on the Trent was about thirty years ago. He caught thirty-two fish, five of them weighed from twelve to fifteen pounds each, about a dozen were from six to ten pounds each, and not one of the others were under three pounds—a glorious bag. He says the thirty-two fish weighed 224 lbs., being an average of seven pounds each fish. We must not expect anything of the sort to happen to us, however, until nets are things of the past, and poachers cease to exist.

Some anglers may suppose that as the barbel is a strong and powerful fish, strong and powerful tackle is required to

take them. Now this is not necessary, for the tackle that will kill the chub will, in skilful hands, kill the barbel, and as the fish have become more and more educated, the angler's chance of success is all the greater if he fishes with fine tackle. What I have said in this respect with regard to the chub, holds equally good with the barbel. The rod, reel, and line described in Chapter II. page 22, will be just the things for barbel fishing, and your bottom tackle should be as fine as you like, providing it is good, sound, and strong. It should be stained as recommended in chub fishing. When you make your tackle, it would perhaps be as well to pick out the strongest lengths, and leave the very finest for chub or roach tackle, but always remember and have the thinnest length of gut at the bottom for the hook or hooks to be whipped to. Your tackle should be about four or five feet long; I like a long tackle because you can have all your split shots on the gut without having to pinch any on the line. There are several sizes of these split shots, and the angler ought to have a supply of different sorts in his bag. For a float he should have a pelican or swan quill when fishing a light stream, and a cork float for a heavier one. A No. 5 or 6 hook will be the best for the bottom one, and about an inch above this there is a No. 8, called a liphook. The angler when he whips these hooks on should use the pink silk mentioned in Chapter II. This is a worm tackle (the tackle required for other baits will be described further on); and there should not be a split shot less than fifteen inches from the bait. Some anglers for float fishing put a long lead on the line close to the loop of the tackle, but I like the split shots on the tackle, the larger ones nearer the top and the smaller ones lower down. Enthusiastic anglers, or *tyros* in the art would perhaps be the best name for them, would, perhaps, on receiving information that the barbel were biting, get a lot of ground bait in a hurry and dash off to the river

and pitch it in anywhere, in the belief that any quantity of barbel would be attracted into the swim, only waiting for a bait to be dropped over their noses in order to be dragged out wholesale. Now, my dear brother angler, let me caution you in this respect—don't waste any ground bait if you can help it, let caution mark your every movement in this respect. You might pitch your ground bait in a place that is entirely unsuited to the barbel, and wonder why you don't catch them, when the fact is there are none there to catch, and then go home disappointed, and say that barbel fishing is all a delusion and a snare, and that there is not such a thing in the river as a barbel. You are furthermore as cross as two sticks, and vow you will give up fishing for ever, when in reality the fault is yours and does not lie in the fish or river at all. You have not been at home above half an hour when your friend drops in and says that Smith has got such a glorious catch of barbel, "as many as he could carry home," that is the last feather that breaks the camel's back. You then, perhaps, go to look at Smith's fish, and a finer lot you never saw. "Smith, old fellow, how did you catch them?" Ah, there is the rub, by simply using a little judgment in putting in his ground bait where the fish were, and not throwing it in anywhere, as you did. If you know a place that abounds with barbel, of course it is different; but if you don't, keep your eyes open, and you will most probably see them jump out of the water or go through a gymnastic exercise, locally known as "pitching." They are troubled with parasites, and I suppose it is in order to try to rid themselves of these pests that they "pitch." As they generally run in shoals, where you see one jump there are probably many more. During the months of August, September, and October, which, by-the-bye, are the very best months to take them, you can scarcely take a walk by the river side without seeing them jump very frequently. Having selected a swim, the next

## 64 BOTTOM FISHING IN THE NOTTINGHAM STYLE.

proceeding is to bait it, and there are various methods of doing this. In order to suit the bottom, you should know how the current is. It may, perhaps, be different under the surface to what it is at the top, and you must bait accordingly; a little practice will make you judge this to a nicety. If you fail to see any barbel jump, then you must choose a swim where there is an eddy by the side of a swift stream, a ledge, or a deep hole where some old posts stick up, &c., as these afford shelter for the fish. The big fellows like a lazy eddy by the side of a swift stream, the curl of the water bringing the food round to them as it is swept down the stream. A good place to find barbel is at an abrupt bend of the river, where the stream rushes hard against the opposite bank. At the inside of this stream a big curl or eddy is generally formed, and in this the fish are wont to congregate. If, when you carefully try such places as these you find a tolerably level bottom with about eight or ten feet of water, you are almost certain to find barbel, and then you must mind and throw your ground bait in so that it glides into the hole or eddy, or else it will perhaps be swept away down the stream. The best way to try the set of the stream is to take two or three small pieces of wood or stick and throw them on the water, and you will see by the way they float down where to put your ground bait in to suit the circumstances of the case. And now having found a swim that holds barbel, the next thing is to bait it. One way of baiting a swim, as practised on the Trent, is to procure half a stone of scratchings. Be sure and get English cake, don't be put off with anything the dealers might want to impose upon you, for the foreign stuff is not fit even for ground bait. When you have got the right sort, break it up small and put it in a pipkin and pour boiling water upon it sufficient to cover it, and let it stand all night. Then take about half a peck of small or refuse potatoes (but not diseased ones) and boil them until

they will crush up. Now put them and the scratchings into a receptacle together, and then add a half-quartern of barley flour, and mix the whole mass till it will hang together in lumps. It is now ready for use. The cost of this ground bait is but trifling, and it is used a good deal on the Trent. Lumps about the size of a cricket-ball are thrown in, about two-thirds in one night, and the remainder the night after. The swim can be fished the following day. The angler must remember that before he fishes the swim he must take a little ground bait with him to use while he is fishing, and he ought to prepare it fresh the night before he goes, because it is of no use saving any of that he prepared first, as it is likely to be sour. Before he scalds his scratchings, therefore, in the first instance he ought to save about a pound of it, a few potatoes, and a handful or two of the barley meal, which can be prepared either the morning he starts to fish, or the night before. Of course, when this ground bait is used, your hook-bait is scratchings, the nicest, best, and whitest bit you can pick out of some that is specially scalded, and without the addition of the potatoes and barley flour (this should also be scalded fresh before you use it). A bit of white pipe is a very good bait, and is much liked by both barbel and chub. The tackle for this bait should be the same as the worm tackle, except in the case of the hooks. A lip-hook will not be wanted, and instead of a No. 5 or 6 hook on the bottom, two No. 7 hooks whipped back to back will be the best. In baiting, the tackle can be released from the line, and the pipe slipped over the shots and down till it is stopped by the bend of the hooks, the points are then covered by a small piece of the scratchings, and the bait is ready for use. This sort of ground bait, to my mind, has its objections, for, after you have done fishing the swim, very few more fish can be caught in it for a week or two after, it makes them sickly, and I think it spoils the sport for any

one who may happen to follow you soon. In fact, I don't like the plan at all, but as it is used a good deal on the Trent, I have thus referred to it. The *best* of all ground bait, in my opinion, for barbel is about a thousand or so of large lob-worms. These are procured at night out of the meadows where the grass is short after a heavy fall of rain or dew, by the aid of a lantern and candle. In gathering them, step as carefully as you can, and by the light from the lantern you will see the worms stretched out on the grass, or at least partly out on the grass and partly in their holes. Seize each one firmly but carefully, and draw it out of its hole. Drop them in a bag or whatsoever you have with you, but be as still as you can, for at the least noise they will disappear like lightning into their holes. A pair of creaking boots are fatal to the success of the worm-catcher; he must be prompt in his actions and move about as stealthily as a mouse.

When you have a sufficient quantity of them, and they have been scoured for a few days among some clean moss, you may then proceed to bait the swim. To do this, some cut them up in pieces and scatter them down the swim, and also a little above the hole, if it be a hole you are going to fish, so that the stream may carry them down fair and square into it. If possible, the angler does this three nights before he fishes the pitch. About five hundred the first, three hundred the second, and two hundred the third is a good proportion. When he comes to fish the next morning, he must be sure, before he puts his rod and tackle together, to cut up a dozen or so and scatter them down the swim. This is an important point; the reason will be given further on. Some anglers throw the worms in whole, for this reason—they say that they live longer in the water and will attract the fish better, whereas the cut up worms soon turn bad. I think myself it is the best to use whole worms, but I prefer to bait the place first thing in the morning, before or at sun-

rise. The reason of this is obvious, for eels and other nocturnal fish would be attracted into the swim if you baited over-night, and get a lot of the ground bait that was intended for the barbel, therefore I pronounce for morning baiting.

If you wish to fish a pitch that you cannot bait very well by scattering the worms down the stream—if, for instance, the water runs too fast—then a good plan is to have a small net, something like a cabbage or onion net, and put clay and worms in it. Then tie a strong cord to it, and cast it in the stream a little above where you are going to fish; the action of the water will cause the worms to work out of the net and attract the fish into the swim. When you come again to bait, draw the net out by means of the cord, fill it again, and repeat the operation until the swim is fully baited. Walton says “the barbel is curious for his baits, that they may be clean and sweet, that is to say, to have your worms well scoured, and not kept in sour or musty moss, for he is a curious feeder; but at a well-scoured lob-worm he will bite as boldly as at any bait, and especially if, the night or two before you fish for him, you shall bait the places where you intend to fish for him with big worms cut into pieces, and note that none did overbait the place, or fish too early or too late for a barbel.” If this held good in Walton’s time, that a well-scoured lob-worm is the best bait for a barbel, it holds equally as good now. The next business, therefore, is to procure a well-scoured lob-worm. The maiden lobs are the very best for the hook; and may be known very easily. They are the smallest of the dew worms that you pick up from the grass, and have no rings or knobs on them. Their colour is a bright pink, and they are usually about two or three inches long. These sorts should be picked out from the others and kept separate, among some fresh moss that is slightly damped. To make them a clear red colour, you should have a piece of very soft red brick, and when you

have placed your worms on the top of the moss (a small barrel or a large earthenware vessel is the best to scour them in), you should take a nutmeg grater and grate the piece of brick, so that the dust goes among the worms. Examine them every day, and pick out all bruised and diseased ones, and repeat the operation with the brick and nutmeg grater. This operation will make the worms a splendid red colour, very tough, and a perfect *bonnebouche* for the barbel. They will be ready for use in about a week, and if you are careful with them and adopt this plan, you will have a well-scoured attractive lob-worm. The worms that you use for ground bait should be well-scoured, for as Walton says, "he is a curious feeder," that is, he likes to have his food clean. As an illustration I might just mention a little incident that came under my own observation. Two anglers were fishing the barbel swim at the Corporation fishery, Winthorp; they had both scoured their hook baits separately, only with this slight difference, one had had his worms scouring for over a week, the other for only a day or two; one lot was bright tough, and of a splendid colour, the other was dark, dirty, and tender; each used their own baits; the one with the bright baits kept getting fish, the other with the dirty ones got none; they changed places, but with the same result; they both then used the bright and well-scoured worms, and then both of them took fish. This is one instance out of many, and goes to prove that the barbel likes a clean, well-scoured worm. And now we will suppose the angler has his tackle all right, his barbel swim baited, and two or three hundred well-scoured maiden lob-worms in a bag among some moss for his hook baits, and also about two hundred coarse worms in another bag to cut up and throw in during the time he is fishing. He will now be ready for any amount of barbel, but he must remember to make no more noise than he can help. Whether he fishes from a boat or

the bank, he should never be less than fifteen yards from the hole he intends to fish; and having carefully anchored the boat lengthways down the stream, or taken his stand on the bank, before he puts his tackle together, he should take his coconut shell and put two or three dozen worms in it. With a pair of old scissors he cuts them up in pieces and throws them down his swim. This will make the fish feel as it were, at home, and they will not be so easily frightened; because when a swim is properly baited, and you have a nice bait on fine tackle, you very often hook a fish the first swim, and if you have not thrown a few worms in before you begin, the fish are apt to be frightened at seeing one of their companions in trouble, and fly from the swim. You will then, perhaps, be at considerable trouble to entice them back again, and all for the want of just throwing a few cut-up worms in. Personal experience, and the experience of old angling friends, prove this to be correct. Another thing these old friends have told me, besides my own experience in the matter, and that is—if when you begin to fish barbel, and you take a dace or two the first few swims, you may make up your mind that there are not many barbel in the swim, for they do not seem to agree very well together; on the other hand, if you take a barbel or two the first few swims, you may congratulate yourself, and know that the barbel have got it to themselves. And now the angler must bait his hooks. Two of the maiden worms will, in my idea, be the best; roll the worms in the bag of sawdust before mentioned, and put the hook in the first worm about three quarters of an inch from the head end, and work the worm up to the lip-hook; leave about half an inch of the tail end hanging below the bottom hook, and then stick the lip-hook right through the head end of the worm, and bring the points of both hooks out of the worm. Take another worm smaller than the first, and just hang the head end on the lip-hook and the tail end on the

bottom hook, your bait will then be in the shape of a link, with three or four ends to wriggle about in a most lively manner ; that, in my idea, is the best worm bait you can use. Sometimes I have put the worms on the hooks head downwards, and taken fish with them ; these were at odd times when I had been an hour without a bite in the ordinary way of baiting ; but whether this result was an accident or not, I cannot say. Having your bait now ready (and you must be sure that it touches the bottom of the river), let it glide down the swim thirty, forty, or even fifty yards from the boat or stand. When you have covered the entire distance where you suppose your ground bait to be, without a bite, wind up the line on the reel and repeat the operation. If you have a bite, don't be in a hurry, give him a second or two to take the bait, and then strike pretty smartly to fix the hook well. Should your float be forty yards away, you must strike a little harder than when it is only twenty yards from you, as you have a good length of line to lift off the water, and when you find you are fast in a fish, wind him out of the hole as quickly as possible. Let him run as near the boat as you can, and then he won't disturb the others. When I say wind him out as quickly as possible, I don't mean a sort of a pully-haully system—a dragging out of the fish neck and crop, because your tackle would not stand it, but *as soon as you can*, get him under the rod's point ; keep a tight line on him, and when he is exhausted your companion should put the landing-net in the water as carefully as possible. You then bring the fish over it, and with a sharp lift you have him. Never dash the net in the water right in front of his nose, or perhaps the sudden fright may make him give an unexpected bolt when you were not prepared for it ; be very cautious in this respect, or you may lose both fish and tackle, and then you will perhaps think of the quotation—

“The waters wild closed o’er the child,  
And I am left lamenting.”

I inferred a little time back that when the barbel were biting you would catch no dace, and when the dace were feeding you would catch no barbel; of course, I allude to the two fish in the same swim at the same time. Now, I don’t want it to be understood, for a moment, that you never catch the two together, for occasionally dace and barbel are taken together, but I mean it is not a general thing to find the two fish feeding very freely at the same time and in the same swim. I remember once fishing in a good barbel swim a short distance above Newark, with an old friend—a capital angler. We had baited the swim properly, and reckoned on a good take of barbel, but that time we had reckoned without our host; water was right, tackle was right, bait was right, in fact everything was right except the barbel, and they were conspicuous by their absence, for not a single barbel did we take in the two days, but nearly every swim we took a dace; now I supposed that there were no barbel in the swim or else the dace would not have fed so freely, and I have still every reason to believe I was right in my supposition. On the other hand, I can remember taking half a dozen barbel and the same quantity of dace out of one swim, though as a set off to this I have known good catches of barbel that have not had a single dace among them.

When I was first initiated into the mysteries of the Trent and its fish, I supposed, as the barbel was a big fish, I should require very powerful tackle to take it. I had for a companion an old friend with very much the same opinion; in fact, you may put us down as being very much uninitiated just then. Well, as it happened, we had got our ground bait in all right, more by good luck than good management, I must now confess; the water was very bright, the tackle very coarse. My old friend, who had a predilection for spectacles,

had them as usual astride his nose, when, by accident, they fell off and sank to rise no more. There, in fact, we were in fine water with coarse tackle, trying to catch barbel. Of course it was "no go." The result was only two small fish in five hours. "There are no barbel in the swim," said my old friend; "let's give it up and go home." "Oh no," said I, "let's try a little longer. I believe it is all owing to your spectacles that we are getting no barbel, for I believe there are a lot down there, only they keep putting your gill-lamps on in turns to examine the bait." The idea of a big barbel with a pair of goggles on was too much for my old friend's risible faculties. He looked at me and laughed, then drew the cork from the bottle, and, as he said "the joke was too good to pass by without wetting," took a good swig. About half an hour after, another angler came down with his rod and tackle, we explained our difficulty to him; he knew his business; he looked at our worms, they were all right; so, at our invitation, he put his tackle together, and now, for the first time, I saw my mistake. His tackle did not look strong enough to land a roach, while his line, I thought, would hardly do to whip hooks on with, so fine was it. In about an hour, however, eight more good barbel lay on the grass, all killed with his fine pale blue tackle, without losing a single fish. This was rather a severe eye-opener to us, and proved by demonstration that fine tackle was decidedly superior to ours. Those anglers who go in for extra fine fishing, use a sort of gut that is sold at the tackle shops, called "patent gut:" it is very fine and very strong. I like a length of it on the bottom of my barbel tackle. I have seen Mr. Rudd, of the Reindeer Inn, Newark, use a barbel tackle made entirely of this fine patent gut, and with a very light float he has succeeded in making some grand catches of barbel. Once, in particular, I remember he and three visitors were barbel fishing and used that sort of tackle, and at nearly

every swim he was fast in a barbel till he had landed a very good catch, whilst his companions could scarcely show a single fin. Some anglers like round bent hooks, and some like sneck bent ones. I think a round bent Carlisle hook is the best, for you can put a worm on it so much nicer than you can on a sneck bent one. An old friend of mine, when barbel fishing, after the first mad rush or two of the fish and when he once begins to wind on him and gets the float above water, hardly ever allows the float to disappear again, but holds him tight and lets the spring of the rod kill him. I don't recommend this, but still it is done by that old friend of mine, and he is a very good and successful angler. If your barbel is only a small one, it is perhaps as well to hold him tight, but if he feels heavy don't risk losing fish and tackle by not allowing him to have a little of his own way. The mouth of a barbel being situated very much underneath, and as he has some very hard leathery jaws, it is certain if you hook him firmly you need not fear the hook cutting through. A moderately sharp stroke is necessary to fix the hook well, and when he is once well hooked, the hold very seldom gives way.

