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SPORTING SKETCHES

WITH

PEN AND PENCIL.

BY

FRANCIS FRANCIS and A. W. COOPER.

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

LONDON:

"THE FIELD" OFFICE, 346, STRAND, W.C.

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GIFT OF
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UNIV OF
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PREFACE.



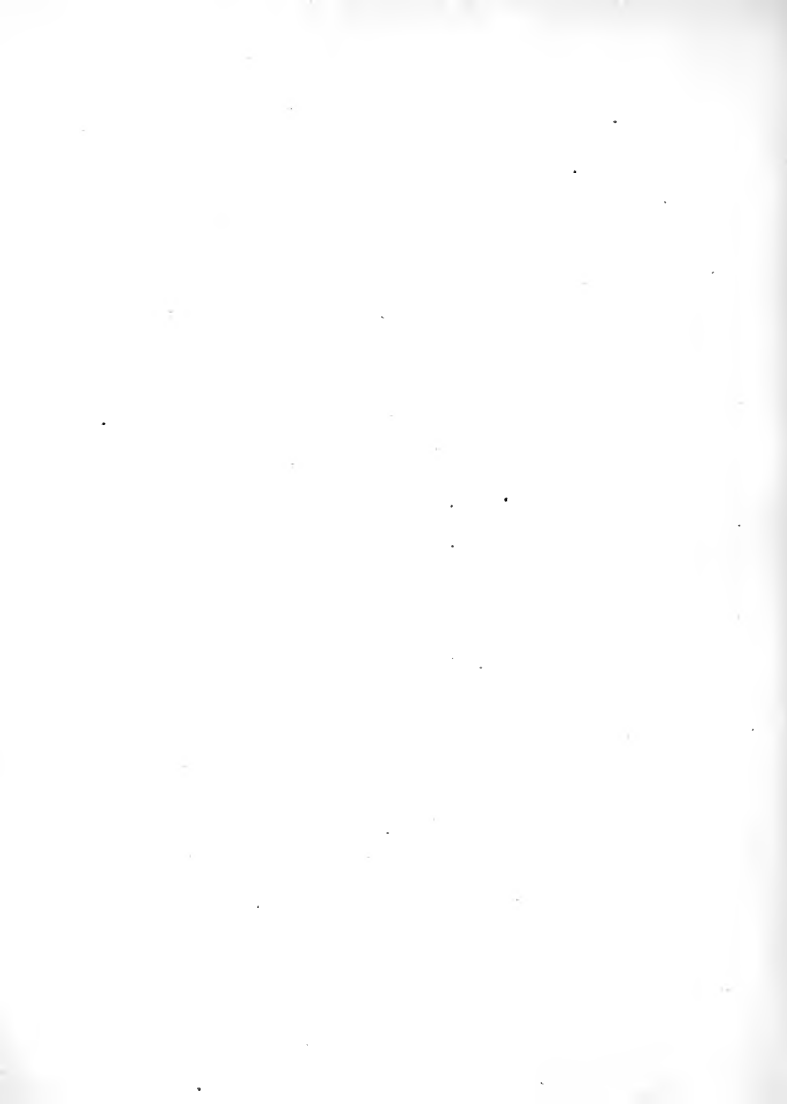
HAVE had the desire to publish an illustrated work of this sort for a good many years; but the difficulty always has been to meet with an artist equal to the task. Many a Shooting and Fishing Picture have I seen published, in which the artist had not the slightest acquaintance with the subject he had undertaken, and wherein the details had been furnished entirely by his imagination. There can be no need for me to say that my friend Mr. ALFRED COOPER has a thorough knowledge of Sport in all its branches, and of the implements and requirements needed for its prosecution. His drawings are most of them Sketches from Nature, and many of the figures are Portraits of well-known persons.

FRANCIS FRANCIS.



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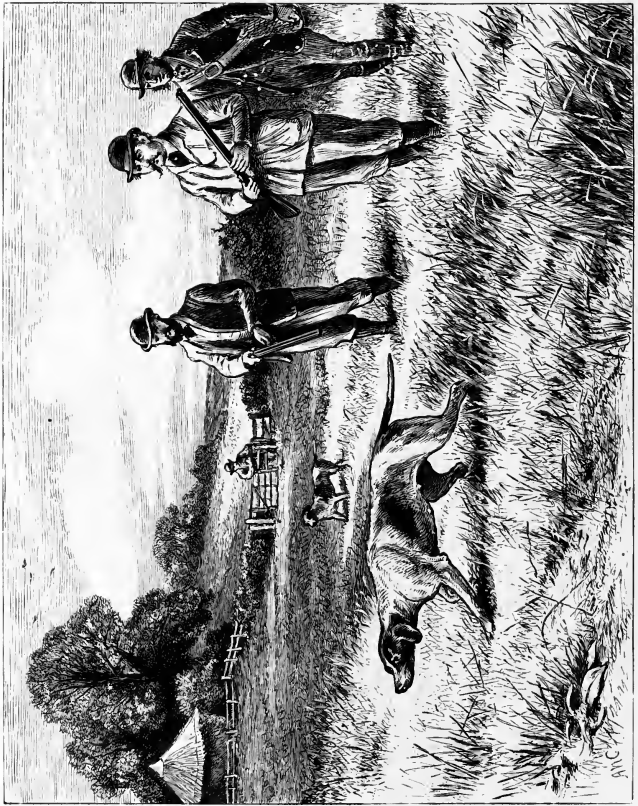
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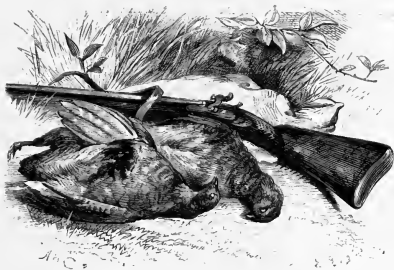
Engraved by EDMUND EVANS.

LARGE ILLUSTRATIONS.	HEADING.	TAIL PIECE.	ARTIST.
Partridge Shooting ...	Partridges	Hare	A. W. Cooper.
Punt Fishing	Barbel	Bottle, &c.	A. W. Cooper.
Woodcock Shooting ...	Woodcock	Cocker Spaniel	The late A. Cooper, R.A.
Trout Fishing	Trout	{ Sheep Bridge on the Test	
Pheasant Shooting.....	Dead Game	Retriever.....	A. W. Cooper.
Pike Fishing	Pike.....	Bait Kettle.....	A. W. Cooper.
Rabbit Shooting.....	Terrier.....	Ferreting	A. W. Cooper.
Roach Fishing	Roach	Landing Net	A. W. Cooper.
Grouse Shooting.....	Shooting Pony	Black and Red Grouse	A. W. Cooper.
Salmon Fishing	Ballyshannon Bridge	The Parson.....	A. W. Cooper.
Snipe Shooting	Snipe	Ducks	The late A. Cooper, R.A.
Grayling Fishing	Grayling	The End	



**THOMAS COLLINGSWOOD CLOWN,
GLENMORE, SILVER HILL,
ST. LEONARDS-ON-SEA.**





THE FIRST OF SEPTEMBER.



THE FIRST!—for it is the first of firsts known to the sportsman and his friends; and, if it is not the only “first,” still it is so far ahead of all other “firsts,” that no other “first” deserves much notice in comparison. It is true, for example, that the First of October is chronologically the commencement of pheasant shooting, though not one sportsman in twenty commences for six weeks to come, and often not for much more. But there are few who go for partridge shooting at all who (unless under some very exceptional circumstances) do not on the First take an hour or two round the outskirts at least, and a few braces of toll by way of reminding the “little brown birds” that the season of grace is past, and that henceforth they very much hold their fate in their own hands, or claws, or wings, as the case may be. Thenceforth their own acuteness must answer for any increased length of tenure of their existence, and constant watchfulness must be exercised against their many foes if they would continue to peck the sweet corn from the stubbles, or play at “hi-spy-hi” upon the hillside among the furze or

juniper bushes, with favourite dusting pits interspersed about; for dogs and cats, stoats, weasels, rats, hedgehogs, and other vermin, with man and gun, make partridge run more risks than you'd determine—(Hem! you can put the "Pome" in proper order, if you please;—for my part, modesty forbids); and, however simple the little brown bird may appear, he or she is quite capable of becoming as clever an old general as any bird that flies. How exceedingly wide awake an old hen often is, even before September is out, if her brood has been shot at once or twice! How often you may walk over a field in which you know there is a good covey, and yet never happen on them—aye, and even with a good dog by your side! I don't know whether, as it was contended by some eminent writers years ago, some partridges have to a certain extent when at rest the power of retaining their scent. I have not seen sufficient to warrant my agreeing in that theory entirely and without reservation; but still, partridges are often very hard to find, and are very cunning in getting out of danger.

Some shooting I had once lay along a line of hills, taking the entire hill for about two miles and a half on each side, down into the valley; and many a time have I walked along one side of the hill from end to end, and missed the birds all along, getting only a very few shots, and then, when I had got to the end of the ground, turning round, I have come back over the same ground and had capital sport. Partridges very soon get to know your line of beat; and the moment they hear you—no matter how far off—they take their measures for getting out of your way; and this should be a warning to the shooter, that he should make as little noise, and, beyond all, open his mouth as seldom and as quietly, as possible; and, if they chance to see you, of course, like the Quaker and the bailiff, they flee from you. "You never heard of the Quaker and the bailiff?" Dear me! I thought everybody had heard that. A Quaker was "wanted"—no matter what for—and a bailiff or process server waited on him. He knocked at the door; the wife looked out of an upper window. "What dost thee want, friend?" "I want to see Mr. Broadbrim, please." "He shall see thee, friend;" and the lady withdrew. Ten minutes passed, and Ephraim did not come; a quarter of an hour, and "the bogey" knocked again, and out came Mrs. Ephraim's head. "What dost thee want, friend?" "Want! why, Mr.

Broadbrim! Didn't you say he'd come down to me? Where is he?" "Nay, friend, that did I not. I said he should see thee, and he has seen thee; and he did not like thee, and he has fled from thee." Tableau! And if that sober brown Quaker of a partridge does see thee, he will certainly not like thee, and assuredly, as I have said, flee from thee.

I remember once or twice beating through a couple of acres of standing barley, in which I knew there was a good covey, but which, after the first time, I never got a sight of. I was going through it for the fourth or fifth time, when my keeper motioned me to stop, and pointed towards a hedge along the crest of an adjacent hill; and, lo you! there was my covey, headed by the old hen, scudding along in single file under the hedge as hard as they could run. They had heard the usual rustling; which, of course, could not be avoided. They ran out at the upper end before us, round the hedges, and before we were well out of the top end they had worked round again, and in at the bottom behind us. I took in the position at a glance.

"I'll go outside, George, while you wait here; I'll go round to the back end, and when I hold up my hand you begin to beat back to me."

George did so, and advanced at the signal, while I went to meet him at the same pace, and about the middle of the patch up they got nobly, and I scored my brace, the old hen first, and scattered them over some clover, where I picked up most of them. I might have gone after them forty times in the usual way and should never have "fetched" them.

I remember once missing a covey for nearly a whole season. They were originally twenty. I got a brace the first day, and never saw them after, until quite the end of the season, though I beat the field they had been in over and over. I thought the poachers had got them. One day I came up the next field along the party hedge. When I came to the end I was going to get over the hedge in the corner of the field, when my bitch jumped on to the crown of the hedge bank, and stood there as stiff as a crutch.

"What can she be standing at? What is there on the other side?" I asked. "There is nothing there but that old sawpit." All of a sudden it flashed on me, and I said to George, "I'll lay a wager that eighteen are in the old sawpit, and that's how we missed 'em." It was so; I jumped up hastily on the hedge; up got the eighteen out of a few brambles, &c.,

right at my feet, and I scored another brace. I had been within a dozen yards or so of that old sawpit twenty times, but never thought of heaving a stone into it.

Partridge shooting, though now so popular, has only grown into popularity during the last hundred years or so. When old Nicholas Cox wrote in 1721, in George the First's early days, it was not apparently known or practised. Wildfowl were occasionally shot *over*, but what for? Read and perpend. You are desired first to set nets over parts of the river, and upon the fens and slashes. Then go early in the morning, and if you espy any fowl on the river "discharge your gun, which will make them fly to the fens and slashes, and then go and see what you have taken." Then you may even shoot fowl by means of a stalking horse, and you are taught how to cast shots by the use of a melting ladle, some water, and a due admixture of auri-pigmentum, and the shot thus produced is thought to be better *without tails*; and even then you are counselled to shoot with the wind, and behind or sidewise at the fowl, and not full in their faces. As for partridges and other land fowl, there seems only to be reserved various nets and engines, driving, setting, and liming. Falconry, of course, was practised, and it was a noble sport, and on it our old friend, of course, holds forth at length; but with the progress of the Georges these methods of fowling fell into desuetude; and as the next century took root and flourished, we find the old single barrel, flint and steel poker, in vogue; and in 1818 Scott wrote as follows:—

"The ammunition, flints, and wadding, the latter in good store, will not be forgotten; nor ammunition of another kind, both solid and fluid, when a long day is expected. Other items may not so readily occur, and yet in the course of the day may have their turn of consequence: for instance, a rod to which a scraper may be affixed. These rods are now made to take to pieces for the pocket, and are useful to scrape a barrel which has been fired a considerable number of times." (Scrape a barrel! Shades of Paddy Grant, Purdey, Boss, and Lancaster! where are ye?) "A small piece of brimstone may be taken wherewith to rub the face of the hammer should a miss fire happen; and a piece of copper wire conveniently suspended to prick the touch hole must not be forgotten."