"Tight corking" is a plan that is adopted by many barbel fishers on the Trent. For this style a cork float a trifle larger than the one in use for "traveller" fishing is the best, except that it must be adjusted so that the bait lies well on the bottom, say about two feet deeper than the distance between the float and the ground. The bait is thrown in and allowed to swim down as far away from you as you think requisite; it is then held stationary, and you can tell at once by the bobbing of the float when a barbel attacks the bait. This plan is chiefly used if the swim be a deep hole or eddy not far from the bank. I like the plan under these circumstances, but as a general rule I prefer to fish with a traveller float, so as to let the bait be always moving about over the swim, or in other words, wherever the ground bait may be. (I have given

full instructions for throwing the float and bait to any distance required in Chapter II. page 34), but if the water is over eight feet deep I should use a slider or "traveller" float. At the beginning of the barbel fishing season, say during the month of July, two caddis on a No. 7 hook and a light float and tackle will be found a good bait, especially in such places as the piles or at the bottom of the woodwork of old bridges, or in the eddies and streams that run from a weir. Barbel will sometimes take a lump of cheese or a bunch of gentles, or in fact almost any bait, for I have known them to take a bit of paste or a grain of creed wheat or malt, when roach fishing, and the sport a three-pounder will give you on fine roach tackle is something for you to remember. Worms and scratchings are, however, the principle baits for barbel, and as I have said and directed it is necessary to well ground bait for them. Fair catches of barbel *have* been made without any previous baiting, a dozen worms or so being clipped up and thrown in as you go along, but it is not a very safe plan. Indeed, it may be said that even after a pitch has been well baited it is not certain that one will catch fish, and the angler is more often disappointed than not. Barbel fishing now-a-days is a very precarious job, for barbel are more often "off" than "on." Years ago they were nearly always "on" during the months of August, September, and October, but of late years the angler has to put up with two or three disappointments for one success.

If you find it is not possible to fish the place with a float, if, for instance, the stream runs too fast, or you wish to fish in the rushing, boiling waters of a weir tail—which latter place I may impress upon my readers is a capital one for barbel—(there are generally two or three lazy eddies in the close vicinity of a weir, and in these the big ones love to lie), you will have to do what is locally known as plumbing or ledgering. For this plan a bottom tackle about a yard long with a few split shots on it is required, and the "ledger" is

either a long pear-shaped lead, or a flat triangular one. Some anglers put this lead on their lines and pinch a split shot below it close to the loop of the tackle, but I think it is best to put the ledger on a small length of fine gimp, and make a loop at each end. The reel line can be fastened to one loop and the loop of the tackle can be put through the loop on the gimp. The hook is brought through the tackle loop and drawn tight, it is then perfectly fast. The lead is liable to cut the line if it is put on that, so I think the gimp is better. When this plan is adopted in the rough waters of a weir, a stronger line and tackle is used. The waters are mostly discoloured by the stream stirring up the sand at the bottom, and there are mostly a lot of big stones, piles, and obstructions generally in the neighbourhood of a weir. When also a fish is hooked and bolts for his "hover," it has to be a clear case of "pull devil, pull baker." The hooks and baits for this style are the same as for float fishing.

If the angler has not the time to properly bait a swim, he can fish in a style known as "roving" for barbel. Having found a likely-looking spot, he cuts up a very few worms and throws them in, and then fishes it with either the traveller float, the ledger, or tight corking; if he gets a fish or two, well and good, if not, he looks for another place and tries again. Should the water be low and bright you will find, as a rule, the barbel in the deepest holes, but if, on the other hand, the water is high and very much discoloured, you will find them on the shallows; for they, like pigs, like to root amongst the sand on the bottom. I remember only last year that one of the night-line parties set their lines during a fresh on the shallows below Winthorp, and for two or three nights, while the water was up, they had some very nice catches of barbel, but as soon as the water went down they ceased catching barbel there, the fish having retired into the deep holes. During a fresh in August and September some good barbel are often taken by ledgering or long corking close to the bank, for they

are then roving about in search of food. A friend of mine told me some time back, that he had given instructions for the baiting of a barbel swim with worms some few years ago. He anticipated it had been done according to his instructions, but judge of his disgust when they went to fish it to find that, instead of throwing the worms in the hole where there were ten or twelve feet of water, they had been thrown into the wrong place, so that they worked into an eddy of about four feet deep on ordinary occasions. However, there had been a lot of rain a few days before, and the water was just rising, and it was the luckiest chance in the world (as it afterwards turned out) that the bait was put in where it was. The water rose a yard during the day, and at night they had one of the best catches of barbel he ever saw. If the bait had been put in the hole, ten to one if they would have caught a single fish. This case goes to prove that barbel rove about the shallows during a fresh.

I have always found that just when the water is rising, you can catch barbel ; but it is no good to bait a swim *during* a fresh. The first day the water comes on is worth all the rest of the time it is up put together.

A piece of a lampern on the ledger tackle is a very good bait for big barbel ; these baits (lamperns) are a peculiar eel-shaped fish. Very heavy fish have been killed by its agency, especially late in the season when the lamperns were running. There is one thing finally I must mention as a caution to the angler. It is this, don't over-feed the barbel while they are biting. Many a day's sport has been spoilt by this very foolish plan. If the fish go off biting a little, throw in about half a dozen broken worms to set them on the feed again ; this number will generally be found sufficient.

As a fish for the table, the barbel is one of the very worst ; it is coarse, watery, bony, and flavourless ; but if the angler fancies he should like one cooked, he can prepare it the same as I directed for big chub.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE ROACH.

To be a successful roach fisher is the highest attainment in the bottom fisher's art. He must be possessed of great skill, patience, and ingenuity, and also a thorough knowledge of the habits of the fish. Further, he must be able to detect the places where roach are likely to be found, and know what places they avoid; he must pay particular attention to a number of the most minute details, a good swim must be selected, and then must be fished at the exact depth. A very fine tackle must be used, and in hooking a roach, the angler must have a regular roach trick, that is, he must do it without a jerk of any kind, simply in a moment by a single turn of the wrist. Walton says, "When you fish for roach, you must have a small hook, a quick eye, and a nimble hand." Walton too says that the roach is "accounted the water sheep for his simplicity or foolishness;" but roach now-a-days are not so foolish and simple as they were in old Izaak's time. 'Tis true the roach in a pond, where they are small and half starved, and where they seldom see the presence of an angler or a rod, might be foolish, and allow themselves to be caught by any sort of bait and tackle (and I know that roach in our well-fished river, during the latter part of May, are perfectly reckless, and will allow themselves to be caught by dozens with the cad bait, when the spawn and milt has been running from them); but the well-fed, good-condi-

tioned, and aldermanic roach of our well-fished river are not to be caught by any tyro during August and the following months, for they are amazingly shy of the hook. They seem to me to be highly educated then, and pretty wide-a-wake to the angler's proceedings. A reckless stamping up and down the bank, or a peering over into it, or working a plumb all over it, to see how deep it is, are all fatal to the success of the roach fisher. His motto must be "fine and far off," thus to keep out of sight as much as possible. Then, and then only, with suitable tackle, baits, and a good swim, he may stand a chance of deceiving a few roach.

The roach is a member of the carp family, and his specific name is *Cyprinus Rutilus*. When in good condition he is a handsome fish. One writer, paraphrasing Yarrell thus describes him. "The colour of the upper part of the head is dusky green, with blue reflections, becoming lighter on the sides, and passing into silvery white on the belly, the irides yellow, cheeks and gill covers silvery white; dorsal and caudal fins pale brown, tinged with red; pectoral fins orange red; ventral and anal fins bright red; the scales are rather large, marked with consecutive and radiating lines; large eyes, the circles of which are of a gold colour, and the iris red; their scales are very smooth, except during and just after spawning time, when they feel to the touch like a nutmeg-grater." This seems to me to be a pretty fair description, and any one reading it, who has never seen a roach, would come to the conclusion that he is a very handsome fish. He also has a small head and a leather mouth, with a peculiar top lip. This lip, if you take hold of it, raise it, and bring it forward, shows to you that it has the power of elongation, and that it is shaped something like a hood. This power seems to prove that the fish can take his food on the bottom like a barbel; or retaining the lip in its ordinary position that he can take a bait in midwater, or on the surface like a dace. I have found, how-

ever, that roach are, for the most part, a ground-feeding fish. As an illustration I may say, I was only last year fishing a good swim with a friend. The swim was well baited, and we both had to stand side by side, and allow our floats and baits to travel down together; we each fished with the same bait. I fished, however, on the bottom, and he was some eight or ten inches above it. We did this by mutual consent, and during the whole of the time he never caught a roach, and I did not take a single dace. We both had very good catches, and strange as it may appear, that my fish were roach and his were dace, the conclusions I arrived at then backed up my former observation, viz. that roach are for the most part a ground-feeding fish; I know that they will take an artificial or a natural fly on the surface; it is the formation, therefore, of the mouth that allows them to take a bait at all depths. (The above will be found a good plan, to fish a swim that you know contains both roach and dace). I have been rather particular in my description of a roach, because the would-be roach anglers ought to know the peculiarities and habits of these fish, and also because during certain stages of their growth they may be confounded with fish of an apparently similar character, but which on closer observation, side by side, are widely different. Roach spawn about the latter end of May, and are a very prolific fish. They are then very slimy, and have a lot of rough pimples on their scales. When they have done spawning they retire into deep holes, or among the thick weeds, and live upon the weeds and the insects found among them. About the latter end of July or so they come out of the weeds, and take more to the open water; and they may be found sometimes in considerable quantities by the side of rushes, flags, or weed beds, especially if the water is from five to eight feet deep. About this time, when as old roach fishers say, "The weed is out of them," and the slimy coat they wore among

the weeds has worn off, their scales are smooth and bright, and their fins nice and clear. They are in very good condition, and are very shy; and it is now that it requires an artist in the business to take them. Roach prefer a sandy bottom, do not like a muddy one; in fact, a river roach I may say is a very clean fish. His baits have to be clean and sweet. If there be any suspicion of dirt or sourness about them, he will have none of them.

The roach fisher should be able to find out what sort of a bottom the river has before he fishes it. I know a very good roach fisher, who, when he is on the look-out for a new swim, has a lump of lead with a flat bottom, on which he sticks a piece of soap, and by letting this down to the bottom generally manages to bring up enough of the sand or whatever it is to judge by. Roach very seldom exceed three pounds in weight; and we have very few instances where the fish reach this. A two-pound roach would be considered a giant if taken from the Trent! and I have only seen one roach that reached this weight. This was caught by a labourer with a large lob-worm for a bait: it weighed 2 lb. 5 oz., and it was literally quite greyheaded. The Avon, I believe, has the biggest roach; I have heard of them being frequently taken from that river of the weight of from two pounds to two and a half pounds. Two-pound roach are sometimes taken in the Thames; but in the Trent I only know of the solitary one mentioned above. A half-pounder is a sizeable fish, a pounder is a good one, while a pound and a half fish would make the heart of a Trent angler rejoice; indeed, I have known the first prize for a specimen roach to be taken with a pound fish. I once took fifteen roach that weighed fourteen pounds; and, again, seventeen fish that weighed fifteen pounds; and an old friend of mine once took six grand fish close to Newark, weighing seven pounds, and not an ounce difference was there in the weight of them.

Roach are very fond of a lazy eddy by the side of a swift stream, and being a bulky fish are not found much in very strong and rapid waters. They like the slow, lazy curls under bushes, or the slow streams by the side of flags, rushes, &c. ; quiet lie-byes or corners away from the main stream are very much affected by roach ; streams that flow at the rate of not more than two miles an hour ; or in the curls and eddies in the vicinity of a weir, or in the neighbourhood of an old wooden bridge, and sometimes they are found in the shallows of a mill tail. These are the places where roach are principally found, and it is in such places as those that the successful roach fisher pursues his quarry. The food of roach consists of grubs, flies, grasshoppers, worms, cad baits, weeds and water insects, gentles, bread, paste, rice, pearl barley, creed malt, wheat, &c., &c. The last few that I have mentioned are the very best hook baits you can have. Indeed, to put it correctly, gentles stand first, cad baits second, worms next, then paste, pearl barley, creed wheat, and malt. These baits, if they are properly used, are all that is required by the bottom fisher for roach.

As a fish for the table, they are a little better than chub and barbel. Nicely fried, a good roach out of a gravelly stream, during the autumn and winter months, is not to be despised, and is a very palatable addition to the breakfast-table. "The Freshwater Fisheries Act of 1878" seems to me to be hardly satisfactory as far as roach are concerned, for on the 15th of March, these fish are in the very best condition, and could very well be taken for another month—that is, as regards the Trent ; while on the 15th of June they have not all of them done spawning, and for another month at least they are slimy, lumpy, and in a generally wretched state. I think, therefore, that anglers ought not to take them before the middle of July.

Having looked at the roach and his habits, we will turn to

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the tackle that is necessary to take him ; the rod, reel, and line described in Chapter II., and recommended for chub, will do, but if the angler goes in for roach fishing alone, then a rod that is lighter will be better ; such an one, for instance, as I have now before me, made for me by David Slater, of Newark. The length is about twelve feet tapered from the butt to the point to a nicety ; wire guards are on the rings, and these prevent the line from catching or hitching round them. Such a rod will hook a roach in an instant, by that almost imperceptible turn of the wrist so necessary in a good roach angler. It is well balanced and only weighs about 10 oz. ; this is a splendid roach rod, but, as I have said before, for the working-man angler who goes in for general bottom fishing, and can afford only one rod, the first-mentioned one will be the best ; if he goes in for roach alone, he can, if he likes, have one of the very finest Derby twist lines, instead of the next size recommended for chub ; and his bottom tackle should also be of the very finest gut he can buy. He should make his bottom tackle from three to five feet in length, to suit the depth of the water ; though a five-foot tackle will be long enough if he has to fish fifteen feet deep. Some anglers use horsehair for their tackle, which will do very well ; but I have seen gut thinner than horsehair, and I am sure that fine gut is better in all respects than hair. I have used no hair lately, and I have come to the conclusion, after careful practice, that extra fine gut is the *best*.

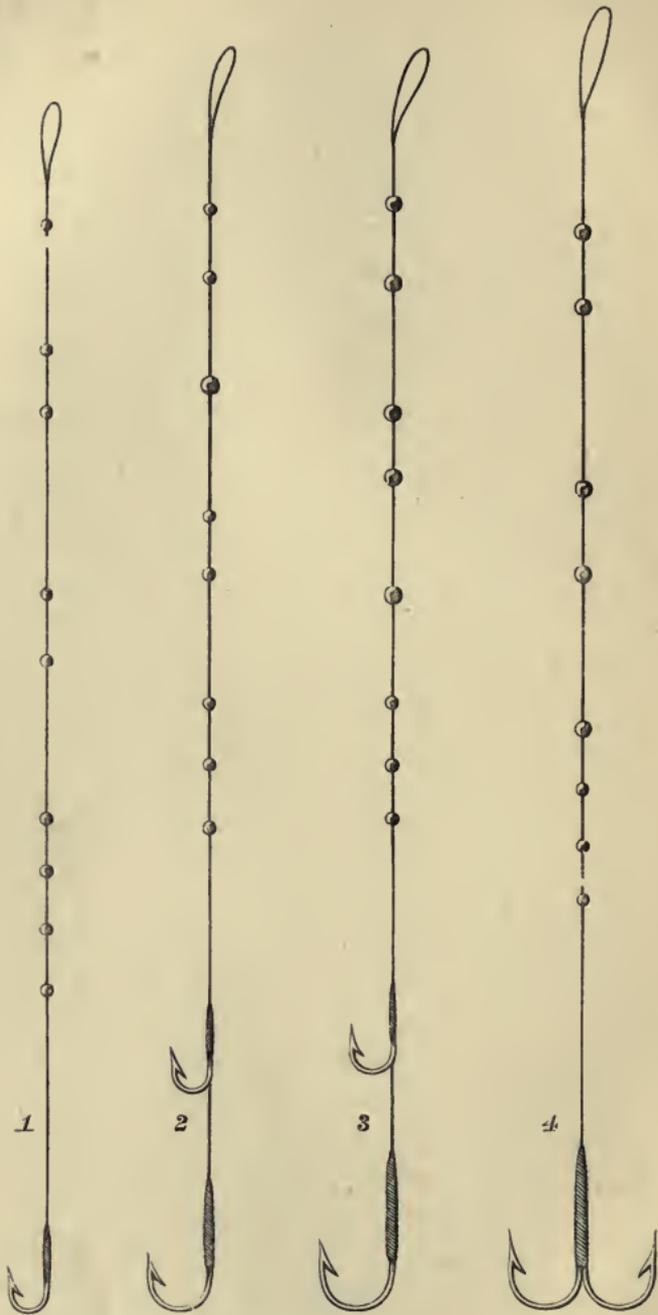
A very important article in a roach fisher's outfit is his float ; if the water is quiet or very nearly so, he must have a float made of the smallest of goose quills, one that will carry about three or four split shots ; but if there is a bit of a stream, he can increase the size of his float, and the number of shots on the tackle. He need not on any account have a float any larger than will carry about eight small shots ; in-