At this time double barrels had just been invented, and an accident had lately happened with one, which had resulted in the blowing to pieces of a gentleman's arm; and Scott says, in considering the case, "Granting the barrels to be unobjectionable, and the caution with which they were managed fairly in the same predicament, the use of the double gun would stand finally condemned by the present accident." Bravo, prejudice! And though he admits subsequently that a double barrel may be used with care, without much extra danger, yet he has a fine old-fashioned hatred for new-fangled inventions, and clearly has no liking for them, and at the best only a sort of suspicious toleration. However, the public soon ceased to be influenced by such views, and double barrels were succeeded by the introduction of the percussion system, with caps or tubes, and all complete, and these in turn have yielded to the breechloader; and whether any sort of repeating breech-loader will succeed that, so as to allow of yet more and grander slaughter in a given time, time only can show. Certainly the mania for slaughter has had something to do with the destruction of what the old school termed good sportsmanship. We used to be satisfied with from twelve or fifteen to twenty or twenty-five brace a day. Now less than from fifty to one hundred is voted slow.

The birds are too numerous now to admit of dogs being successfully employed, for if only one bird is accidentally flushed, covey after covey rises until the field is emptied. Dogs being very much less in request, and gunners much less in the habit of using and working them, less pains are bestowed upon their breaking, and they are less efficiently hunted, and this of course deepens the evil. Improved farming, clean drilled turnips, and short stubbles, with the constant disturbance by stock of various kinds, and labourers at work, renders the bird wilder and wilder, until it is a question even with the best dogs and the best sportsmen whether you could kill birds over dogs as we used to. Though for the first few days, where birds are not too plentiful, one can still get a savour of the good old sport of shooting to a pair of good dogs. But it is not worth keeping dogs for, and the practice of flushing every covey on the ground and following none, very soon assists powerfully in putting them on the *qui vive*. Formerly we went out with two or three lads as markers, who were perched in com-

manding positions. We flushed a covey, and followed it at once; flushed it and followed it again, losing no time until we broke the covey; then, when they were dispersed over turnips or clover, we set to work with a steady, careful dog, and hunted them up one after the other; and when we had done with them we hardly wanted to see them again. We then went and looked for another covey, and so on. Now we disturb fresh coveys every ten minutes, and get a brace or so out of each, and soon all get wild together. Look on this picture of an old First of September:—

It is the First of September. Just a quarter of a century ago, my friend Tom Shanks, of Winkleberry Grange, had asked me to shoot with him. Tom and I had been old schoolfellows, but had parted when he left, and we had not met for several years. Only a week previous I had gone in to Hoppy Burgess's billiard rooms on the Parade at Portsmouth, patronised largely by the officers of both forces, when who should I see sauntering round the table but Tom.

"Why, Tom, old fellow?" "Why, Frank, my boy! Who'd have thought of seeing you? Where have you hidden yourself?" &c. And for twenty minutes inquiries after Jack, Bill, and Harry filled up the time.

Tom was future master of Winkleberry Grange, with nine hundred acres of good land round about it. He had taken to farming, and meant to farm a good slice of it, while the rest was let to a desirable tenant, and his prospects were bright enough. I was then a gentleman at large, and bent on enjoying life, which I did after my lights.

"By the way, where are you going to shoot on the First?" asked Tom at length.

"Well, I have a little walk over my own patrimony, and I have a sort of conjoint arrangement with my next neighbour, and between us, with one thing and the other, we make out *a walk*."

"Ah, I see! That can wait, and be none the worse, for a few days. You come down and shoot with me. We've plenty of birds, dogs in fine order; and, by the way, there's 'a kick up' the night before; the girls have a bit of a dance on, and they'll be delighted with another dancing man. So mind you're hooked."

This decided me. The shooting was very attractive, but the dance was

irresistible. I was a little soft on my shooting, but perfect butter on my dancing; and, as for the girls, if they were anything like Tom, they must be worth trotting out.

The First saw me bowling along in a well-appointed cart—of which I was proud, having architected it myself—to Winkleberry, fifteen miles; one more, and in through a wide open gate, through a short avenue, and I pulled up before the Grange. I won't describe it; just imagine what a grange ought to be—ivy, oriel windows, buttresses, and all complete, with a white headed old British patriarch to receive you. Ah! that *was* an evening. The "little dance" was, of course, no end of a ball; and, as for the girls, I've still a soft place somewhere, or had not a very long time since, by reason of that visit; and before the evening was over I could see that Tom's friend was voted "nice."

The next morning—what a morning it was!—Tom and I, with the keeper, two markers, and a young friend, the son of a neighbour, who walked with us but didn't shoot, stood on the velvet lawn gay with all manner of flowers and shrubs, ready to start, with a brace of handsome liver and white pointers, which looked all like business, and a sort of half-bred spaniel, a *protégé* of the keeper's, following. Fairy forms, in the crispest morning muslin, dispensed a cherry brandy to us on the steps, and a pair of the brightest eyes sent a couple of charges of electricity right through my waistcoat—and no partridge that day was ever so shot through and through as I was. But, eyes or no eyes, business had to be attended to.

"We'll run over the twenty-acre stubble first, sir," said Sam the keeper; "and you go and get up in that tree at the corner and mark into the swedes, Bill; and you, Joe, get to that gate and look out t'other side, but mind you keep out of sight;" and we started.

"Hold up, my beauties!" and away went the pointers over such a stubble as one does not see often now.

"Now, gents, afore we begin," said Sam; "may I ask you, if you've any talkin' to do, to do it now. When the dogs is a huntin', and we're on birds, please be as quiet as you can." We nodded, and set off, Tom on the right the keeper between us, and J., our young friend, on my left.