deed in very quiet waters a self-cocking float will be the best. This can be easily made out of two small quills. Use the two tops and join them together with a little plug of wood in the middle, in the bottom piece of quill two or three small shots are placed. This float should be about four inches long, and it can be fastened to the line with a quill cap on each end; to make this float watertight, it should be bound where the join is, tightly and closely, with a bit of well waxed silk or cotton. The utility of this float is apparent to all thoughtful anglers, because when you scatter your ground bait in a still water it breaks up and sinks very gradually; and then if you plump the hook bait in, and there is a long necklace of split shots on the tackle, the bait sinks so much differently to the way in which the ground bait did, and the shy and suspicious roach would see the fraud at once. When the water is clear in these still quiet places, the nearer you approach nature the greater is your chance of success. The ground bait as just noticed sinks down gradually, and the hook bait ought to do the same; so if the weight is in the float, without there being any on the tackle the hook and the bait will sink down as gradually as did the ground bait, and be more likely to deceive the fish. The float for roaching in ordinary swims on the Trent will carry about half a dozen split shots; and I must again impress upon the angler, that he ought not to have one of them less than eighteen inches from the hook. The others also ought to be down the tackle at distances of six inches or so from each other; the bait will then swim straighter in the water, and the fish will be less wary than if all the shots were huddled together in one place on the gut. The float of a roach fisher should be so nicely weighted that it will indicate in a instant a roach bite. The angler may ask himself the question, What is a roach bite? The answer would be, "When the fish snaps at the bait and

takes it ;” but I believe that in quiet or semi-quiet waters, a roach does not snap at a bait and swallow it instantly ; in paste fishing this is so especially I remember reading some time ago of experiments tried with different fish in an aquarium. Dace and trout snap at the bait ; but the roach generally took it in a different way ; he would swim up near the bait, open his mouth and draw in a current of water, together with the bait. Should it please the fish it is immediately swallowed, and the water ejected through the gills, but the moment he finds out that there is something amiss, such as a line attached to it, or the taste does not suit him, he instantly blows it out with great force, along with the mouthful of water he has just taken in ; and the bigger the fish the more cautious they are in this proceeding. In fishing with gentles for roach it is a very common occurrence to find the gentles blown up the tackle, sometimes a couple of inches from the hook ; the roach had tried to blow the bait from his mouth, but the angler had been too quick for him, the hook had penetrated the mouth, and the bait had been blown up the gut, instead of both hook and bait being forcibly ejected, which would most certainly have been the case had the angler waited another instant before he struck. The would-be angler will now see at once the necessity of having a float that will indicate a bite of this description, and the smaller the quill, the better it will be. Some anglers in roach fishing only have the extreme tip of the float out of the water. Now I think this is scarcely enough ; he should have half an inch at least out, on purpose to properly indicate a roach bite. When the roach draws in the bait, in the manner described, the float perhaps does not bob down, but merely tilts over a little sideways, and the angler ought to respond on the instant. How many times has an angler seen his float give a hardly perceptible bob, and has waited until he has had another and more decided



IV.



1. Roach tackle. Page 87.
2. Worm tackle, with lip-hook, for Bream. Page 125.
3. " " " " for Barbel. Page 62.
4. Barbel tackle for scratchings. Page 65.

For particulars of the length of the gut, tackle, and distance apart of the shot, see pages referred to. The hooks are given about the correct size.

one, and then found on striking that his bait was gone, and there was no fish on his hook ? The crafty old roach had drawn the bait into his mouth at the first little bob of the float, and that was the time to have met him by the magic turn of the wrist. In the moment between the first bob and the second, the roach found out that there was something wrong, and so blew the bait out, and it was the very act of blowing out that caused the second and more decided bob of the float. One of the very best roach fishers we have in Newark tells me that he has very often noticed this peculiar biting of the roach when he has been fishing with a stationary bait in quiet waters. He says he always gives a short twitch, let the float move as it likes ; sometimes, he has noticed that the float has been thrown upwards a trifle ; and then again it might only tilt over a little ; and, he is now of the firm conviction that all these moves indicate a roach bite, a conviction that I most heartily share. It is always the largest and best roach that bite in this sly and unobtrusive manner ; it is nevertheless true that anybody can catch roach sometimes when the fish are quietly sucking down the bait and hooking themselves ; but it is not very often that he is "on," like that. Very small fish will bob down the float and make the angler think he has got a most important bite ; but the big fellows in a quiet water, when they are not very well "on ;" are not to be taken by anybody. When you are fishing with gentles in a slight stream, and your float is travelling down, you cannot notice this action of your float, but it will be the best to strike promptly on the least indication of a bite ; more roach have been lost by waiting a trifle for a second bob, than have been taken. I think I have shown the necessity of having a float to properly indicate a roach bite, and now we will look for a minute or two at the roach hooks ; these should be carefully selected and tested before whipping them on the gut. Some anglers like a hook that is short in the shank and very fine in

the wire ; as they say "you can thread a gentle on them so much nicer," but I don't care for them, because if your hook is very short in the shank you cannot hook your fish properly (they do not strike sufficiently true on the point of the hook). Tie two hooks on two pieces of gut, the one with a short shank, and the other with a shank a little longer, and fix the points in something, and then pull the gut gently, and you will see then what angles the hooks and gut form. The one with a short shank will approach a right angle, a great deal nearer than the one with the longer one ; so you will see by this that when you strike a roach with the short shanked hook, you will most probably draw the hook out of his mouth instead of his jaw ; or, in other words, when you struck the fish, the hook failed to penetrate the jaw, because the angle formed by the point of the hook on the gut and shank was too great ; whereas a longer shanked hook would have pulled straighter from the point. Hooks that are extra fine in the wire, too, have their objections. They will spring open when you strike a fish with them. A fish with a hard leathery mouth takes a hook of this fine wire, and instead of it at once penetrating the jaw it springs open and the barb is not buried, and the result is the loss of the fish. I like a hook of a medium length in the shank, and moderately stout in the wire, and if you take notice of your hooks you will see that the points of some point outwards from the shank, while others point inwards. I like those pointing inwards, for I have fancied that I have hooked my fish better with them. When the point stands very much outwards, the hook is liable to cut itself out ; but when they stand inwards they are more liable to take, as it were, a fresh grip the further they go in. These hooks should be very neatly and closely whipped to the gut, and the best sizes you can use will be No. 8 for the tail end of lob-worms ; No. 9 for cockspurs, paste, creed wheat, or malt ; Nos. 10, 11, and 12 for gentles, according to the biting

of the fish, or the fineness of the water, and all these hooks should be the bright, round bend Carlisle hooks. If the water is fine, use a small hook, and when you whip these hooks to the gut be sure and have the gut on the inside of the shank ; and as I have before said, use gut that is round, smooth drawn, and of the very finest description. If the angler, however, fancies he would like a hair tackle, the best hairs for the purpose are those from the tail of a young chestnut horse. Black hairs are not so good ; in fact, don't have them if you can get anything else. Personally, I have long since discarded hair in favour of the very finest gut, and this gut should be stained as recommended in Chapter II. During the summer and autumn, or, indeed, any time when you can get them, gentles or maggots are the best bait you can have for roach. Some fishers like white maggots, and some yellow ; the yellow ones are the best ; they are best procured from a bullock's liver ; hang this liver up somewhere where the blowflies frequent, only before so doing slash it all over with a knife, the flies will then lay their eggs in the crevices ; when it appears to be sufficiently blown, it should be taken down and put in a vessel of some kind ; in a few days the eggs will have hatched, and in a few more will have fed themselves up to their full size. They should then be removed into another vessel half full of bran, and only a few pieces of the liver left with them to feed on ; as soon as they lose the dark spot, and assume a pale yellow colour, they are scoured and fit for the hook. They should be kept in a cool place with plenty of air. The white gentles are bred from fish ; three or four cods' heads well blown, and treated in the same manner as the liver, make capital white maggots ; but the yellow ones are the best. Gentles can be kept far into the winter, and if the angler desires this, he should get his bullock's liver or whatever it is well blown late in the season, and then press it into a box that is half filled with

sand and bran ; it is then covered over with the sand and buried in the earth, and when the angler wants to use his gentles a couple of months after, he will mostly find them in good condition ; gentles for ground bait can be procured from a bone or knacker's yard. These are not fit for the hook, a quart or two of them they will be sufficient to bait the swim ; in slow running swims on the Trent this is as good a ground bait as can be used. The angler scatters them in during the time he is fishing, and good sport is often obtained by this means ; indeed, it is more often practised by Nottingham anglers than any other plan for roach fishing. Two gentles are put on the hook, and the fisher throws in and lets his float swim down as far away as he thinks fit, very often thirty or forty yards from him. When the fish slacken in their biting he scatters them another handful of the coarse gentles, and a very few of the scoured ones.

It sometimes happens when the angler is fishing with gentles and the fish are very shy—biting and nibbling very cautiously, though sufficiently to move the float—that the angler strikes time after time, and yet cannot hook his fish or only just feels them for a moment, and that when he has drawn out his bait he finds that his gentles are nothing but a bit of skin. The fish have sucked and squeezed the insides out. When this is the case I have found the best plan is to take off the No. 10 hook you are using and whip on instead a No. 12, and instead of having two gentles on only use one, and sticking the hook through the thick end of the gentle, just let it go twisting down the stream in a lively manner. Sometimes I have managed to deceive a few after using this “dodge.”

If you can manage to find a few cad baits or if you have a few wasp grubs with you, you will find it to be to your advantage, in order to change the baits pretty often, that is, if the fish are biting very slow and shy ; i.e. sometimes use

one gentle, then two, or a wasp grub and a cad bait. I have found all these dodges to answer; in fact, if the angler wants to be a successful roach fisher, he must try all the dodges that suggest themselves to him, but he must beware of overfeeding the fish, his business being to attract them and not to overfeed them. A quart or two of coarse gentles are plenty to fish a forty yards swim all day. Two or three handfuls of them are scattered in before the fisherman's tackle is put together, and then after he has got the proper depth he puts in another handful. After this he takes about a dozen of his scoured gentles and throws them in, just to give the fish a taste of what they may expect. He only now renews his baiting when the fish give over feeding, and this must be done sparingly. Thus by all the dodges I have named, viz. changing the baits, fishing fine and far off, keeping out of sight as much as possible, he may manage to secure a bag of roach, should the day be anything like, even if the fish are only biting indifferently. If the angler has not been able to procure any coarse gentles and has only a few scoured ones with him, a very good substitute can be made for his ground bait as follows:—Take a basin-full of broken bread or refuse crusts and put them in a small receptacle, and pour boiling water upon them sufficient to cover them. Put a cover over it then to keep the steam in, and let it stand an hour or two; the water is now to be drained and the bread squeezed up so that no lumps are left. While the bread is going through the process of scalding, the operator can have a pound of twopenny rice in a bag boiling on the fire (be sure that the bag is big enough to allow the rice to swell), and when it is thoroughly cooked and the bread ready, a quartern or so of bran is added, and the whole mixed well together till it is a very stiff pudding. A handful or two of barley meal is an improvement to this. It is necessary to be sure that this mixture is made fresh just before it is wanted to be used, for it is apt to turn sour.

Mind and make it up as stiff as you can, for if it is too soft it will rise to the surface and swim away. The cost of this ground bait is only trifling, and I have proved its efficacy to my own satisfaction. The quantities I have given will make about a dozen lumps the size of your fist, and will be plenty for any ordinary swim. It is all the better if you can manage to drop two or three lumps of it in your swim the night before you fish, a round stone about the size of a large walnut being placed in each lump, which should be dropped in quietly. Be sure that the bran is sweet and not musty when this ground bait is being made, or your chance with the roach will not be a very good one. When this ground bait is used and one is fishing with gentles, a very few of the latter scattered down the swim will be an improvement. A little wrinkle I will also give you now: the biggest fish very often lay at the extreme end of the swim, and so don't be afraid to let your float go a few extra yards. I have seen splendid roach struck time after time when the float has been forty yards away, ay, and hooked too.

Of course, paste, creed malt, or wheat, can be used in this style of fishing, and with that ground bait; but good roach anglers adopt a different plan for paste baits. They use the paste and grain in nice quiet waters by the side of streams, just over some flags or weeds are very good spots, or where a corner or any obstruction forms a slow eddy; in fact, anywhere in a very lazy stream that they know or think contains roach and is of four or five feet depth. Paste baits are fished as a stationary bait, and this style is locally known as "pegging." The tackle is the same as for the other method, and is hardly ever used or practised above a yard from the bank, unless the rushes or weeds extend further out. Your pill of paste is put nicely on the hook and then thrown out, the slight stream gradually works the float and bait down till it is about fifteen yards below you, and it is then held stationary, the

float indicating when you have a bite. I have taken good roach by this plan when the stream has worked the float to within a foot of the bank. Various plans are adopted for making pastes, but as good a paste as you can have is made of a bit of white bread crumb, the bread being dipped in water and squeezed until all the water is expressed, it is then worked up with the fingers to the proper consistency. This makes a capital paste for this "pegging" business. Some anglers say this paste is improved by adding a little honey and gin to it, but I have never found that to be any better than the plain paste. Coloured pastes are sometimes used with advantage, they are made exactly the same as the plain bread paste mentioned above, excepting the colouring. To colour a paste red I roll the paste about a lump of red lead, and work it well, until it assumes a nice pink colour. Don't get any more of the lead, however, among the paste than you can help. Another coloured paste I use is made by adding a little chrome yellow to the bread paste. Some good roach have been taken by these coloured pastes, but I don't personally think they are an improvement, on the whole, on the plain paste; when I fish with paste, it is very seldom I use anything but the plain. Nevertheless, I know a very good roach fisher who uses these plain coloured pastes, if I may be allowed the term, and he certainly does make some good catches at times. The angler can, however, please himself, but whether he uses the plain or the coloured, when he makes it his hands must be perfectly clean, and it would be an advantage when the angler goes for a long day's paste fishing and the weather is warm, to take a bit of bread with him, so that he can make another lump of paste by the river side if necessary, as the one he mixed before he started would have a tendency to turn sour after a few hours. These pastes should be rolled up in a bit of damp white rag, and I suppose I need not tell you this ought to be clean. I might just say

that new bread is nothing like so good as bread a day or two old, and home-made bread is not so good as that from the baker's.

The ground bait that I have described can be used in this fishing, but anglers generally take a few pieces of bread with them, and chew them up and spit into the swim, or rather blow them out of their mouths, and some good catches of roach are sometimes made by this plan without any previous baiting. Creed wheat and malt are very good baits during the months of August and September, and are used a good deal on the Trent. An old angler has often told me that he does not consider the roach are in condition until they will take malt, and I agree with him. When I cook my malt and wheat I put it loosely in a calico bag and boil it in the kitchen boiler. Be sure you allow the corn to have plenty of room to swell however, that is, don't tie the string of the bag too close to the corn. I boil it in the boiler, because it then has plenty of water, and after two or three hours, when the skin cracks open and shows the white inside, it is ready. It looks nice, white, and clean when it is cooked like that, whereas some anglers stew it in a jar; and when cooked like that it looks black, dirty, and disagreeable. This bait is used in the same manner as the paste, one or two corns being put on the hook; for ground bait use brewers' grains. Beware, however, of overbaiting with brewers' grains, for many a good day's sport has been spoiled by a too free use of this ground bait. I have seen anglers come down to the river with a huge bag of grains and dash them in by the peck, when about as many as would fill a quartern measure would be ample; the roach feed on these grains, and when fishing with malt I have taken roach with their mouths full of it. It is of no use fishing with malt and wheat before August. We don't expect cherries and plums on the trees in January, and the fish don't expect grain to be coming down the river only at

harvest time. Instinct is sometimes stronger than reason, and to be a successful angler we must take lessons from nature herself. Before I have done with this paste fishing for roach, I will just shortly consider a very vexed subject among anglers, and that is, the question of scented pastes. Some say that roach are attracted long distances by scented baits, and grow quite eloquent about the merits of their chemically prepared pastes. Now I could never find out that they ever made a better bag of roach than could first-rate anglers using plain paste. True, we have odd cases of certain individuals who have made a good bag of roach by using these scented pastes, when other anglers in the same water and on the same day have failed to take any, but in the course of my experience I have only dropped across one angler who could do it, and he was an old pensioner living in the fens of Lincolnshire. He used to prepare his paste with something, and certainly it did smell very nice, and I know he has taken great catches of fish out of those large fen drains, but whether it would have acted among the educated roach of the Trent I cannot say. The old man promised to give me the recipe of how it was made, but I suddenly left that part of the world, and when I went back to visit the old man he was laid in the village churchyard. I have tried these scented pastes a time or two, but I must confess that my experiments have not been crowned with a deal of success. We know that experiments have been tried and fish have been attracted by chemically flavoured food, but whether they would not have been equally attracted by plain food is not shown. A short time ago a bait was advertised and sold under the name of "Ching," and the advertiser said it would take fish by the bushel, or rather, fish would take it and be caught by the bushel. I know some anglers who bought and tried it, but it turned out a delusion and a snare. I examined a bit and it looked to me to be nothing but a bit of bread, and it smelt

as though it was flavoured with aniseed. I have an extract which has been taken from some fishing-book, in which the following passages occur :—“ An old Nottinghamshire angler to whom, when a boy, I was indebted for many valuable hints, told me that when fishing in the Trent, he used to meet an old collier, who was not only a most successful angler, but one who could lure the fish on to his hook when everybody else failed, this naturally excited the curiosity of the neighbouring fishermen, and as the taciturnity of the collier equalled his skill, they resolved to find out his secret. They watched him, and found that his pastes were coloured and scented ; but with what ? After an investigation not much unlike espionage, they discovered that a variety of essential oils, saffron, and balsam of Tolu entered into the composition of the old man’s pastes, and that he changed them month by month to suit the varying appetite of the fish he angled for.” A friend also told me a little while ago that when he lived at Stratford-on-Avon, there was an angler there who could catch quantities of roach with his scented paste ; he said he told him how to make it, and it was nothing but “ oil of rhodium ” that was mixed among the bread. My friend says he has been to and worked in several counties since then, and he could never do anything with it in any other river than the Avon ; in short, I don’t believe in scented pastes, and I will leave the experiment of trying them to those who have more time on their hands than I have. Plain bread paste is good enough for me, when I feel inclined for a bit of paste fishing.

As the winter advances and the roach begin to get in the deep holes, the cockspur worm is a good bait, as also is the tail end of a lob-worm ; large worms clipped up very small are the best ground baits you can use for this method, only, as I have before said, be very sparing with your ground bait, especially in the winter. When the water is very much discoloured any time during the year, worms are the best bait for

roach, and when the water is rising the angler can fish on the grass slopes by the side. The fish are roving about, and are looking for food ; also when water is low, keep your eyes open, and note where a nice grassy slope comes gradually out of the river, that is free from obstructions. This, when covered with a rising water, will be found a capital place to take roach with the cockspur or the tail end of lob ; but as soon as the water begins to go down again, the fish retire with it into the main stream, and it is very little good fishing in a falling water during flood time. I have taken good roach during the winter, when snow has laid on the ground, and the weather has been altogether disagreeable, by a little judicious baiting, and using the tail end of lob for the hook bait ; anglers, therefore, need not despair, and think they cannot get any roach fishing. If they know the winter haunts of the fish, they *can* get some sport, and the roach they do catch in the winter with the tail end of lob are generally big fish and in splendid condition.

Although roach, as a general thing, are found in deep, quiet water, yet in the early part of the season they are sometimes found in the shallows of a mill tail, or in the gravelly shallows that flow from a weir, and they may then be caught by a cad bait, or with gentles, fishing with a float and a short tackle. If the angler is so minded also, he can whip for them with an artificial fly, red and black palmers will be the best, and as an improvement he can put a gentle on the point of the hook. Roach can also be taken by daping a live insect on the surface, in such places as follows :—Where a lot of weeds &c., hinders you from float fishing, or in any place that you know contains roach, providing that there is something on the bank that will allow you to keep out of sight. A blow and the cowdung fly are the best for this purpose. There is also a certain water-weed (*conferva rivalis*) that roach will take as a hook bait, when they are vegetably minded. That roach

are sometimes vegetarians I know because I have opened roach that have had some half-digested weeds in their insides, though catching roach with a weed bait is a branch of sport I have yet to learn. Ledgering for roach is not often practised on the Trent, but sometimes during a thick, heavy water it is tried with success. It resembles what I have described in ledgering for barbel, only the lead is smaller, the tackle finer, and the hook is a No. 8. The bait is of course a worm.

The wind comes in for a fair share of odium, when the angler is only having indifferent sport, and east winds I know are not good for roach fishing, although I have known good catches to have been made when the wind is in the north, which I have heard some anglers say is a much worse quarter than the east. Roach can be caught when the wind is settled in any one quarter; it is when the wind is shifting about to all points of the compass in a few hours, that it is fatal to the success of the roach fisher. A rough wind is not good for the roach angler, and if we could have it as we liked, a west, or a south-west wind is the best of all. A morning when the rime frost hangs about everything should be carefully avoided by the roach fisher. If the sun should manage to struggle out and lick the rime off, then the angler might venture to go towards noon, with some chance of success. I remember that an old friend and I were once roaching on the Trent; it was very cold, and the snow was falling fast. We were fishing with bread paste, and yet we managed to take a bag of fish, though the wind was in the east. I must confess, however, that in the winter roach fishing is very uncertain. More often have I been disappointed than I have taken fish, but nevertheless, as I have before said, roach are to be taken in the depth of winter, if you know their winter haunts, and the day is anything like fair. Snow broth is fatal to your chance

of success. Before I finish with the roach, I might say that occasionally the angler takes a fish that he supposes to be a roach, but which in reality is a rudd; it has a more coppery tinge than the roach, is shorter and deeper, the back fin is nearer the tail, and while the roach has a projecting upper lip, the rudd has a projecting under lip.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE PIKE.

As this little book more particularly relates to "Bottom Fishing in the Nottingham style," I ought strictly, perhaps, not to mention the pike, but as there are plenty of bottom fishers who occasionally indulge in a little pike fishing, perhaps a few hints to the tyro as to what a pike is like, and how to catch him, will not be unacceptable. The pike is a member of the Esocidæ family, and his scientific name is *Esox lucius*. He is more frequently called the "Jack" by anglers nowadays, though formerly he was only called Jack when he was under about four pounds, and "pike" when over that weight. The fish has also been termed "the freshwater shark," and certainly he deserves the name, for in very truth, he is a tyrant of the water. When hungry, the voracity of this fish is very great, few things seeming to come amiss to him. Hundreds of anecdotes are told about how he will seize anything from a flat leaden plumb, to the hand of a child. Among such anecdotes are references to his seizing a swan's head and neck, a mule's lip, a Polish damsel's foot, tender kittens and puppies, &c., &c. I have seen a pike come up with a dash, and snap at a water wag-tail that has stood on the edge of the water weeds; and once I had hooked a nice roach, and was getting it towards me, when, with a sudden rush, a large pike seized the roach, and the next instant both were gone. Pike will sometimes dash at a highly coloured

float under the impression, I presume, that it is something edible ; and will even swallow one of their smaller brethren or offspring perhaps. In fact, when hungry, the pike is perfectly ferocious, but when his appetite has been appeased, he is scarcely to be tempted. Practised pike fishers are well aware of this, and know the difference between the "runs" when he is hungry and when he is not. When not very hungry, he will mouth a bait and play with it, without any intention of swallowing it, and will then allow himself to be hauled about, and pulled up to the surface of the water, only, with a flap of his tail, to drop the bait from his jaws, and roll again over into the deep water. In spite of his voracity there are, however, some fish he does not care about. A tench is not a good bait, neither does he like a perch although some do fish for him with small perch which have been denuded of their back fins. Although also he will take a frog, he will have nothing to do with a toad. Notwithstanding this, his voracity is great, for we read that, "shrouded from observation in his solitary retreat, he follows with his eye the shoals of fish that wander heedlessly along; he marks the water-rat swimming to his burrow—the ducklings paddling among the water weeds—the dab-chick and the moor-hen leisurely swimming on the surface, he selects his victim, and, like a tiger springing from the jungle, he rushes forth, seldom indeed missing his aim ; there is a sudden rush, circle after circle forms on the surface of the water, and all is still again in an instant."

The pike when in good condition is a handsomely marked fish, his whole body is mottled with green, yellow, and white. One great characteristic of the pike is his dorsal or back fin, which is placed a deal further back than in most fishes it is, opposite the anal fin and is very near his tail. The body is rather long and slender, rounded on the back, and the sides are very much compressed. What a head and mouth he has ! The very look of it is suggestive of ferocity, the head is de-

pressed, the jaws are large, oblong and flattened, and furnished with a perfect phalanx of formidable teeth of various sizes; his eyes are on the top of his head, and have a very villainous look with them. We can fancy the sensations of a shoal of roach or dace, when his head and eyes are suddenly thrust into view. I once saw a pike rush at and seize the leg of a duck, and a great squalling and flapping of wings was the result, and it is common to hear of pike drowning ducks, geese, and even swans, when they have seized them. In the case of the duck just mentioned, however, the pike was only about a four-pounder, so after a struggle the duck got away. In Ireland, I believe, a big pike will sometimes drown an eagle; the eagle, it appears, having pounced on the pike when the latter has been basking near the surface, has embedded its talons in the flesh of the fish so deeply as to prevent its extricating them. A traveller corroborates this story by saying that he had himself seen a big pike with an eagle fastened to his back lying dead on a piece of ground which had been overflowed, but from which the water had retreated. It will be seen from this that the pike, voracious as it is, is sometimes the prey of feathered enemies.

The pike is a solitary fish, though big ones are often found in pairs. After floods and frosts, however, they may sometimes be found collected together in numbers in favourable eddies, or in a backwater, or at the tail of an island, reed beds, or at the ends of old locks, &c. Good ones are sometimes found in the rough water of a weir also, and they are occasionally met with in a full stream. Generally, however, they prefer the quiet parts of the river. A deep corner away from the main stream, where a lot of reeds and rushes grow by the side is a sure find; a backwater or a cutting that has an entrance from the river generally hold a few good fish; while a big lake often is a perfect pike paradise.

These spawn about March, and deposit their eggs on the

weeds in shallow waters, such as ditches and backwaters, and after a short rest they scour themselves in the stream. After this they take up their regular haunts for the season. While they are performing the operation of spawning, such is their lazy and absorbed manner that they may nearly be taken out with the hand, and poachers profit by this and either snare the fish or else catch them by snatching, though they are at this time very unwholesome as food, and ought not on any account to be taken. A pike in good condition is a good fish for the table, the flesh is white and firm, and of a deal better flavour than chub or roach. Those from a river and running water are a great deal better than those taken from a pond, and a pike out of season and condition is about as filthy a mess as can be tasted.

Formerly, the pike was a scarce and expensive fish in England. During the reign of Edward I. (about the close of the thirteenth century), jack was so dear that few could afford to eat it, the price was double that of salmon, and ten times higher than either turbot or cod. In 1466, pike was one of the chief dishes in the high church festivals given by George Neville, Archbishop of York. In Henry VIII.'s time also these fish fetched as much again as house lamb in February, and a very small pickerel would sell higher than a fat capon. Pike under favourable circumstances and in good localities will grow to a remarkable size. I have heard that in some of the large lakes of Ireland they will attain the extraordinary weight of eighty pounds, and in Wales it is said there are enormous fish in its deep mountain tarns, but in England they do not exceed the weight of forty pounds, and it would require to be a carefully preserved and a very favourable water to possess one of even that weight. The lakes, broads, and meres of Norfolk, Suffolk, and Huntingdonshire are credited with holding some big fish. There is a story also of a monstrous pike being caught at Lillieshall Lime Works in 1765

out of a pool about nine yards deep, which had not been fished for ages. The water was let off by means of a level, and brought up to drain the works when this enormous pike was found at the bottom; he was dragged out by means of a rope in the presence of hundreds of spectators, and was said to have weighed upwards of one hundred and seventy pounds, and was thought to be the biggest ever seen. Such is the story, but whether it is correct or not, I cannot say; it has, however, been placed on record as a fact. Jack, as a rule, do not run very large in the Trent, and it is only occasionally that one of twenty pounds is taken, but there are some districts where fish of that size or even a pound or two over are taken. The occasions are nevertheless very rare, and a Trent angler must be content if he gets one of that size during the term of his natural life. A ten-pounder ought to content him, a twelve-pounder make him happy, while one of fifteen pounds or over ought to make his heart rejoice to such an extent that he would call his friends and neighbours together and give them a banquet in honour of the occasion. An eight-pound fish is not to be despised, while one of six or seven as a fish for the table, and a bit of sport for the angler, especially out of a stream, is hardly to be equalled. It is true the pike is not a very good fighter; a ten-pound jack being nothing like a five-pound barbel for pluck and dogged resistance; still, however, a five or six-pound jack on the light tackle of a Trent spinner, in a stream, is not to be despised. Two of the finest pike, I suppose, that have ever been taken out of English waters by rod and line were taken a year or two ago by Mr. Alfred Jardine. They weighed thirty-six pounds each, or the two together seventy-two pounds. These are grand fish in the estimation of all anglers who have seen them, and are preserved, and were exhibited at the Norwich Fisheries Exhibition. I believe they received a valuable prize there as specimen fish. There must, however, be a

great deterioration of the race of jack during these last few centuries ; for what are Mr. Jardine's fish, or indeed the monsters that have been taken from the Irish lakes, compared to that historical pike captured in the vicinity of Manheim in the year 1497 A.D. To one of the gills of this fish was found suspended a medal with the following inscription in Greek : "I am the first fish that was put into this pond by the hands of the Governor of the Universe, Frederic the Second, on the 5th day of October, 1232." By this it will appear that the fish had reached the ripe old age of two hundred and sixty five years, and he is said to have weighed three hundred and fifty pounds, measuring nineteen feet in length. His skeleton is said to be preserved in the Museum at Manheim.

Various are the methods employed for the capture of the jack. He can be shot, trimmered, huxed, and snared or snatched, but these are methods unworthy of a sportsman, and should be carefully avoided by the true angler. He legitimately is taken by live baiting, dead gorge fishing, and spinning with both the natural and artificial baits. Of all the methods that are adopted for the capture of the pike, spinning is certainly the most scientific, and is practised more on the Trent than is any other style. I will commence with that, therefore, and shall be as brief as possible in my instructions, merely giving the tyro a few hints, so that he may know how to go on. Those anglers who would like to know the whole art of jack fishing, I would recommend to purchase Mr. Pennell's "Book of the Pike," which treats the subject in an exhaustive manner.

The rod for pike fishing differs from the ordinary bottom rod in one or two particulars. It is stronger and stiffer, and is nothing like so fine at the extreme point, the rings also on it are larger, so as to allow the line to run freely through them without the possibility of a catch or tangle. My pike rod is in four pieces, the butt is of hickory, and the other pieces are

of lancewood. It is rather more lissom made in that fashion than if it had been made like the generality of Trent pike rods, that is of red deal and lancewood, because when the middle joint is of red deal it must be thick and strong, for the purpose of withstanding the wear and tear consequent on throwing a heavy bait thirty or forty yards. My rod being rather more lissom or whippy, as I said, it bends nicely to the throw, and I can cast long distances with the greatest ease. The would-be pike angler, however, can please himself; let him go to a good rod-maker, and he cannot be far out.

The reel described and recommended in Chapter II. for the bottom fisher will be just the thing, and for a line I should use a plaited one, as they are better than the twisted ones. Select one of middling stoutness, but not too thick or heavy. A Nottingham spinning line or one that is made by the Manchester Cotton Company is the best. Undressed ones are best, the dressed lines for spinning are not so good in my idea. The lines recommended are very cheap, and will do for any sort of pike fishing.

To spin a bait properly the angler requires a trace, a lead, and a flight of hooks on which to fasten his bait. The trace consists of a yard of stoutish gimp with a steel loop and swivel on one end and a large loop on the other, to which the reel line is fastened. Some anglers use stout twisted gut for these traces, but gimp is the cheapest. On the bottom of this trace, and fastened to the steel loop and swivel is a lead, and a lead that hangs below the line is the best. I used to make these leads something in this fashion:—I took one of the long pear shaped leads that are termed heavy corking weights on the Trent, and bent it slightly in the middle, so that it was in the form of a crescent. I next put a piece of gimp through the hole, and then one of the spring loops and swivels on the gimp, lapping the two ends of the gimp over each other, and binding them tightly together with a bit of waxed silk.

The bound ends are then worked round till they are inside the hole of the lead, and the two pieces of gimp are next bound together to each end of the lead. A loop of the gimp is now at one end, and one of the spring loops and swivels at the other. The gimp loop of this contrivance is then hooked on the spring loop at the bottom of the trace, and this forms a first-rate lead. The desirability of having these leads is because they hang as it were below the line, and keep it from twisting and kinking, which it must do if the lead is only a straight one merely threaded on the gimp. A better lead than this has been brought out by the Proprietor of the *Fishing Gazette*, and is a decided improvement on the old system.

At the bottom of the lead there is another foot of gimp or so, with a loop on one end and another of the spring loops and swivels on the other, and at the end of this last there is another foot of gimp with a small loop at one end, and the flight of hooks at the other. Some tyros may want to know why this trace, &c., cannot all be in one piece, without having so many pieces and so many swivels in it? The reply is that the bait must revolve or spin in the water, and if there were no swivels on the trace it would not do that very well, to say nothing of twisting and kinking the line. I like plenty of swivels on my trace and the spring loops and swivels may be bought at any tackle shop, being very cheap. These spring loops and swivels are also fastened together and are very useful things, as they enable the angler to disengage any part of his trace from the others in a moment. Some anglers only have their traces divided into two parts, with one swivel, but I like it divided into three or four with as many swivels, because if one swivel gets fast during the process of spinning, there is another to keep twisting. This, then, is the spinner's trace : and now for the flight of hooks. There are various flights in use, but the one that is known as the

“Pennell” flight is the best. It is chiefly remarkable by having the lower hook or hooks formed like the letter S, it also has a sliding lip hook and one or two flying triangles. This is a very simple arrangement and is a very deadly one. The sliding lip hoop, as you may infer from its name, is made to move up and down the gimp of the flight, purposely to adapt it to any sized bait. A piece of fine wire or gimp is whipped to the side of the hook, so as to leave two loops, one at the end of the shank and the other near the bend of the hook. The gimp of the flight is then put through the loop nearest the bend, and twisted two or three times round the shank, and then passed through the other loop. By loosening the coils of gimp that are round the shank, the lip hook can be shifted up or down to suit the requirements of a large or small bait. The lower hook, as I have said, is like an S, and between this hook and the lip hook there are one or two flying triangles, so called because they hang loose, and are not fastened in the bait at all; these are on short pieces of gimp, which in turn are whipped firmly to the gimp of the flight. If dace are used as bait, two flying triangles are deemed best, but if gudgeon or bleak are used one is better. To bait this flight, it is best done in the manner described by Mr. Pennell himself; the bottom or tail hook being inserted first:—The point is inserted by the side or lateral line of the bait near to the tail, and passing it under a broadish strip of the skin, and through the end of the fleshy part of the tail, bring it out as near the base of the tail as practicable. Next insert the small reversed hook (the top hook of the S) in such a position as to curve the bait’s tail to nearly a right angle; finally pass the lip hook through both its lips, always putting it through the upper lip first when the bait is a gudgeon, and through the lower one first with all others. This is very important in securing a very brilliant spin.” The flying triangles of course hang free. This is a splendid flight, but

I fancied when I first made and used one, that it might be improved on a trifle. The bait spun well, but there was such a long distance between the bottom hook and the lip hook, and nothing to hold the gimp to the side of the bait, which would often buckle in the middle, and cause the gimp to stand away from the bait in an awkward manner. I therefore had a smallish hook, and whipped it on the gimp the reverse way to the lip hook, somewhere between the two triangles, and then stuck it well in the side of the bait. I found that it acted well. Another kind of flight and one that is more used on the Trent than any other, is made with two or three fixed triangles and the sliding lip hook. These triangles are all whipped tight to the gimp, and just above the bottom one there is a single hook whipped on the reverse way. To bait this flight, take the bait and put one of the hooks of the bottom triangle into the flesh of the tail, bringing the point out on the same side; draw up the tail so as to bend it well, and then put the reversed hook in to keep it bent, next insert one of the hooks of the second triangle in the side, and then one of the third triangle in the side near to the shoulder; and lastly put or slide the lip hook down to the mouth of the bait and put it through both lips. The three triangles should be straight by each other along the side of the bait, and no loose gimp between them, or the bait will not spin so well. All sorts of flights are made that the ingenuity of man can suggest, or his hands form for the destruction of the jack; but the two described will be found entirely sufficient for the angler's purpose. I may just mention two more contrivances, however, that have been brought out for spinning with dead bait; one is Mr. Gregory's "Archimedean" spinning tackle; it is thrust in the mouth and down the belly of the bait; the tail requires no bend as the fans at the mouth of the bait causes the spin. The other is a contrivance brought

out by the Proprietor of the *Fishing Gazette*, called the "*Fishing Gazette Spinner*;" and is a capital contrivance with which to spin a dead bait. The triangles of an ordinary flight are simply inserted in the sides of the bait, without bending the tail, and the "*Spinner*" performs the spinning operation itself, which it does to perfection.