The two dogs were perfect, and worked like parallel rulers. We hadn't gone half way into the field when Don stopped and drew himself up till he looked liked a stone dog, and Bess, about sixty yards off on the right, backed him in fine style. We walked up to Don. There was a sudden whirr before us, and up got sixteen birds, serving me rather than Tom. I got my first, and Tom got an outsider. I cut my second about heavily, and he went away with his leg down, when Tom pulled him down with a long shot.

"By Jove, that's a capital shot!" called out young J., and in his excitement pretty loud, too. At the word twelve more birds got up about sixty yards on the left. Sam said nothing, but skewered the offender with his eye, and shook his head deprecatingly, and Master J. coloured up and looked foolish.

"I'm so sorry," he whispered; and so he was; but Sam shook his head and looked reproachful.

"All gone for the turnips, sir; and I warrant Bill 'ave marked 'em; he's got a eye like a 'awk, 'as Bill. Better foller 'em at once, sir," said Sam, picking up the dead birds.

"Right, Sam, on you go;" and on we went to the tree to take Bill's report.

"The thirteen's gone down just over the brow by that white turmut; the twelve skewed up under the hedge, and is gone into that ere briery bit, you know."

"Then we'll drive 'em to the clover, and there we shall likely get 'em to rights. Now, gents, on we go's; and, Bill, run on ahead to that ere gap, and signal your mate to get on to the other corner."

We then made a circumbendibus, and got below them so as to drive them in the desired direction. As we didn't want the dogs, we called them in to heel. The beauties had each fallen just where he stood, and, with heads up, regarded our proceedings critically; and never moved till the guns were loaded and shouldered. We got round the birds, which did not get up all at once, but went away in two lots, out of which we got three, for I was not quite into my batting yet. They went straight for the clover; and, as we went on to the clover, we went through the briery

bit, and flushed that lot, too. I got a brace of them, and Tom missed, being rather out of it. They also went for the clover.

“Hurra! now we have 'em. Where are they, Bill?”

“Where? why all over it. There's three down there, and two here—and then—”

“Ah! that'll do. Now, my beauties, show 'em sport.” And they did; I never saw dogs work more beautifully. Point for point they took in that clover, backing to perfection, and dropping to shot as if they'd been shot themselves. It was perfectly lovely. Sometimes they both got points at the same time; but they never made a fault. We got seven brace of them in ones and twos. We also dug up two landrails; and I bowled over a hare at long range, which Tom tailored badly, breaking her hind leg, and right in front of Don. The old dog gave a start; but, recollecting himself, stiffened down again instantly. It was very grand—that power of recollection and training over the natural impulse; and I made much of him, and let him have a sniff at it, which he did with great satisfaction, till Sam said gravely, “War' hare, Don!” when Don looked as if he'd been taken down at class for spelling hare with an “i,” and he came behind me and looked up at me as if to ask me to help him up again.

We finished off at a gap into a bye-road, leaving seven birds for stock; and to us came a lad with a half-gallon of sparkling ale, which, as the morning grew warm, was particularly grateful, and we sat and smoked a small Lopez each. That was the brand in those days, and a very good brand it was. It was the first cigar that I remember with a label round it.

“What next, Sam?”

“Well, sir, I was a-thinkin' that if we could get 'old of that 'ere big covey down in Stumpshire's mustard they'd give us some work. They be a sight! Thirty birds, and fine 'uns too!”

“What! in one covey, Sam? How is that?” I asked.

“Well, sir, there was a eighteen and a fourteen in that mustard, and a dratted cat o' Stumpshire's carried off the old cock one night, and the old hen the next, out of the fourteen. I see'd him, and I gi'im jack up the orchard, too; and the poor little cheepers run about callin' till they got in with the eighteen, and the old uns took to 'em, and wery proud they seems to

be of such a fine family; but, for all that, I thinks we must spile 'em a bit, and the sooner the better, or we'll never get nighest 'um at all. This way, sir." And after going down the road a short distance we turned into a large bit of mustard hard by a farm, and set the dogs to work. They beat it all over carefully, but made no sign.

"Where in natur' can 'em be?" said Sam. "Bound to be here somewheres. Stop a bit, there's a bit o' cow cabbage as big as a bandanner t'other side o' the hedge, and they've run through the drain into it." And so it proved, for as we surmounted the gate, it seemed as if all the cabbages in the field turned brown and got up in the air at once; and a prodigious cloud of birds got up while we were in difficulties, and made off without our getting a shot, but we marked them into some rape, and followed them at once.

Again it seemed as if half the field was getting up; but this time we got four barrels into them, though we only got two; and the covey out of pure cussedness skewed away to the left—the only direction they shouldn't have gone—and got just out of our beat into bad hands; and the farmer was a nasty-tempered man too. What was to be done?

"Can't you *look for a wounded bird*?"

"Won't do," said Tom; "if I only went once on his ground to look for a wounded bird, he'd come on mine every day to look for two."

"Worst on't is, if they find they can be quiet there, drat 'em, they'll allus go there. Stop a bit! I has it! 'Ere, Bill; see poor Joey the softy yonner? Jus' you get 'long side o'n, and tell'n there's a wosburd's nest under the thorn bush in Grimes's bents. He's that cur'us he's sure to go'n look vort. No one minds what he dooes, and he's sartain sure to put 'em up."

The errand was featly sped. Silly Joey walked right into the middle of them, and no one regarded him, and once more we had the satisfaction of seeing the big covey in our mustard. In spite of all our caution, however, the birds went back again to Grimes, and we only got three; so we left them and took a light lunch of bread and cheese, some cold pickled pork, half an hour's smoke under a shady hedge heavy with traveller's joy and honeysuckle, and laden with blackberries. Here, on a turfy bank we lolled at ease over another Lopez, talked over the morning, and planned the afternoon to our satisfaction.

There is no need to prolong the relation. We found as many birds as gave us work. The dogs acted superbly, rarely making a fault. We shot fairly well, and a more enjoyable day I hardly remember. One curious thing happened: Tom shot a bird which was a runner, and which took into a little three-cornered plantation where there were rabbits, and some rough grass and bushes.

"Here, Bess, old lady, hie lost there!" and the bitch went into the shrubbery and stood, but rather undecidedly.

"What's the meaning of that?" In we went and found her standing over a rabbit-hole.