The baits for spinning are dace, gudgeon, bleak, and small roach. A bleak I may say is more frequently called a whitling on the Trent; it is a brilliant bait, but soon wears out on the hooks; the others being tougher last longer. A Thames spinner when he throws his bait pulls off the reel a sufficient quantity of line, and either gathers it in the palm of his hand, or else lays it in coils at his feet; the Trent spinner avoids this by casting directly from the reel; he winds up all the spare line till only the trace and bait hang from the point of the rod; he has the forefinger of one hand laid lightly on the barrel of the reel, and then brings the point of the rod behind him, and makes his cast by sweeping the rod and bait smartly over the river, in the direction he requires. If the angler is not careful the reel is apt to turn so much faster than the line can travel through the rings, and a sad tangle is the result; this can be avoided, however, and regulated by the forefinger that is on the barrel of the reel. When the cast is made the forefinger is lifted off, and if he sees it is likely to travel round too fast, he can check it by again laying the forefinger lightly on the edge of the revolving part of the reel. So soon as the bait strikes the water it can be stopped at once by pressing a little harder. It is rather difficult to get into the throw all at once, but as the saying goes, "it is easy when you know how;" a little practice will soon put you up to it; and when you do get into it, you can throw your bait anywhere you like to within a foot or so; and thirty or forty yards are by no means uncommon distances. When you have thrown your bait, you wind up the line on the reel, and the

bai comes spinning and glittering towards you like a thing of life, or more properly like a partly disabled fish trying to escape. Wind the bait as near to you as you can, lift it out of the water and repeat the cast, never let the bait sink to the bottom, or the hooks may catch hold of some obstruction, and give you a lot of trouble to disengage them. Try all sorts of dodges also during spinning, spin slowly, spin quickly, let the bait spin near the surface, or down deeper in midwater; or jerk it a little with the rod point; act, in fact, all sorts of dodges.

When you know there is a jack about, search all the water within reach of the cast well, don't let a yard of water go unfished. When a jack takes the bait, and he is hungry, he generally takes care that it shall not be a doubtful matter. Hit him rather smartly, as the hooks having rank barbs, would fail to penetrate the hard mouth of the pike if you did not strike well home. Some anglers, when they feel a fish, give him a few seconds' grace. This is not absolutely necessary, as a pike when he means to take a bait, seldom misses his target, and striking and hooking can be done at once, as well as if one waited. Pike are very often lost when spinning, but mostly through the carelessness of the angler. Play the fish firmly but carefully, and keep a tight line on him, for if the line be slack and the hooks not very fast in, he will shake his head like a bulldog sometimes, and probably shake hooks and bait out of his mouth. When you have landed your fish, the next job is to get the hooks out of his mouth, and it is "ware 'hawk" here. Don't put your fingers in his mouth, or indeed close against it, for he can bite, and to some tune too. He will snap at you like a savage dog, and if he once gets a fair hold, you will most likely remember it for the rest of your natural life. The best plan would be to rap him over the head with something heavy, and then force his mouth open with a bit of stick, pulling out the

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hooks with a pair of flat-nosed pliers. Contrivances have, however, been brought out, on purpose to prop open the mouth of the pike, so that the hooks can be disengaged without fear of the fish closing his jaws over your hand. Before concluding spinning for pike, I may be allowed to again refer to Mr. Gregory's "Archimedean Spinner" in detail. Its merits are so obvious that it were a pity to omit description. They consist, as I have said, of a long brass hook and lead to thrust down the belly of the bait, three triangles, a single hook to stick in the head of the bait, and the "Archimedean fins" at the head to cause the spin. To put on a bait properly, thrust the brass hook with the lead, in the mouth of the bait, and down the belly, with the point towards the belly, taking particular care that the head of the bait is brought as closely up between the Archimedean fins as possible; when you have done this, the bait will be perfectly straight; next bring over the hook at the top, and send it well into the head of the bait, and adjust the treble hooks to suit the size of the bait you are using. This can be done by drawing the gimp through the tubes, but take care the hooks are not twisted before putting on the bait, or the gimp will not draw properly through. A six-inch dace is as good a bait as you can use with this tackle. Do not bend the tail at all, let it be perfectly straight, and the fins of the tackle will cause the bait to have a brilliant spin. Mr. Gregory tells me that with this very tackle, in the season 1880-81, he killed fifty-eight fish. I might just mention that these tackles are made in five sizes, two for pike and three for salmon and trout. I must now just caution the angler to examine and test his hooks, and the spring loops and swivels before he makes his tackle, or if he buys his tackle ready-made before he uses them, for I have lost a good fish or two by the spring loop snapping at the bend, and the hooks of the flight either breaking, or pulling straight.

If the angler wishes to fish in a backwater, or any other place that is choked up with weeds (and he cannot very well use the spinning bait there), he fishes with what is called the gorge bait. The gorge hook is a double hook securely fastened to some stout twisted brass wire; about six inches in length. Around the shank, a piece of conico-cylindrical shaped lead is cast, and to bait this, it is necessary to have a flat baiting-needle, about seven inches long. Put the loop of the tackle in the eye of the needle, and push the point of the needle in at the mouth of the bait, then drive it right through the body, and bring it out between the forks of the tail. The lead is now pushed into the belly of the fish, until the hooks lie by the side of the mouth; next the tail can be tied to the gimp, then hang the loop of this contrivance in the spring loop at the bottom of the trace, and it is ready. In the weedy places where this is used, there may be a few holes and openings that are comparatively free. Drop or throw the bait into these openings, and work it with a series of jerks up and down, letting it sink to the bottom, and then drawing it to the surface with a jerky motion. When a fish seizes the bait, the angler must let him take it where he likes, letting out the line from the reel, so that the fish shall not feel any obstruction. The fish begins to swallow the bait; when he stops,—and the angler allows him ten minutes to perform this operation, unless he begins to move off before,—at the end of that time, wind up the line, and pull a little; striking is not necessary, as the pike most likely has got the bait down his belly, and all the striking in the world won't make it any faster. This is a plan of fishing that I don't like, because if you only hook a pound fish or he swallows the bait, you cannot return him to the water, he must be killed. I don't practise this plan, if the place can *anyhow* be spun over. Another method of pike fishing is by live baiting. For this method, the spinning trace is dis-

pensed with, and a single length of gimp, about two feet long, is used. At the bottom of this, there is an arrangement of hooks, and at the top a loop; the hooks are generally a triangle at the bottom, and a little above it there is whipped a smaller single hook. This small hook is fastened to the fish, at the side near to the back fin, by the help of the baiting-needle, and the triangle hangs loose against the side near to the belly of the bait. A double hook is sometimes used instead of a triangle, especially if the water is fine, because the hooks will lie closer to the side of the fish, and the pike not notice them. Another sort of live-bait tackle is made by merely having a double hook on the bottom of the gimp; the baiting-needle is passed under the skin, near to the shoulder of the bait, and brought out a couple of inches lower down, the gimp is then drawn through, until the shank of the hook is under the skin, and the hooks are laid close to the side of the bait. A large float is used with these baits, and is put on the line, and thereafter a running lead which is fastened halfway between the float and the bait. When a pike takes these live baits, I advise you to give him a minute or so to get it well into his mouth, but don't give him time to gorge it, and then strike smartly. A single hook is sometimes hung through the lip of a bleak, or a small dace, by way of a live bait; but a pike when he takes this bait must have time to gorge. There are several other sorts of snap hooks and live-bait tackles that have been introduced to the public, and amongst others an arrangement in which a live bait can be fastened to the tackle by means of india-rubber bands, instead of having the hooks stuck in the body of the bait. For that, however, and other inventions, I must refer the angler to the nearest tackle-maker. All sorts of creatures have been recommended as baits for pike, such as frogs, rats, mice, small birds, &c., but I don't much believe in either of them, except, perhaps, the frog.

Pike are not confined to fish or spinning baits, for I know that sometimes they will take a worm. A friend once took four pike about four pounds each with a worm on fine roach tackle out of one hole in about an hour, he hooked the lot in the corner of the mouth, or else perhaps they would have cut the gut and escaped. I also have taken an odd one or two with the worm, and I have lost some, owing to the fish severing the gut with their teeth. Artificial baits for pike are so numerous and various in design, that to give a description of them would require a very long chapter. The old-fashioned spoon bait is still used a great deal, and kills fish; but improvements have been brought out these last few years that we now very seldom see the old spoon bait in the hands of a scientific pike fisher. First and foremost among the artificial pike bait makers stands Mr. Gregory of Birmingham; his baits are splendid articles and beautifully finished. I have tried the "Colorado," the "Clipper," the "Windsor Bee," and the "*Fishing Gazette* Spoon." These are all grand baits, and will spin well in dead water, and where there is a difficulty in procuring fish baits, they are very good substitutes. I can most cordially recommend any of those baits to the angler. Another sweet little bait Mr. Gregory has just brought out is called the "Wheeldon." It is a lot smaller than the others, and for small pike, or waters that contain no fish heavier than four pounds, it will be found just the thing; it looks to me to be admirably suited for perch spinning. If perch are inclined for running at your spinning bait, one of these will be just the lure for them. There are also "Phantoms," "Plano convex baits," "Archimedean minnows," and artificial fish in every shape, style, and size, which, as I said before, would take a very long chapter to describe; but this is already drawn out to a greater length than I had intended, and so I must refer the reader to the tackle makers. The baits mentioned above are plenty good enough for me,

and any one of them will kill when the pike are inclined to feed, but I suppose I need not say that natural fish baits are the best, if you can get them.

Pike will sometimes take a very large artificial fly, if fly it can be called. Its body is as thick as a man's finger, and the wings are two peacock's feathers, and it is as big as one of the stuffed humming-birds that you see in glass cases. It is worked over weeds and open places, with a series of jumps and bobs.

One word yet, and I have done. The angler should always pay very great attention to weed beds, reeds and flags, or a sheltered shallow corner, in the immediate vicinity of a deep hole, or just below an island, where the stream is, as it were, broken in two, and a quiet eddy formed in the middle. These are all favourite places, and some good pike are often found therein.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE PERCH.

THE perch is a member of the Percidæ family, and is a true representative of the "spinous finned" fish (of which there are very few different sorts found in the waters of Great Britain), and his scientific name is *Perca Fluviatilis*. When he is in good condition, he is a handsome fish; the body is oblong, and is covered with small, hard and rough scales. He has a large mouth, and the gill covers are spinous or prickly. His jaws and palate are well furnished with teeth; in colour he is a sort of a pale green, with a white belly, and there are some dark transverse bars striping his sides; his anal and tail or caudal fins are of a bright red, and the golden irides of his eyes are very beautiful. The back is very humped, the dorsal or back fin is surmounted by sharp spines or prickles; there is one very great characteristic, and that is, he has two dorsal fins. Taking the perch altogether, he is a very handsome fish. One drawback he has, and that is, he is not a very comfortable fish to handle. You hook one, and swing him into your hand, like a roach or dace, and he will elevate the spines on his back, or you may perhaps catch your hand against the edge of his gill covers, and a very sharp stab will be the result. He might very well be called the water hedgehog, in that respect. The baits for perch fishing are worms (a well-scoured tail end of lob-worm is, perhaps, as good as any, though he likes a bunch of small red worms,

or a brandling); minnows are an excellent bait for him, or a very small gudgeon, or dace (all fry in fact not above two inches long); minnows, however, if you can get them, are the best. He will sometimes take a lump of paste, or a bunch of gentles, when one is roach fishing, or a cad bait when fishing for dace in a stream, and he will very often take the very small hook and scrap of worm of the gudgeon fisher. When ledgering for barbel with worms in a weir hole, he is often taken, but I believe his principal food is the small fry of fish. I have taken them when I have been spinning for pike with an artificial bait, and have seen them dash at a six inch dace on a spinning flight, with back fin extended, and mouth open, to within a few inches of it, and then turn tail and retreat; and very often they have only been perch of half a pound or so. In lakes and waters where perch run very large, it is astonishing the size of the bait a three pound perch will take. You are perhaps fishing with a live bait, a dace or roach, intended for (at least) a ten pound jack, and a three pound perch will insist on trying to swallow it. A big perch has a tremendous mouth, in proportion, and perhaps he thinks that anything he can get into his mouth, he can swallow. When I see a three-quarter pound perch hanging from the triangle of a spoon bait (for instance), I always think of the old saying about the eyes being bigger than the belly. Perch are found in almost any river, canal, lake, and pond in the kingdom: and in ponds, &c., where they run small, and are ill-fed, can be taken anyhow, a worm on coarse tackle they will then take greedily. A good river perch, in the months of August, September, or October, is quite another thing; he is a good deal like a roach, and is not to be had by a mere tyro. About the latter end of June or so, perch are found in the streams, and are often caught when dace fishing with worm; a month or two after they get into deeper and stronger waters, or seek the quiet eddies and deep holes near

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old piers and piles of bridges, weir depths; and it is then that they are very shy, being well fed. It requires fine tackle, and a very delicate bait to entrap them then. After a sharp winter, when the frost has just broken up, and the river is tearing down in high flood, the perch are driven into the still corners and eddies, and at that time and in those places they are sometimes congregated together in large numbers. They have been on short commons most of the winter, and are very hungry, and will then take almost anything, after the water has cleared down a little. In good perch waters, I have heard of as many as two hundred fine fish being taken out of one hole, by two rods in a few hours, when they have been in that condition. That instance is the exception, however, and not the rule. In January and February they are taken in the largest quantities, but in the autumn and early part of the winter they are not to be had so easily.

Perch spawn in April, and deposit their eggs on the weeds and rushes, the submerged branches or fibrous roots of trees or bushes in the still backwaters, or up ditches, and these hang about the weeds, &c., like long festoons of lace; it is then that swans, &c., should be kept away, for they will gobble up this spawn by the yard. One singular point in the perch is that out of every dozen that is captured, eleven of them are female fish. Some naturalists infer that the perch are bisexual, and that they are self-concipient, but one thing is certain they are very prolific, even a small perch contains a vast quantity of eggs. Perch in some localities will reach a considerable size. I have heard of them reaching a very heavy weight in the Danube, but in England they very seldom exceed the weight of four pounds, and this is by no means common. A three-pound fish is a very heavy one, a two-pounder is a good one, while a pounder or a three-quarter-pounder is not to be despised, while even a dish of a half-pound perch does not fall to the lot of the angler every day.

## 118 BOTTOM FISHING IN THE NOTTINGHAM STYLE.

The Thames, the Kennet, and the Hampshire Avon, are perhaps the best rivers in England for perch, for we hear of them being taken out of those rivers very often of the weight of from two to two and a half pounds, while in the broads of Norfolk and Suffolk, and the meres of Huntingdonshire, we hear of them of the weight of four pounds and even a few a little over. The Trent does not seem to be much of a perch river, either as regards weight or numbers. I don't see why it should not, but such is the fact. I have never yet seen or heard of a two-pound perch being taken out of the Trent. Some localities are better stocked with them than others, perhaps, but I must confess that in all my rambles up and down the Trent, I have never found a place that abounds with perch either little or big. Once I got a pound fish from out of the rough water of Averham weir, and two or three three-quarter-pounders from the mouth of the Devon, and another place or two, and a few half-pounders from various places, but they are by no means common, and I don't think I ever caught above half a dozen perch in one day from the Trent in my life; the Devon and the Witham seem to be better stocked with perch than the Trent, for I have seen several good catches from those rivers. An angler went up to Barnby to fish the Witham a few months ago. It was, in fact, just after the break up of last winter's frost, and when he got there the river was tearing down nearly bank full and very much discoloured. He thought when he saw it that it would be no use fishing, but there was a big drain or dyke a little distance away, and as there was a deep hole at the mouth of this drain where it ran into the river he thought he would go and have a look. He found that a short distance up this drain, a very few yards in fact, the water was nothing like so much discoloured as it was in the river, so he determined to have a try. It was a beautiful quiet eddy, whereas a few yards outside the river rushed down in a tor-

rent : he clipped up a few worms and threw them in, and then baited his hook, his float had hardly reached the perpendicular, before down it went, and in another minute a half-pound perch was landed, this was rather encouraging, and so he set to work in earnest, and for two hours the biting was very fair, and when he left off, he had something like thirty perch, and some half-dozen roach, and many of the perch were very good fish. The perch had run up the mouth of this drain, to get out of the way of the heavy water outside, and being hungry, had taken the bait freely. Nothing like that has been done on the Trent, and I have tried all such likely-looking spots up and down the river, on purpose to see if I could not break the spell that seems to be cast over it, but without any very great results, and I have long ago come to the conclusion that the Trent is not much of a perch river. The largest perch by far that I have seen captured in the neighbourhood of Newark was taken out of the Devon, it was only an ounce or two short of two pounds. I have, however, an idea that if they were properly angled for there are some good perch in Besthorp Fleet (a large sheet of water a short distance from the Trent, about eight miles below Newark), in fact, I think of experimenting there before long. A perch is a splendid fish for the table, a small one out of a stagnant pond is not very good, but a good river perch is excellent ; his flesh is white, firm, and flaky, without so many of the objectionable small bones of the roach. I have them opened and well cleaned, and a little salt rubbed down the backbone, and then simply broiled in their jackets. When they are cooked the skin and scales all slip off, they are then seasoned to taste. The rod, reel, and line described in Chapter II., p. 22, will be most suitable for perch fishing, and the tackle may be stoutish roach tackle, about three or four feet long, with a No. 5 or 6 hook on the end. A perch has a large mouth and so it is better to have a large

hook ; the float can either be a quill or a very small cork one, according to the strength of the stream. I prefer a quill, and tackle (except in the case of the hook), as recommended for dace fishing when the bait is worms. A few worms cut up as you are fishing and thrown in, is quite sufficient for ground bait, the hook bait is a worm, the tail end of a well-scoured lob-worm is the best of all, while brandlings or small red worms can be tried for a change. When a perch takes the bait, give him a second, and then strike lightly, and play him carefully, for if you prick, hook, and lose a perch or two it is fatal to your chance of success, unless they happen to be well "on," which is not often the case ; and if you get a shoal of perch in a biting humour, nothing would be more annoying than to prick a fish or two. The rest of them are frightened, and fly out of the swim, and nothing will entice them back again (this holds good with either worm or minnow fishing), or if you do entice them back again it will be a couple of hours wasted, and the fish will be shy and bite very gingerly. The most common plan of taking perch is with the minnow, and this can be used in several fashions. The most common method is with a single minnow and float. The float is a light cork one, and the tackle is about four feet of medium gut, sufficiently weighted with split shots. Don't have a great clumsy float, but one of the lightest cork floats you can find. One that will carry six or eight middle-sized split shots will serve, and the lowest shot should be about a foot from the hook, which should be about a No. 4 or 5. Some fasten the hook near to the back fin, but I like to hook them through the lip. This bait should be very near the bottom, and the float should travel down the swim, something like traveller fishing for barbel. The minnow is a capital fellow to work about ; and if you know a perch haunt by the side of a row of bushes or a line of flags, reeds, &c., the little fish will soon attract the atten-

tion of Mr. Perch. When the float bobs down with a perch bite, don't strike at once, give him a few seconds, and let him have a trifle of line ; and when you feel the quick tug, tug, tug, which ensues, strike firmly, but don't hit him too hard. The reason why you give him a few seconds is because the hook is at the lip of the minnow, and a perch takes them by the tail, and he has the whole of the minnow to get into his mouth before the hook can take effect ; at least that is my impression. With this tackle you can use worms, for some odd times he will not look at the minnow, but will take a well-scoured worm. In swift boiling waters, or in a rapid stream, in which very often the largest perch are to be found, and where you cannot very well use a float, then an arrangement that is called a paternoster is used. This paternoster consists of about four feet of gut without any split shots on it ; and at the bottom there is a plumb, or heavy ledger, to keep the bait well down. Above this lead there are two or three hooks on which the minnows are impaled ; two will be sufficient. On the gut bottom, about a foot from each other, two loops are tied—the bottom one a few inches from the lead, and in these loops a piece of fine gut about six inches long is also tied with a No. 4 or 5 hook on the end. The minnow is baited in the same way as for the float tackle. Do not use a dead minnow, but see that he is perfectly lively. To use this, cast the plumb down and across stream, when the plumb touches the bottom hold it tight there, and let it stay a minute, then slowly wind up the line and draw the baits towards you, but let them come very slowly ; when you get them as near you as you can, lift the plumb out of the water and make your cast again. Throw it in all directions so as to search the whole of the water well ; when you get a bite, remember what I said before, don't strike at once, but give the fish a few seconds, so that he may have time to get the bait in his mouth well.

I have heard of anglers fastening bones at regular distances on a cord, by way of an attraction for the perch. I should suppose the bones have a supply of meat on them, and have not been picked clean. A first-class angler says they are a capital attraction for perch ; I, personally, cannot say, for I never tried the scheme, and so cannot speak from experience on that matter. The artificial minnow is sometimes spun, but I think it is like spinning the natural one—a very sorry business. If you must have an artificial bait for perch, perhaps Mr. Gregory's "Clipper" would be as good as any, for I have caught one or two on it. Spinning for perch, however, is not very profitable. Where perch abound the worm and the minnow worked as I have described will be found all that is required. I have heard that perch are taken in some districts with an artificial fly, but I have never seen one caught with a fly, nor have I caught one myself. I am told that a big showy fly is the best, and that it does not matter about the pattern, as the perch are not very particular. I have used big showy flies for chub and in places where I have taken perch with worm, but not a single perch has yet taken my fly.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE BREAM.

THE bream is another distinguished member of the carp tribe, distinguished because he is of rather a peculiar shape, being nearly as broad as he is long. His back stands up a good height, and his belly bows round to a good depth. Indeed, I have a short cutting before me from a journal in which a writer describes a bream as being like a pair of bellows, "the handles forming the head and the spout the tail;" my author, however, spoils his remark by adding, "they are like a pair of bellows in flavour." Well, I know they are not very good as an edible, but like a pair of bellows! The scientific name of the bream is *Cyprinus Brama*. There are three sorts of bream in English waters, but the most common are the carp bream or golden bream, and the white bream or silver bream called by some bream flats. The carp bream is the larger of the two sorts, and is not a very handsome fish, it can easily be recognized by any tyro, being very thin and also wonderfully broad. The fins are of a very dark colour, his head is not out of the way large, and he has rather a small mouth, when we consider the size of him; his skin is very slimy in a general way, but I remember taking two or three two-pound fish, and they were as clean as a dace. This was in September, and I hooked them in a slight shallow stream. They were very beautiful on the back, looking as though they were shot with mother-o'-pearl and gold, while their bellies were silvery white, the scales on their sides were smooth, round,

and hard ; in fact it seemed to me that they were a different species of bream altogether, and I can only suppose them to have been the third species, *Ahamis Bugganhagii*, or the Pomeranian bream, which is a very scarce fish in Britain. These bream had the distinguishing features of the carp bream, namely, very dark fins, head and mouth small, but the back (shot, as I said, with gold and mother-o'-pearl) glittered when taken out of the water as though phosphorescent, the scales were small, round, hard, and as smooth as glass, without any superabundant slime on them. The sides and belly were silvery white. They were all about one size, the smallest was a trifle over two pounds. I cannot remember taking any bream either before or since that were so beautifully marked. Carp bream are generally found in sluggish waters, they are very fond of a deep quiet hole that has a sandy bottom. Old anglers on the Trent, when they are on the look-out for a bream swim, watch what they suppose to be one very narrowly, early in the morning or late at night, because bream in warm weather will rise up to the surface, and when they do rise they leave a large bubble on the surface. In suitable holes bream are sometimes congregated together in very large numbers. There was a few years ago a famous bream hole a short distance below Newark, when the fish were "on," a good bag of bream was almost a certainty from there, but one day the hole was netted and upwards of two tons of fine bream were taken out of it, and since then scarcely any fish have been taken from it. I have noticed that bream are sometimes very roving in their habits, swims that contain quantities of bream one week becoming tenantless the next, as far as we could make out, and we have found them again in places where we never supposed any bream to be. Bream spawn in June, and during this operation each female is accompanied by three or four males. These fish are found in rivers, lakes, and ponds, but I believe the Bedfordshire Ouse is the very best bream river in England, its deep

sluggish streams being exactly suited to them. The Broads of Norfolk and Suffolk contain vast quantities of fine bream, and the Trent has some good ones in many of its deep quiet holes.

This fish will sometimes attain to a very great size. I have seen them taken from the Trent when they have scaled seven and eight pounds, but such are by no means common, four or five pounds being a good weight. Although I believe it is put on record as a fact that a seventeen-pound fish was once taken from the Trent, I have a cutting from the *Fishing Gazette* now before me in which the following passage occurs: "At Hoveringham (on the Trent) three years ago, two splendid carp bream were caught by Mr. Beck in his eel nets. I was present at the weighing of these fish, and they scaled twelve and a quarter and twelve and three quarter pounds respectively." Grand fish they would be, but I must confess that I have never seen any approaching that weight. The bream is not a very good fish for the table, its flesh is wooly, watery, and disagreeable, and it has a great quantity of small bones in its flesh. It will take a bit of paste, a lump of gentles, or a cad bait, but the very best bait for bream is a well-scoured worm. The rod, reel, and line recommended for barbel and chub will do for bream, and your tackle should be the same as recommended for the same fish. Don't have a float any larger than a swan quill if you can help it, and it ought to be a slider, for bream are, as I said before, found in deep holes; and as the stream is sluggish, do not use any heavier tackle than what will ride comfortably in the swim. Everything should be as neat as possible, for the bream is rather a cunning customer. They are very uncertain in their feeding, often refusing to look at a bait after the swim has been well baited. The hook should be a No. 7 or 8, as bream have rather a small mouth, and a lip hook, a No. 9 can be used if you like, the same as is recommended for barbel. The swim is baited with worms exactly

the same as is recommended for barbel, and the hook bait should be the tail end half of a well-scoured maiden lob-worm, a small cockspur or brandling twisting about on the point of the hook will be an improvement. The large brandlings as described elsewhere are a beautiful bait for bream, and you should fish as near the bottom as you can; in fact, the description for barbel fishing will answer to the letter for bream. When a bream takes the bait give him a second or two to get it well in his mouth, he is rather a nibbling biter and likes to suck at the worm (and that is the reason I like most of the worm on the hooks, and not much of a long end hanging down), and then strike firmly but not too hard, for you are fishing with fine tackle and might break it with too hard a stroke. When you feel that you have hooked your fish play him carefully and look out for squalls, for he has such a tendency to bore downward; if, however, you play him firmly and keep a tight line, you will soon tire him out, heavy as he is (and he does feel very heavy on a line, his very deep sides holding against the water). In a very few minutes he turns on his side and the landing-net is slipped under him. I once was playing a big bream, and I had got him exhausted, and a companion slipped the net under him. The net was very tender, and the fish went right through it, making another bolt. Playing a heavy fish in that predicament was a little bit of change in the sport, but I succeeded at last in landing him.

The bream may be taken with the ledger the same as recommended for the barbel; in fact, the instruction in worm fishing for one will answer in every respect for the other, except that the bream likes a smaller bait, and you use a smaller hook. The white bream are often taken with the same tackle, the same baits, and in the same swims as the roach, they very seldom exceed a pound in weight and are greatly inferior to the carp bream.

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE CARP AND TENCH.

CARP and tench are mostly linked together on the angler's tongue, why, is not apparent, unless it is because that they are generally found in company. They are both of them lake or pond fish generally, although sometimes found in rivers. In some respects, they are totally unlike one another, for instance, the carp has the largest scales of any freshwater fish, while the tench has the smallest, excepting the eel; a small carp is a very good bait for pike, while a tench is the very worst. However, as bottom fishing for carp in ponds or lakes, may be equally well practised for tench, I have connected the two fish, and so the instructions for one must answer for the other. A short description of these fish I will, however, here give. The carp is a cunning member of the Cyprinidæ or carp family, and his scientific name is *Cyprinus Carpio*. He has very large scales as I have said, and a Roman nose, like a barbel. Carp spawn in May, though I have read somewhere that they spawn three or four times in the year. This I cannot verify; observation shows to me that they only spawn once, and that in May. However, I will not argue the point as to whether they spawn once, or more, but one thing is certain, they are very prolific. The female fish contains a vast quantity of eggs; indeed, I have read that when the roe is extracted from some specimens, it will turn the scale against the rest of the fish. These fish will sometimes

reach a very heavy weight, and are found in England of the weight of from twelve to twenty pounds, but the latter, however, being by no means common, from six to ten pounds makes a very good fish. In Germany, carp reach to an extraordinary weight, thirty and forty pounds being a common size, while it has been put on record that "a carp was caught in 1711, near Frankfort on the Oder, which was more than nine feet long, and three round, and which weighed seventy pounds;" and in the lake of Zug, in Switzerland, one was taken which weighed ninety pounds. Carp are found in lakes and ponds, and sometimes in rivers, the big ones being the most shy and suspicious fish that swim in our waters. Small ones of a pound or so will sometimes bite very freely, but the big ones are not to be had except with great difficulty; indeed, it often happens that when the angler has exhausted all his patience and ingenuity, the carp has not come to hand and rewarded him for his trouble; for as the poet justly remarks,—

"Of all the fish that swim the watery mead,  
Not one in cunning can the carp exceed."

All sorts of baits are recommended in carp fishing—pastes of all sorts and colours, sweetened with honey and sugar, or flavoured with gin or brandy; green peas, small green beans, while others swear by a bit of half-boiled potato, a bunch of gentles, or a few grubs. Perhaps, however, as good a bait as can be used is a well-scoured worm, a brandling, or a cockspur. If you know of a lake or pond that contains carp, it will be as well to bait a pitch. If you keep your eyes open, you will soon see which is a favourite feeding-ground, and a day or two before you fish, get the right depth. Having done this, throw in a handful or two of chopped worms the first thing in the morning, or whatever ground bait you propose trying, and, if possible, repeat this for two or three days. When you come to fish, if you can keep quite out of sight,

and you have a beautiful well-scoured brandling on your hook, you may perhaps delude one of the big fellows, though hooking one would be the signal for the rest to bolt. You should then go to another part of the pond, and operate there in the same manner, and so give the carp in the first swim time to recover from their astonishment. Whatever you do, don't insult the carp by fishing for him with a heavy cork float, a long necklace of chain shot, and a coarse tackle, the self-cocking float, the one split shot, and the fine tackle recommended for roach fishing must be the order of the day. Remember that

“The carp whose wary eye  
Admits no vulgar tackle nigh,  
Essay your art's supreme address,  
And beat the fox in sheer finesse.”

The tench is a good deal nicer-looking fish than the carp. The following is a good description of him : “All fins are rounded at the extremities, tail fin not at all forked, nearly square with corners rounded off; mouth small and toothless, with one barbel at each corner; scales very small; colours, head, sides, and cheeks, golden green, darker on the back and fins, orange yellow under the belly, irides, bright orange red.” Tench spawn in May, and seem to go raving mad while they are performing the operation. I have seen them dancing and twisting about in the most absurd manner, rushing and chasing one another through the weeds, and then stopping side by side for a few minutes, refusing to be scared by anybody. They are like the carp, very prolific, no less than 300,000 eggs have been estimated in a fish of three and a half pounds. They are very tenacious of life, and will live a long time out of water. The tench do not grow so large as the carp, six or seven pounds being perhaps their limit; and this depends on the quality of the lake or pond they are in; in small ponds they do not often exceed two or three pounds. There is an

## 130 BOTTOM FISHING IN THE NOTTINGHAM STYLE.

account, however, of one that was found in a hole among some old roots, in a piece of water, in which old rubbish had been thrown for years; it was ordered to be cleared out, which when done a lot of fine tench were found, and this one in the hole had literally assumed the shape of the place in which he was found; it weighed eleven pounds nine and a half ounces, and is the largest on record. As a fish for the table the tench is a good deal better than the carp; his flesh is white and firm, and not at all bad eating. The fish has a very thick skin, and is very slimy. It has been called the "physician of fishes," and the reason, it is said, why the pike will not eat him, is because when the pike is wounded, the pike rubs the injured place against the side of the tench. Pike have been known to take tench occasionally, though it is thought that this is the result of accident, rather than design.