"Drat the bird, he's run into this here hole, sure as peas!" said Sam, thrusting his arm into it; "I can't feel of un. Yes, I can; I touched un then and he moved! There he is again; I got un. Whoy, what ails the bird? a won't coom; durn his picter! Wot's this 'ere? There's summit a-hangin to un;" and out he lugged the bird with a large ferret hanging on like grim death. "Why, bust my old breeches if it ben't that scamp Joe Hickson's creetur; I thought I seed un slink away from here this morning. The fer't wur laid up, that's sartin; and he couldn't chance to wait for'n, but thought to pick 'n up this evening. Well, well, well! To be sure! I han't had a better find nor this for a year or more. Joe's mortal fond o' this ere fer't, and if I don't clear the place o' he along of it, never trust me;" and Sam did. By returning the ferret to Hickson he not only cleared their ground of him, but made a friend of him, and one who proved useful more than once.

Having the ferret, we worked him a bit, and shot half a dozen bunnies for our own amusement, then struck down to the "Dribble," a pretty trout stream, where I saw some famous trout feeding, and where a certain young lady landed several for me two days after, and we boiled a kettle and cooked the fish, and saw an old ruined tower half hidden in trees and ivy, specially constructed for the convenience of young ladies and gentlemen who wanted to say something tremendously private to each other, and not to be heard by outsiders. Dear me! Dear me! I was then eight or nine stone in my boots, I am now thirteen in my bathing towel; and she is married to a stockbroker who is prosperous.

Ay! Ay! How time flies! and what an original remark! We went home and tumbled out twenty-four and a half brace of birds, six rabbits, three landrails, a quail which I shot out of a bevy of eleven found on some standing barley, and five hares. They were pleased to say that it was the best first of September that had been scored for many years.

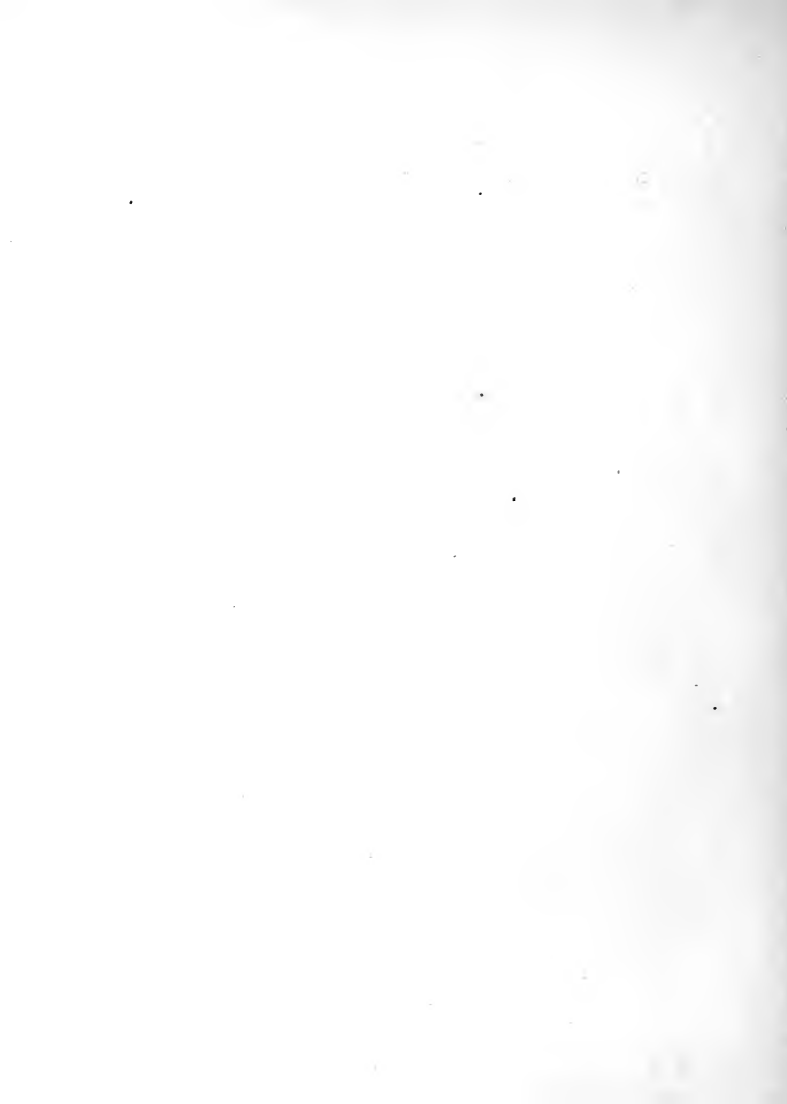
We had a glorious dinner. The old folks were gorgeous; the old gentleman was what they'd call "awfully jolly," I suppose, nowadays; and told us little tales when the ladies went, and laughed till he was purple; and as there was not much point in them we too laughed consumedly. After dinner we had a committee of the whole house in the billiard room, where we played a pool, and somebody and I divided it amidst a slight titter from one or two lady friends who were visiting. They weren't good looking nor very agreeable, so of course—ah! that's how it was. Then we had some four-part songs which the old gentleman sadly discomposed by a melodious moan from the pit of his stomach when any particular chord struck him from time to time; and, lastly, I was besought by Somebody, egged on by Tom, to oblige them with a nigger song, and I sang them "Get away, black man,"—then quite a novelty,—which suited them amazingly, and then one or two more; and as that sort of thing was new then, I was looked on as a sort of Mackney or nigger Phoenix, &c., &c., and so ended that first of September.

I never had so pleasant a one since, and though by walking without dogs we do perhaps make bigger bags now, beyond the mere pleasure and skill in shooting, what does it amount to? Three, four, or even six abreast, with perhaps a beater to each gun, you swoop down on a twenty-acre turnip field. "Bang! bang!" on the right of the line; "bang! bang!" on the left of the line; "bang! bang!" in the middle. It is almost like an engagement in the Russo-Turkish war. On you swoop without stopping, three miles and a bittock an hour. The keepers look after, pick up, and retrieve the dead and wounded. You go on as if you were doing it for a wager, and you hardly know how many you score, or whether your birds are gathered or lost. If birds lie very close, as they sometimes do, you walk over them; sometimes they get up behind you, sometimes they don't; sometimes a covey of Frenchmen worry the soul out of you just for distraction; or you stick

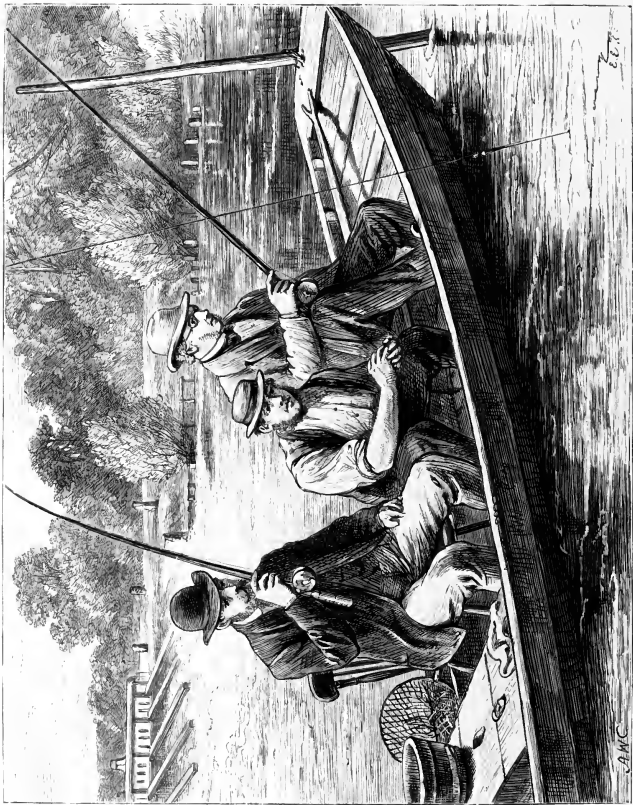
under a wall or hedge with a north-easter whistling into your left ear, and as the Russians—I beg pardon, partridges—come on at a splitting pace up to the entrenchments, a rolling fire along the whole line salutes them; or you fly the gentle kite—and it *does* tame the birds, I admit, with a vengeance. I have often almost trodden on them; and at times you may nearly pick them up in your hands; and though these methods may be necessitated by the overstock of birds and their exceeding wildness, and though oftentimes the bag made is five times as large as we used to make, yet still I cannot help saying that I think the old style was infinitely preferable; and if it did not make quite as good shots, it made better sportsmen.

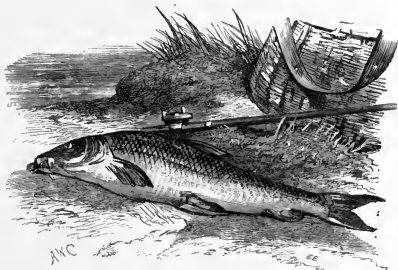


A BONÂ-FIDE TRAVELLER.



**THOMAS COLLINGWOOD CHOWN,
GLENMORE, SILVERHILL,
ST. LEONARDS-ON-SEA.**





A DAY IN A PUNT.



WHEN I first went to town I lived in a venerable time-honoured portion of the village known as Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, next door but one or two to the "Don Saltero;" in the parlour of which renowned hostelry I have many times moistened my clay and tried to look like a Grand Seigneur, behind a churchwarden pipe a yard long. There was an old-fashioned courtesy about the visitors to that parlour. They always addressed each other as "Sir," and the chairman of the evening was a despotic sovereign whose will was law—while discussion never became heated beyond high dignity point—"I don't agree with you, sir," being perhaps the strongest form of dissent admissible. And any one who should have retorted, "Very likely not, sir," would have been looked on as bumptious, and guilty of a breach of good manners. The whole place was quaint enough, with its stiff red brick houses, built of a brick work such as one never sees now, and which was done before unions and strikes and such rubbish, when workmen took a pride in their work, and sought to rise by diligence, soberness, and attention; not to sink down into a slough of indifference and the worship of a beer barrel. The row of stiff

plane trees and trim-proportioned gardens, the formal iron gates and its general air of solid, grave respectability, looked as if it had all been contrived to last, and no doubt it must have been a pleasant retreat when the Thames was "the silvery Thamesis," and you could stand upon the river wall and catch you a score or two of fine roach and dace; but that time had departed then, and Putney Bridge was the nearest fishwalk extant, and even that was fading. A dirty turbid stream flowed by, lashed into a muddy froth by scores of fourpenny boats, for the pennies and Citizens were not yet.

Still, fish could not exist off Cheyne Walk, or the place would have been Paradise for me; and the nearest point where I could indulge my favourite sport was the mouth of the Wandle at Wandsworth, some three miles or so away, and thither I sped evening after evening. But I soon got infected with a love of the Thames, and used to make my way up to Richmond, Hampton Court, and elsewhere on every available holiday. Shall I ever forget that first ride upon the top of an omnibus, after six months of London bricks and mortar, relieved only by a weary drawing board in Cannon-row—where I studied engines and piers and bridges, *et hoc genus omne*, under the present worthy engineer to the Brighton Aquarium, whose works are so well known at most of our fashionable watering places.

But that ride I never shall forget. It was early summer and the buds were just bursting into leaf, the birds beginning to sing, and this to a country-bred lad, after six months of town smoke, was perfect paradise. How I listened to the birds, drank in with delighted eyes the opening foliage. What a glory was Bushey Park with its unequalled avenue of towering chestnuts and its herds of dappled deer; its velvety turf, and sparkling waters. My driver, too, was chatty, and discoursed learnedly on roaching, and how he caught so many roach "with a huming 'air" "which it were a lady's as gev it him," &c., &c. Then he remarked on the peculiarities of town and country. "Birds now—that's a rum thing!" pointing to some cages near Kew. "In town where there aint none, leastways on'y sparrers, which ain't 'ardly to be reckoned so, nobody keers about 'em, and nobody keeps 'em. In the country, where they can see and 'ear 'em in every tree, they 'angs 'em up everywhere by dozens."

What a day's fishing, too, I had at Moleseye. The first dace was a

beauteous creature, the first barbel a tremendous achievement. How one did enjoy things then. Ah!

That's nearly thirty years ago,
Indeed it may be longer;
But still I am, and who is not,
The man that has been you-ou-ounger.

Now that's a song that you boys of the present age never heard. No matter, *you* haven't got all the good things; don't think it.

I stood whistling at the door of my abiding place early in the month of August. The moon was sailing high over the trees, and tipping even the muddy ripples of the Thames with silver. That was the time I liked to look upon the river; one could then indulge in illusions, and imagine the stately barges, the brocaded dames, and the periwigged beaus of the last century.

"Charley," I called out suddenly, as an idea struck me, to my companion, with whom I had been smoking and executing many games at cribbage; "we've never settled what we'll do to-morrow—what say you to starting off and walking down to Hampton Court; knocking up old Bill Wisdom at day-break, and having a day by the weir?"

"Deuced good idea! I'm agreeable."

All right then, let's see—eleven o'clock; two hours' snooze on the sofa and then we'll start. Stop a bit. Here, Chump!"

I called to a policeman who was passing, a great friend of ours. "Take a drink and call us in two hours. Knock at the shutters, that'll do."