The rod, reel, and line described and recommended in chub and barbel fishing are right for carp and tench fishing. As I have said before, your float should be as small as you like, the self-cocking one will be the best if you can use it, if not the lightest quill you have got, one that will carry four or five small split shots will be quite big enough. In fact, the remarks on the subject of floats in the chapter on roach will fit in exactly for carp and tench fishing; the tackle should be the same as recommended for chub, and as fine as you dare fish with. The split shots should be very small and a long way from the hook, which latter can be a No. 7 or 8. A bit of bread can be steeped, well crushed up, and mixed up with a handful of bran, if you intend to fish with paste, but use your ground bait sparingly, don't toss a thousand or two of worms in, the same as you would for a big barbel swim; a handful or two of worms, or bread and bran, at once will be quite enough, if you are fishing with worms. I believe a smart brandling is as good as any of these; thread

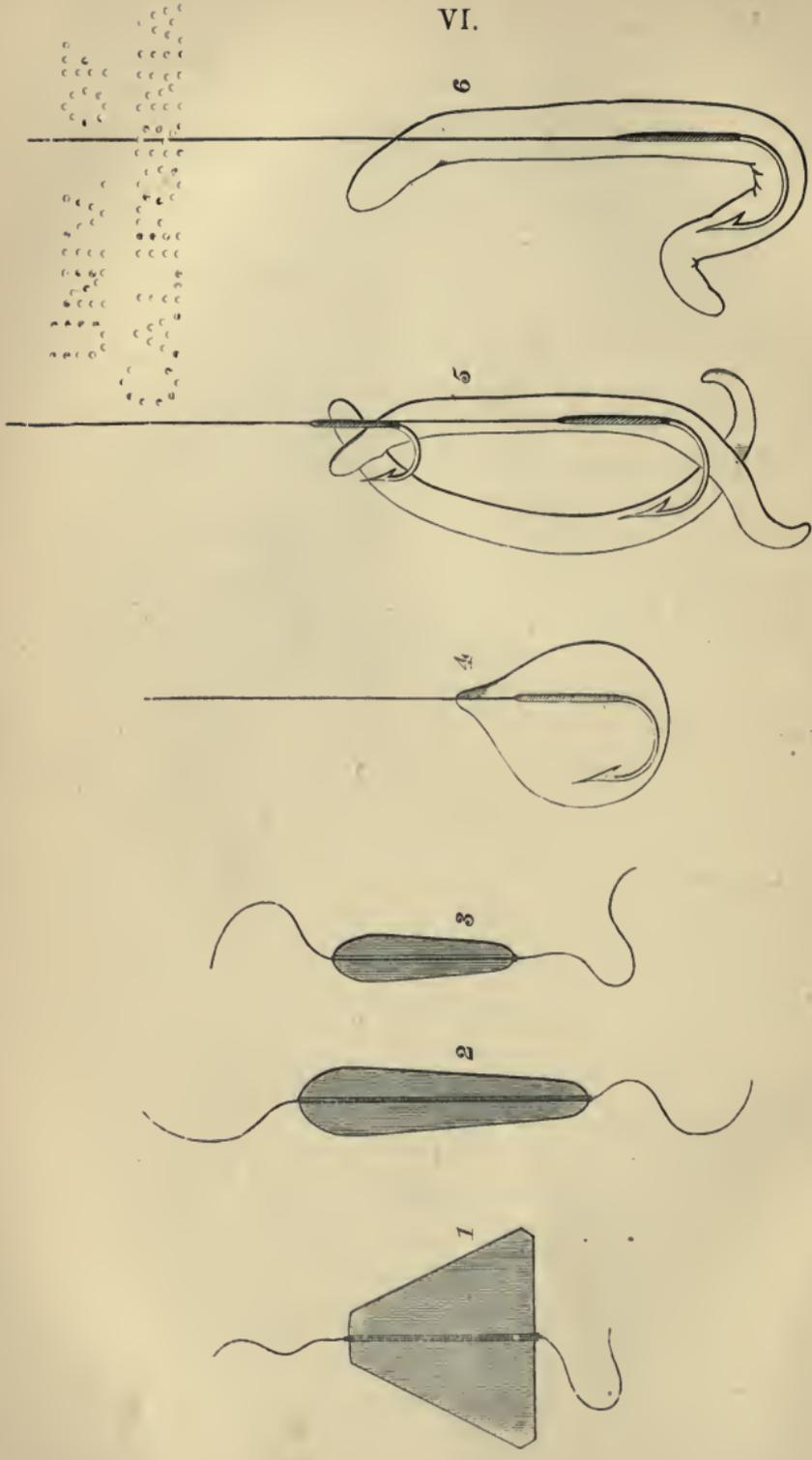
it carefully on the hook, so that every part of it is hidden in the worm, or Mr. Carp will soon find the latter out. Allow the bait to be plenty deep enough, better let it lie a few inches on the bottom, than hang clear. If the carp bites, don't be in a hurry, for he is a very slow biter, the float will sometimes bob and tremble for a few seconds, don't meddle with it till it bobs under water and begins to glide away, then strike firmly, and if he is a big one, look out for squalls, should there be a weed bed handy so that he can pop in it. If you wish to use paste, the bread paste recommended in roach fishing will do, only instead of it being plain, it is best mixed with a little honey; a few pellets of this can be thrown in before you begin to fish. The cunning old customers, however, will rob your hook of this paste continually, therefore I should prefer the worm myself.

The chief requirements of an angler for big carp in a pond are, first, very fine tackle; second, a nice bait; third, keep out of sight, and make no noise; fourth, plenty of skill; and fifth, a very large stock of patience, and then you may perhaps catch one or two, and perhaps not, for fishing for carp and catching carp are two different things, and should not be confounded in the least. Should the angler be so fortunate as to drop across a big pond that has not been fished since the "Middle Ages," and it contains an abundance of fine carp and tench, then the probability is that he will get a little sport; but in well-fished waters, these fish are not to be had without a lot of trouble. The angler must be up to all sorts of dodges. If the pond has a lot of weeds, or water-flowers on it, and the carp are on the surface, as they very often are, grubbing about and eyeing the weeds, to see if there is anything good to eat among them, a nice worm is just hung over the edge of a leaf or flower, the fish will very often take it without any preliminary hesitation, as he would if it were on the ground; but it is a very risky proceeding, carp being more

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often lost in the weeds than captured, after they have been hooked. Small carp will sometimes bite pretty freely, as they have not had the education of their elders. When I was in the fens of Lincolnshire, I used to watch a few cunning old carp that had their home in a very large pond. A friend of mine used to try all manner of dodges for them, but he never got a big one, a few pounders and some nice tench was about the extent of his captures. A river carp will bite a little more freely than a pond carp, for they are taken in some places when fishing for barbel; or they sometimes get in a roach swim, and take a few gentles or a bit of paste. It is not a regular thing to fish on purpose for them in rivers, when the angler does get one it is a lucky accident, an odd tench or two are also sometimes taken when bream fishing. *Cyprinus Tinca* is the scientific name for tench.





VI.

1. Plumb or ledger lead. Page 74.
2. Heavy corking weight, Page 73.
3. Light corking weight, Page 73.
4. Lump of pith about right size for Chub bait. Page 51.
5. Method of putting two worms on Barbel tackle with lip hook. Page 68.
6. Method of baiting single hook with worm. Page 46.

## CHAPTER X.

## THE DACE.

THIS is a bright, handsome, well-made member of the carp tribe, and his scientific name is *Cyprinus Leuciscus*. He is only small in regard to size, but the old saying runs, "little fish are sweet," and that old saying is very applicable to the dace, both in respect to its culinary qualities and its rendering of sport to the angler. The dace is the very fish to train up the young angler in the way he should go, for not being so shy as the roach, it will bite bolder; and the young fly fisher can then try his 'prentice hand on him. This fish will spring freely at the artificial fly, and quick striking has to be the order of the day with dace. I do not know that I can say much about bottom fishing for dace, for the tackle and baits that are recommended for roach will be exactly right for their capture. The dace, sometimes called the dart, the dare, and the darden, is very rapid in his movements, darting through the water with extraordinary speed. Drayton, the poet, writing about him, says,—

"Oft swiftly as he swims, his silver belly shows;  
But with such nimble flight, that ere ye can disclose  
His shape, out of your sight like lightning he is shot."

One may readily confound a small chub with the dace, and remain under the impression that when he has caught a nine or ten ounce chub it is a very fine dace. If he looks at them carefully, however, the following differences may be

noted; the anal fin of the chub is red, while that of the dace is not; the scales are larger on the chub than the dace, and the mouth of the chub is bigger. I have mentioned it because I have seen anglers with a small chub (which if it had been a dace would be a very large one) carefully put on one side as a "weigher in" for the specimen dace prize. Dace are found in swifter, shallower water as a rule than roach, although they are very often taken with the roach; indeed, I question if an angler fishing in a roach swim on the Trent can make a bag of roach without there being a dace or two with them. In the months of May, June, and July dace are found on the shallow streams, the eddies by the side of a swift stream, in the water at a mill-tail, over a bank of weeds, or in the streams from a weir; and they are there sometimes in very great numbers, and may be caught with a cad bait or a gentle. As the summer advances and the days begin to shorten the dace retire into the deeper swims, and are then caught almost exclusively by bottom fishing. Sometimes they get into a barbel swim, and will insist on swallowing a big bait intended for the barbel, and it has often struck me as being strange that a little fish like the dace can get such a big bait and large hook in his mouth. When a swim is baited for barbel and no barbel are attracted therein, the dace get possession, and the angler has a fine time of it, for dace can take the barbel hook and bait. This question was, however, discussed in the chapter on barbel.

During the winter the dace pass into the deep quiet holes, and are then caught with the roach, fishing with cockspur worms. They spawn early in April, and for a week or two after performing that operation are as rough as nutmeg graters, again getting into condition about the middle of May, and will then take the fly or bait on the shallows. The new "Act," however, says no; the dace must not be touched until the 15th June. Dace very seldom exceed a

pound in weight; indeed, I should suppose that to be the very top weight for them in England; it is only in certain rivers and under very favourable conditions, however, that they reach that weight. In the Trent a dace of half a pound is a very good one, while occasional ones of nine and ten ounces are taken, though they are very rare. The biggest I ever took weighed a trifle over ten ounces, and I caught it out of a deep hole when bream fishing. They are a good sporting fish, and will fight bravely to the last; while as a fish for the table, they are a deal better than the roach. They are generally broiled or fried dry. In bottom fishing for dace the tackle recommended for roach will do. In the early part of the season when they are on the shallows they are very fond of a cad bait, or a couple of gentles, and may sometimes be caught in considerable numbers; they may also be caught fly fishing.

A light single-handed trout rod is used for this work, and the flies are the palmers, red, black, or grey, the black gnat, or a coch-y-boudhu. He can also be caught by "dibbling" the real insect on the surface, as is described elsewhere. An improvement on the artificial fly will be a gentle or a cad bait placed on the point of the hook. During the autumn and winter months, when the dace retire into the deep quiet holes, they are caught also in exactly the same way as was fully described in reference to roach fishing. The ground bait can be the same, the only exception being that the dace do not care for paste and grain so much as roach, though they are sometimes caught with those baits. Cockspur worms and gentles are the best lures therefore.

## CHAPTER XI.

## EELS AND FLOUNDERS.

THESE fish are generally connected together by Trent anglers similarly to roach and dace, or carp and tench. Why is not clearly apparent, because there is a vast difference in their shape, nature, and habits. The eel, as every one is aware, is long and thin, somewhat after the shape of a snake, while the flounder is a flat fish, like a plaice. Perhaps the reason is that where the flounder is found there also are eels, and both of them are taken on the same tackle and with the same bait.

Angling for eels as a sport is not of much consequence; and as it is a sport that any boy can successfully follow, few instructions are needed. As the fish, however, run to a good size in the Trent, and are excellent eating, I think them eminently worth mention. Eels are by no means "coarse" fish as far as their gastronomic value is concerned. Perhaps the only time when the term *coarse* can be applied to them is when the angler is barbel fishing; or, intent on nobler sport, at that time a miserable little quarter-of-a-pound eel takes the carefully prepared worm bait, and twists and tangles up the tackle in a horrible way; for of all the Gordian knots ever fabricated, those tied by a small struggling eel are the most complicated. The problem about the eel, until recently could not be satisfactorily explained until very lately, was how they produced their young, and where

the breeding-grounds were. Years ago, ay, and even up to the present time, old and deep-rooted notions about the breeding of this fish are entertained in various districts; some supposing they were born of the mud; others from particles scraped off the bodies of large eels when they rubbed themselves against stones; others from the putrid flesh of dead animals thrown in the water; others that they are bred from the dews which cover the earth in May; others from the water alone; others, and this is the most curious of all, that they generated from stray pieces of horse-hair that were thrown, or found their way into the water. I believe it has, however, been proved lately that they produce their young from ova or eggs the same as other fish, and that they deposit their spawn in the sea, that is, as far as migratory eels are concerned. Non-migratory eels, of course, cannot get down to the sea, and so they deposit their spawn under stones, or among the sand and mud at the bottom of ponds or rivers, but I will not commit myself on this question, leaving it for abler pens than mine. Very old anglers here say that the silver-bellied or migratory eels come into the Trent from the sea with the swallows (I don't mean that the swallows come from the bottom of the sea and travel alongside with the eels, but that they both arrive about the same time) and disappear from the river when the swallows go away. I think they are not far wrong. Other old anglers say that the silver eels come into the river with the first new moon in May. There are, I believe, four different sorts of eels in the Trent—two that migrate and two that do not. The silver eels that migrate are, if you examine them carefully, two distinct species; the one sort has a sharp round nose, and is of a bright silvery colour on the belly, and a very pretty dark green on the back; the other has a broader, flatter nose, and the belly is tinged with gold, as also are his sides; the back is darker than the other sort also.

These two sorts are commonly called "browett eels" on the Trent. Last year I and a friend caught two eels down at Carlton about two pounds each. They were the silver eels, and they were very marked and distinct species, as I have described above. The non-migratory or yellow-bellied eels are also divided into two sorts, the nose of the one being very much sharper than the other. I have caught some of these yellow-bellied eels with a mouth like a frog; they are, however, not so big, nor anything like so good eating as the silver-bellied ones. Trent eels will sometimes reach a very great weight—four, five, or six pounds being frequently taken in the net. The two largest eels I ever saw taken from the Trent were caught on a night-line at Collingham, with a nest of young blackbirds for bait. The two weighed a trifle over fifteen pounds; one was eight pounds and the other seven. I have seen several six pounds each; but these big ones, when you come to cook them, are very oily. The best for the table are those from a pound to two pounds; they are very rich and luscious. The poet truly says,—

"The Trent hath such eels, and the Witham pike,  
That in England there is not the like."

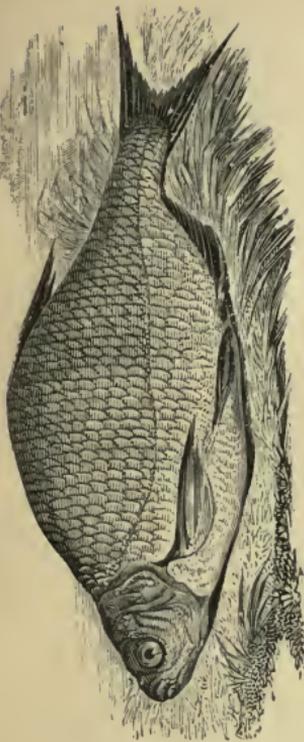
In Italy I have heard that the eel will reach the extraordinary weight of twenty pounds, but I believe the biggest that was taken in English waters weighed a trifle over eleven pounds. The yellow-bellied or non-migratory eels in the Trent very seldom exceed a pound and a half; though in some lakes and ponds they range considerably over this. In Balderton ballast-hole, for instance, eels of this species, are taken of the weight of three or four pounds.

There is hardly a piece of water of any description in England, even a muddy horsepond, or ditch, that does not contain eels of some sort. They are found in almost any place, in the foul, muddy, and stagnant water of a cutting, or in the boiling waters of a weir. The eel gets under stones, in holes

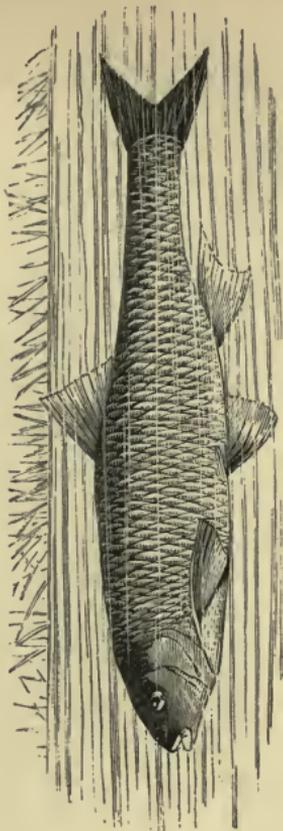
in the bank, or in the brickwork of an old wall, or among the piles and old rotten wood of a landing-stage ; and sniggling an old eel out of these places, when the weather is hot, and other fish refuse to feed, is not bad fun. Eels are caught in various ways : in baskets, bucks, hives, &c., &c., and when they are running they are caught in very great quantities in the nets. Mr. Thorpe, at the Water Mill, Newark, once took three tons in his nets in a single night, a most extraordinary catch. It was a few years ago, and the catch has not been equalled there, either before or since. Eels are for the most part nocturnal fish, and it is at night that they do their "running," and that the big ones are caught. Some aver that the eel will travel over land, from one pond or lake to another, and a correspondent, recently writing to the *Fishing Gazette*, said that an old fisherman told him that the eels came out of the river during the night, and picked up the worms on the grass. He was further assured that the fisherman had seen them scuttling back again into the river, on his approach. Now I should suppose that the "old fisherman" was poking fun at that writer, for I must confess that I have been by the river side all hours, night and day, under all sorts of circumstances, i.e. when it rained, when a very heavy dew was falling, and when very fine,—in moonlight, starlight, or darkness,—and I have never yet met an eel on his cross-country journey, nor have I disturbed any, when they have been worming. Furthermore, I never yet met anybody who could positively say they had done so. Large eels are not often caught with rod and line, though odd ones sometimes are picked up by angling, when the water has been very much discoloured. As I said before, they "run" at night, and they choose the darkest nights for this. Night-liners very seldom set their lines during the bright moonlight. These night-lines consist of several yards of very strong string with ten or a dozen hooks on each, fastened about a yard

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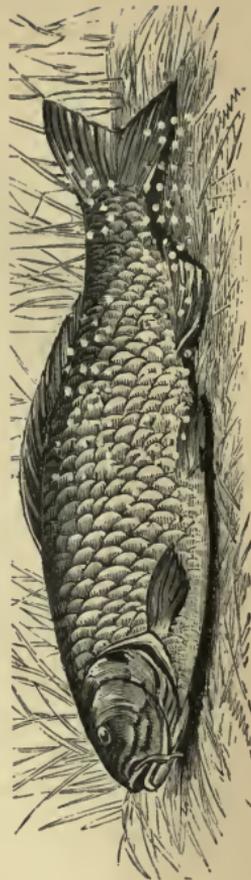
from each other. The hooks are big ones, and are tied on strong twisted horsehair; the bait is a very large lob-worm, or a young bird, or a bleak, for it must be noticed that large eels are fish and flesh eaters; a piece of lampern is also a very good bait on a night-line. Grand fish of four, five, or six pounds, are taken on these lines, while a big barbel or chub are occasionally pulled out on them. A piece of brick is fastened to each end of these lines to sink the baits well. The lines are then thrown in the river and left, and in the morning a drag hook and cord is used to pull them out. Sniggling is another method of taking eels; for this a stick about six or eight feet long is used, with another short piece lashed at the top so that it forms a right angle, a few yards of coarse twine and a stout needle will complete the outfit of a sniggler. The string is lashed to the needle with a bit of waxed silk, beginning at the eye end of the needle, and finishing about the middle, the point of the needle will then be upwards. The end of the needle-point is stuck into a very thin bit of stick or a crowquill, and the needle is thrust into half a lob-worm at the broken end, until the whole of the needle is in the worm. The point is then just brought out of the worm, and the point of the needle is stuck very lightly in the end of the cross piece of stick, at the top. The cord is not tied to the stick at all, but held in the left hand, while the right holds the rod; and then the angler looks about him for a suitable place, such as a hole under the water in an overhanging bank, or under a stone, or in old walls, or old rotten boards under a landing-stage, &c., and when he finds one, he puts the worm on the end of the stick into it. If there happens to be an eel there, he will seize hold of the worm and pull it and the needle from the stick; the angler will feel the tug, and then he gently moves the stick away and throws it on the bank. After a few seconds, when the eel has swallowed the worm, the angler pulls the string, and



The BREAM.



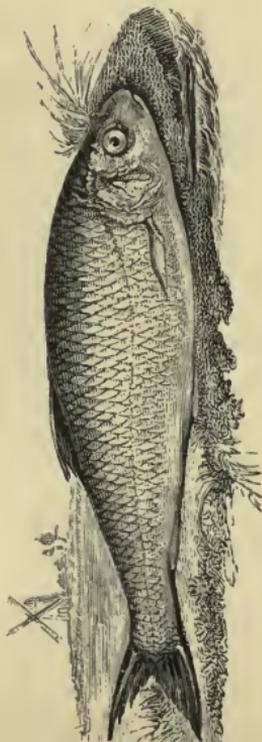
The DACE.



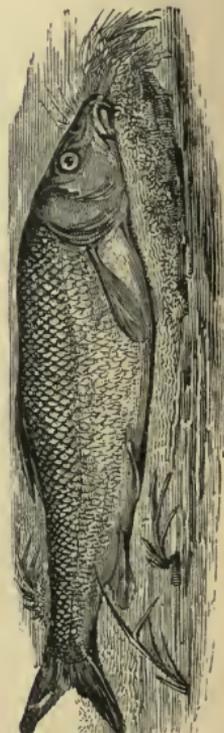
The CARP.



The CHUB.



The ROACH.



The BARBEL.



as it is fastened to the middle of the needle, it turns cross-ways in the throat of the eel, and of course holds him faster than any hook can do. Now if the eel is a pounder or more, and he has got his tail twisted over a stone, or a board, or what not, he will refuse to come, and it is then a clear case of "pull devil, pull baker," but the string is strong, and the angler has only to keep steadily pulling, and the eel will tire out in a few minutes, and come out of his hole, and is soon drawn ashore. I have mentioned this method because it is easily practised, and a few pounds of eels are a welcome addition to the angler's basket, to say nothing of the fun of the thing, when no other fish will stir. In angling for these fish, the bottom fisher's rod, reel, and line is used, but the angler need not be particular as to his tackle, the eel is not afraid of a bit of gut; if you want to angle close to the bank, or over a bed of weeds, an ordinary quill float and a stoutish tackle weighted accordingly will do. The hook is a No. 7 or 8, and the bait is a worm, which of course must lie on the bottom. If there are many eels about, they will soon take the bait, and when the angler gets a bite, he must get Mr. Eel out as quick as he can, set his foot on him, and stick a penknife in the back of his head, and then get the hook from him as quick as possible, for if he lets the eel twist about the tackle a few times, it will probably take him half an hour to untie the knots, and get all ready for another attempt. Eels are also caught by ledgering, or plumbing, as it is locally known. A big flat plumb is fastened on the line and a short tackle, or even two, being used, the bait is of course a worm. The plumb is wound up to the point of the rod, and the angler throws directly from the reel to any place he desires. (This throw is described elsewhere.) When this plan is adopted, a "lazy back," as it is called, is used. This is a forked stick a good deal like the letter Y; the bottom end is thrust into the ground, and when the angler has made his throw, he hanks

his line round one of the handles of the reel, and lays the rod on the forks of the "lazy back" aforesaid. The butt is on the ground; when an eel bites, the angler will have plenty of time to pick his rod up, for they are but slow biters at best. He can tell by the bobbing of the rod point when he has a bite. If the eel be a big one, and the angler is getting the hook from its mouth, he must mind not to put his finger in, for the eel possesses a lot of small sharp teeth, and his bite is a very serious affair; the disgorging is a good thing here.

The flounder is a peculiar-looking fish and is found in the lower reaches of the Trent. I do not believe any are found above Averham weir. They are a flat fish, white under the belly, and brown on the back, with some pink spots on it. Its mouth is as it were all on one side, and its eyes seem starting from their sockets. These fish, I believe, spawn very early, for I have caught them in good condition early in May. If we could get hold of a flounder about Christmas time, we should then find them heavy with spawn. They bury themselves in the sand in the quiet shallow parts of rivers, and perform the operation of spawning in the early spring. In April they come out of the sand, and by May they are in good condition. They like very quiet waters where there is a sandy or gravelly bottom, and water not above three feet deep, though they are sometimes taken ledger fishing for barbel in the rough deep waters; indeed, the angler need not be surprised if he pulls up a flounder, let him be fishing where he may on the lower Trent. As a rule, however, I have found the most on the quiet sandy shallows. These fish in a general way only run very small, i.e. three or four to the pound, although some will reach the weight of a pound and a half. A half-pound flounder is a good fish. For the table flounders are very good, being sweet and luscious, if fried in butter or lard, and sprinkled over with egg and bread-

crumbs, this fish is not to be beaten as a breakfast delicacy. The flounder is caught in exactly the same way as described in ledgering for eels with the "lazy back." The plumb, the two tackles, and the worm for bait, on a No. 7 or 8 hook. "Pin lining" is one plan of catching flounders, only this is the way of the pot-hunter. Pins are fastened on lengths of gut in exactly the same way as described for sniggling for eels, and ten or a dozen of these are fastened to a long line at regular intervals. The worm is baited as described in sniggling, and a stone is fastened to each end of the line to keep the baits down at the bottom, if you get a favourable place and a sunshiny day, you catch a lot of these fish. From four to eight dozen have been taken in a single day.

## CHAPTER XII.

THE BLEAK—THE GUDGEON—THE RUFFE—THE MINNOW.

THIS is a batch of small fry, and as it is not much trouble to take them, very few instructions for their capture will suffice. The reason why I mention them is because three of them out of the four are very good baits for much more valuable fish, This chapter will be a short one, as a sort of tail end to my instructions for "Bottom Fishing in the Nottingham Style."

The words of Michael Drayton, will just fit in here for a text, as regards these fish :—

"The dainty gudgeon, ruffe, the minnow, and the bleak,  
Since they but little are, I little need to speak."

I have substituted the word "ruffe" for "loche," which appears in the original.

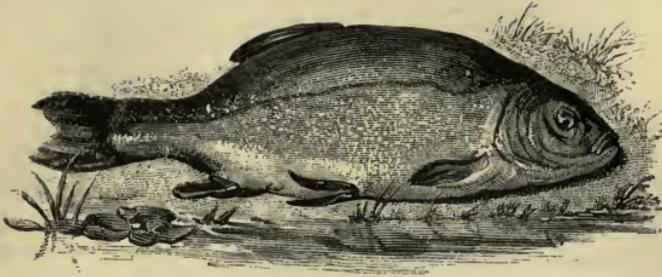
The bleak, sometimes called a "blay," or "willow blade," or as it is known on the Trent, "the whitling" is a member of the carp tribe, and its scientific name is *Cyprinus Alburnus*. It is a small fish, six inches in length, and two ounces in weight, this being about its extreme size, and is a very pretty fish, narrow and flat, sides glittering like silver. Bleak spawn about May, and are soon as active as ever; they delight in warm summer weather, and will then disport themselves near the surface of the water; they are very active and glitter in the water, turning from side to side. They are found in great quantities in different parts of the Trent, and generally in large shoals in an eddy by the side of a swift

stream, or about the piles or buttresses of old bridges ; in fact, the angler can soon find them, for they are mostly near the surface. I read that the scales of these fish were once used in the manufacture of "artificial pearls," a pound of which went to make four ounces of the guanine, as it was termed. Four thousand bleak were required for a pound of scales. Fortunately for the bleak a new substitute has been found, or bleak at that rate would soon be a "rara avis" in some waters. Any sort of a light rod and tackle will do for their capture. I have seen them pulled out very rapidly with a long thin stick for a rod, a few yards of thread for a line, and about six inches of fine gut, and the smallest of floats and hooks, with a gentle for a bait. The light roach and dace rod, reel, and line will do for the fish mentioned in this chapter. As the bleak swims very near the surface, the tackle will only require to be very short. A single length of fine gut will do with a loop at one end and a No. 14 hook on the other. A very small float is used, one that will carry about a couple of very small split shots, and a gentle for a bait. The hook is put into the thick end of the gentle and the thin end hangs down and twirls about in a very lively manner. It is then dropped among the bleak, and as the bait is only a few inches under water, you will see a dozen fish perhaps make a rush at it. As soon as the float bobs down strike at once, and out comes the little rascal dancing and glittering like a bar of silver ; they are pulled out sometimes by that plan as fast as you can take them off the hook and bait again. Bleak can be caught with a very small artificial fly, and there is worse sport than whipping for bleak on a summer's evening, with three or four small brown flies on a fine gut cast. In the winter bleak go to the bottom of deep holes, and are not so active. They make a capital spinning bait, for they spin so truly and glitter beautifully, though they are rather tender on the hooks.

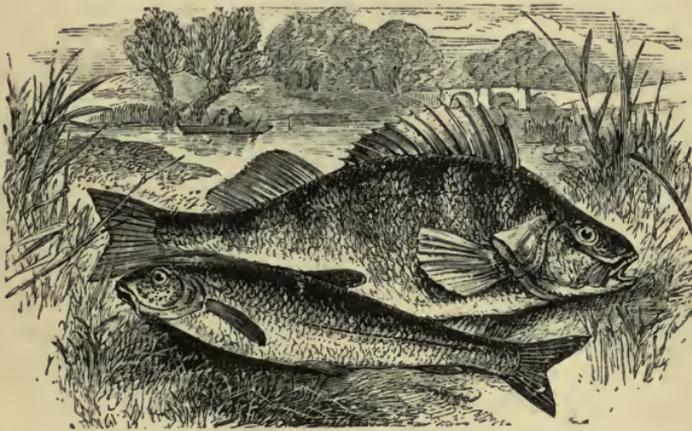
The gudgeon (*Cyprinus Gobio*) is another member of the carp tribe, and a nice-looking little fellow he is; in shape something like a barbel. The top jaw hangs over the bottom one, and looks very much adapted for rooting among the sand. Like the barbel he has a beard at each corner of the mouth. Six or seven inches is its extreme length, but that size is by no means common. He spawns about May, and it is some time before he gets into condition: about August and September are the best months to take this fish. He is a very toothsome morsel, if fried crisp with egg and bread crumbs. A light rod, reel, line, and tackle are used for his capture. His haunts are in rather rapid shallow waters that flow over a gravelly or sandy bottom. The bait is a small worm, the tail end of a brandling or cockscur on a small hook is best; and the bait must trip along the bottom. The float and tackle recommended for dace fishing in a stream will be right for the gudgeon, but the hook must be a size or two smaller. The worm should be threaded on the hook so that no loose ends hang about, or he will pull and bother you like a tiny eel. If the water is very clear, a rake is used in some places to stir up the sand and make a rather thick water; the gudgeon then flock together there, and are then sometimes pulled out very rapidly. I have seen anglers doing what they call "muddling for gudgeon." They take off their shoes and stockings, and roll up their trousers to the thigh, and shuffle about the sandy shallows with their feet, and then with rod and tackle fish among the discoloured water. This plan is adopted if the water be not above two feet deep, but a heavy iron rake is the best. Owing to the fact that these fish take so little skill to catch them, it is a favourite sport with the ladies in various districts where the fish abound.

A poem of Hood's, entitled the "Angler's Lament," contains the following lines:—

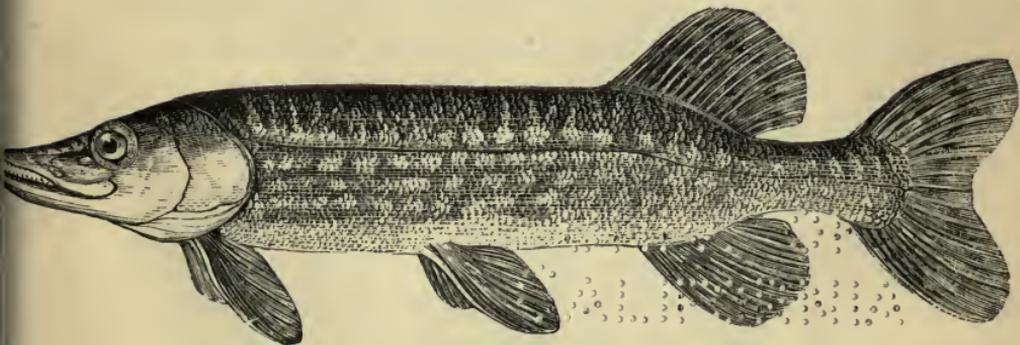
VIII.



The TENCH.



The PERCH and GUDGEON.



The PIKE or JACK

THE  
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO  
PRESS

“ At a brandling once gudgeons would gape,  
But they seem to have alter'd their forms, now.  
Have they taken advice of the Council of Nice,  
And rejected the Diet of Worms, now ? ”

But that must be a bit of poetic fancy, for gudgeon are very fond of a nice brandling, and a “ diet of worms ” suits them precisely. Perhaps, however, the poet had Martin Luther in his eye when he wrote that. I now must pull up my line, however, and, as the cheap-jack at the fair says, “ show you something else.”

The ruffe, sometimes called the pope, is a member of the perch family, and his scientific name is *Perca ceruna*. He is very like a small perch in shape, having the same prickly fin on the back, but is a deal darker than the perch and marked more like a gudgeon. The fish is small, four or five inches being his extreme length ; it spawns in April, and he is to be found in deep quiet corners, and like the eel is not afraid of a bit of mud. He will bite freely at a worm, and where the young angler takes one he will very often find many more. The ruffe is not much good, except as a bit of practice for the young angler.

The minnow is well known to any lad who has seen a stream of water. These tiny fish also belong to the carp family, and what a little beauty he is, with his splendid colouring, silvery, white, brown, pink, &c., &c. When I see one it always brings back to my memory the happy time of my school days, when I used to catch them with a bent pin and a scrap of worm. They are an excellent bait for perch, &c., and for this purpose are caught in a hand net, or a minnow trap specially made. They will take a scrap of worm on the smallest of hooks, and any lad can catch them with a stick, a bit of thread, a small piece of horsehair, a bent pin, and a scrap of worm or gentle, or a tiny bit of paste.

And now, dear reader, I have got to the end of my in-

structions for "Bottom Fishing in the Nottingham Style," and if I have imparted any real knowledge to those for whom it is intended, I shall be well satisfied. I will, therefore, wind up my line, put away my tackle, and bid you farewell; and may you have as many happy days on the Trent, or elsewhere, as I have had, in the pursuit of this my favourite sport.

## CHAPTER XIII.

FRESHWATER FISHERIES ACT, 1878.

(41 and 42 Vic. Cap. 39.)

NOTICE is hereby given that, in accordance with the provisions of the above Act, it is illegal—

1. To fish for, catch, or attempt to catch, or kill, trout or char during the close season between 2nd October and 1st of February following, or during any close season, which by Bye-law may be substituted for the same.

NOTE.—It is already illegal to buy, sell, or expose for sale, or have in possession for sale, trout or char between 2nd October and 1st February following (36 and 37 Vict. c. 71, s. 20).

2. To use or have in possession with the intention of using, any light, otter, lath, jack, snare, wire, spear, gaff, strokehall, snatch, or other like instrument for the purpose of catching or killing trout or char.

3. To use any fish roe in fishing for trout or char; or to buy, sell, or expose for sale, or have in possession for sale, any trout roe or char roe.

4. To fish for, catch, or attempt to catch or kill any “freshwater fish” between 15th March and 15th June, both inclusive. (“Freshwater fish” include all freshwater non-migratory fish other than pollan, trout, and char.)

NOTE.—This prohibition does not apply to—

a. Any owner of a several fishery where trout, char,

or grayling are specially preserved, destroying within such fishery any "freshwater fish" other than grayling.

- b.* Any person angling in private waters with the leave of the owner of such waters.
- c.* Any person angling in public waters with the leave of the Local Board of Conservators.
- d.* Any person taking "freshwater fish" for scientific purposes, or for bait.
- e.* Any district or part of a district specially exempted by a Local Board of Conservators with the approval of the Secretary of State.

5. To buy, sell, expose for sale, or have in possession for sale, any "freshwater fish," as above defined, between 15th March and 15th June, both inclusive.

6. To use any dynamite or other explosive substance for catching or destroying fish.

N.B.—The first four of these provisions do not apply to the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk, which are placed under a separate Act (40 and 41 Vict. c. 98). January 1st, 1879.

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## CLOSE-TIMES FOR FISH

(According to the Act of 1878).

**SALMON.**—From November 2nd to February 1st, unless altered by the local Board of Conservators, who may vary the dates; but in no case must the fence time commence later than December 1st, and it must extend to ninety-two days.

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