The friendly guardian of the night agreed to do as we wished, took his liquor, thanked us, and stalked on. In those days policemen were friendly, and we liked and trusted them, and one heard nothing of "running in," and hard swearing, and all that sort of thing. A policeman was regarded with friendly eyes, and had he called on two or three bystanders to help him in a difficulty, they would neither have fallen on him and kicked him senseless, nor would they have skedaddled, as they do now. One policeman then could do the work of six now; and I am bound to say that the police have only themselves to thank for the change and the obnoxious position they much too often occupy.

Two hours' snooze on the couch brought the knock at the shutters, and in ten minutes after we had shaken ourselves together, filled and lighted our pipes, and were stalking away for Battersea Bridge.

A lonely spot at that time, too, was that venerable shaky old structure, which drowned more men than all the other bridges on the Thames put together. Never a Saturday, Sunday, or holiday, but some poor creature came to grief under those wretched cross set piles of the middle arches; and once overboard there, with such a stream, your chance was small. I myself, though a pretty good sculler, nearly came to grief under it once or twice. Lonely and weird enough it looked now in the shadowy shifting light as the clouds crossed the moon.

"Hereabouts, I suppose it was that poor beggar was murdered and chucked over," I said, as we stopped and peered over into the rapidly eddying stream.

"Like enough," said my companion. "That's one of the mysteries of the Thames, and there have been many a thousand of them that have never been unravelled, and never will be."

The incident referred to had happened some months before. A young fellow, apparently flush of cash, had been about the neighbourhood dissipating, drinking, and skylarking at various places of resort, with a roughish, ill-looking companion. One evening they left the Old Swan together to go to Battersea, and neither of them were ever seen by us in life again. Some days after the body of the young man turned up down the river. On his temple was a big bruise, the knuckles of his hands had been smashed with some heavy weapon, and his pockets were empty. It was known that he had a considerable sum about him in notes and gold, besides a gold watch and other valuables. No doubt he had been felled senseless on the middle of the bridge by his companion and then rifled, and when his murderer sought to heave him over the rail into the river he had recovered consciousness and clasped the rails and hung on, when his hands were battered to make him let go. That was the theory advanced, and no doubt it was correct enough. Cries were heard on the bridge, but no one regarded them; the night was dark and windy, and it might only be some drunken folk. So the murderer got clear off with his booty, and never was heard of after. And we may

have rubbed shoulders with him in a crowd haply without knowing it. Pleasant idea, that!

Soon we left the river and were striding up Wandsworth-street, now quiet enough. Anon we turned off up the hill towards Wimbledon Common; and how delicious the Common was, bathed in the broad moonlight! With many a joke and quip we wended on stoutly in the highest spirits. Now we raised our voices in a chanson, and woke the echoes of the neighbouring plantation; and thus with laugh and jest we trundled on, leaving a late nightingale whom we had awakened from his first snooze "du du du-ing" away in the shrubbery. Kingston Hill rose before us, and we faced it manfully; then down into the fine old town, with only one sleepy policeman in the market-place, who blinked at us as we went past the grand, simple old stone on which many a monarch was crowned; and now we strike the river again, and set our faces for Ditton. Another mile or two, and the night begins to wane; over the watersplash, and in ten minutes more we sight Moleseye. Soon a handful of gravel wakes Bill, and a gruff "Who's there?" comes from the open window.

"Get up, Bill; light the fire, put the kettle on and boil the coffee, and then we'll go up to the weir."

"Lor, sir! Be that you? Why, who'd a thought o' seeing you at this hour?"

"Hour, you old sculpin! why, it's daybreak."

"Why, so it be! 'Old hard, sir, I'll be down in a jiffey."

Ten minutes later the fire was alight and the kettle on, and in due time the steams of fragrant coffee arose, and, with a thick slice of bread and butter, we hastened to enjoy it.

"Well, you be lucky, Mr. F.! I baited the weir barbel-swim night afore last wi' eight quarts o' lobs. Didn't do much yesterday. 'Ad them Synigogues down"—it was thus William designated some notorious Jew quack doctors whom he hated—"but I specs we'll be among 'em to-day. We'll have to fish fine, though, and with float tackle;" and collecting his rods, baits, chairs, &c., he preceded us to the boat, first calling up-stairs to his wife:

"Missus, you send us up a nice piece of br'iled rump steak, wi' plenty o'

hot buttered toast and a pot o' coffee at eight o'clock. We'll be pretty sharp set by then; and get that 'ere Irish stew ready by two, and send the boy up wi' some beer and a drop o' gin soon as ever they opens at the Castle. D'ye hear?"

"All right, Bill," and, as Bill remarked, "Right it was," for Mrs. W. was a notable provider.

The day had now broken fully, and it was rapidly getting light, and by the time we had poled up to the weir and hung on to our ripeck it was quite light. We never took our ripecks out in those days. Ould Tommy Davis, the only other fisherman (he is still alive I am glad to say), and Bill chose their swims on the 1st of June, stuck in their ripecks, and never moved them after till the end of the season.

We had chosen a fine swim for general sport; roach, dace, barbel, bream, and a chub or two all in turn came to hook. We were about a punt's length from the shore, where a row of walnut trees stood over the water, and below us, some fifty yards or so down, commenced a huge deep eddy of the most superior kind. In those days it was one of the finest on the Thames. It was about seventy yards long, and in many places between twenty and thirty feet deep. An old camp sheathing had fallen away from the bank, and tumbled into the hole, and the old but of a pollard willow along with it; and a few other trifles of that sort, made the hole a paradise for big fish, and tons of big barbel, bream, and chub lay snugly there all the winter long. No matter how the water poured and tore along outside, in their deep secure eddy they were snug enough, and could rest there for ever. As for a net, if anyone had ever been so rash as to put one in he would certainly have left it there; it never could have come out again. When the water suited, and was just of that pleasant change between foul and clear which seems to make all manner of fish hungry, we baited the swim some fifty yards or so above this hole, where it was nice and level; and the fish, finding a steady stream of worms coming down, followed it up till they got into our swim, and stayed there so long as the feast was spread for them. We now provided ourselves each with a light punt rod and float tackle, with our ledger rod lying over on my companion's side, he being in the stern

of the punt. Half a dozen balls of groundbait of a composite description being thrown in by Bill, the fun began.

"First fish!" said I, as I landed an active dace of four or five ounces.

"Number two!" said my companion, hauling in a half-pound roach. Numbers three, four, five, and six followed in pretty quick succession. Then there was a bit of a pause.

"John Barleycorn!" (it was thus our attendant distinguished the barbel). "John Barleycorn's come up for to have a sniff round, and the small fry has shied off." Then we got a shy bite or two, and presently my friend had a heavy pull down, and, striking smartly, it seemed as if he had got hold of a stump, but we knew better.

"Easy with him," says Bill; "that's a barbel, and a good 'un."

There was a pause for a second or so, when my friend first struck—he sat with his rod bent in a very fine arch; and then the fish began moving slowly away, as if a hook in the gristle of his nose was no great matter of consideration, but, still, it might be as well to see to the consideration if it would come off twenty or thirty yards away; and so, with an improving pace, he marched out into the stream and considered, and, finding that it was in its usual condition, he came back again in front of the punt. Then he made a little smarter play, and evidently began to think that he didn't like this sort of thing; it was taking a liberty which he did not approve of—a rude practical joke—much too practical! Then another rush, this time down stream, to the edge of the hole, but fortunately not further. Then he came up and took a survey of the punt poles, and a rare job it was to keep him off them. Presently we got the float out, then arrived at half line, and finally we saw a good fish of 4lb. or 5lb. wallop over on the surface, and two minutes after Wisdom, who was the best netsman I ever saw on the Thames or anywhere else, slipped the net under him and got him out—4½lb., and a nice fed fish. We wetted him, and put in another ball or two, and then I got a tug, and my rod made a lively curve, but it soon became evident that I was in something extra large, 10lb. or 12lb. at least, for, after one or two bold rushes of thirty or forty yards right out into the stream, he scorned to come near the boat, but, turning round, made a determined dash for the hole.

"If he gets in there he'll beat ye, sure as a gun; it's full of all manner o' rubbish!"

"He's going, Bill—going!" as the fish shot into the very depths of the hole, taking line like a salmon. "Going, Bill!—going—gone!"

I felt him go right in amongst some mess or other, the line gave a scrape, and was cut in a jiffey, and up came the line without any hook. Four times that very same morning were we cut in just the same way, and they were all undeniably heavy fish, for we killed four or five of 5lb. and over without a great deal of difficulty. Once or twice we had on the one a barbel and the other a bream at the same time, and it was capital fun keeping them apart while playing.

"Ah, here comes little Billee with the breakfast! I was a thinkin' it was very nigh time," said William.

They've fine instincts for victualling time, have your Thames fishermen. The boat dropped behind, a big basket was handed on board. Hot coffee, a frizzling rump steak, and a pile of buttered toast—"all hot, all hot," and covered in closely with a flannel cloth. I rather fancy we enjoyed that repast. The rods were laid aside while we recruited nature, having dropped the punt to the bank under the walnut trees; and then how beautifully the rings of tobacco smoke went curling up amongst the foliage.

That camp-shot just below there was rather a good pitch for a perch. The last time I had fished there I remembered seeing a black servant come down to this very spot. He had his rod and line all ready, and he had a little wee minnow kettle with him which would have carried from three to half a dozen. He slipped a minnow on to his hook, dropped it in. "Bob;" there was a hauling match on immediately, which resulted in the flopping of a splendid 2lb. perch on the grass. On went another minnow, and in went the tackle again. "Bob;" another pullyhawley, and out came another two-pounder—brothers they were, clearly. Then Sambo put his rod over his shoulder, pouched his fish, and stalked off home; he hadn't been at the river side more than quarter of an hour, if so long. It was just as if he had ordered the fish to be there to meet him. It was the crispest, neatest little performance I ever saw.

While we were at breakfast here, a few yards above the spot, I had

stuck a red worm on my hook and let the float meander on the chance of there being another perch promiscuously contiguous. Having finished our repast and lighted our pipes, and resolved into a lazy chat for half an hour or so, I began peering about for my float, which I hadn't seen lately. "Where in Nature is the float?" and as I couldn't see it I took up the rod and lifted it, and I found my float two feet under water and my line hold of something and in a weed. Some patience and pulling disclosed a 1½lb. chub; and as the day was getting warmish, we thought we would give the swim a rest and push up to the tumbling bay hill, where there was always a crowd of chub scouring at this time. Bill rummaged his stores and produced an artificial cockchafer. This we stuck upon a single bamboo rod, fixed three or four gentles on the hook, and I was put in the bow to whirl it about and knock chubs on the head with it.

At the first cast there was a general rush at it, and the biggest, of course, got it. He came out 2½lb. The next cast there was no rush, but a good fish took, so I hauled him out. One more came to hook, and then their curiosity was satisfied, and I could not coax up another, and we went back to the swim; but the fish were off, and we did little, so we tried under the weir with a live bait for a jack, and I managed to get two runs, and once I got a fish of 12lb. or 14lb. up to the surface, but somehow he got off, to my intense disgust.

Then the Irish stew came up. It was perfect, though some might have thought it over well fixed up with onions. But taste on the Thames runs rather to that fragrant vegetable. Then we had a glass or two of grog and some very large meerschaums, and the fishing was not closely pursued. The day grew warm, and a gentle langour prevailed, and what with the "hum-hum-burr" of the weir, and the night walk, &c., one got a little drowsy, and got to wondering what the weir was saying. It was singing a murmuring song, now loud and wild, like some sort of barbaric music, and then sinking lowly into a soft slumberous melody, with scraps of things, but nothing we could catch. What was it? Now it grows louder and more distinct. It is the hum of many voices. It is night, too; and under the stars I see a multitude of half-naked men, with wild, tangled locks, and stalwart limbs, labouring indefatigably; and what a hammering and

thudding, to be sure, as they stand shoulder deep in the water, ramming huge stakes into the river, which stand in serried rows like a great *cheveux de frise!* And now the morning breaks, and I see a phalanx of armed men upon the other side; men on horse and on foot. A cloud of arrows and stones darkens the air; the horsemen dash into the stream, and the footmen follow. A short fierce struggle takes place in the mid-stream. Javelin, mace, and short sword ply a brief and bloody slaughter, and swaying heads and shoulders meet, and oft go down and float away, and are lost together. The wild half-armed defenders break and fly, and the trained legions of Rome force the barriers, push up the opposite bank, and Cassivelaunus himself, in his scythe-wheeled chariot, with his circlet of gold all awry, grinding his teeth in baffled fury, and shaking his clenched hand at his pursuers, dashes right into the open door of the "Ship," and shouts to Miss Stone, in a hoarse voice,

"A thimbleful of gin just to settle them ingons."*

Was that Bill Wisdom calling to little Billee? and wasn't I asleep at all? No, I wasn't asleep, for there was my rod, and there was the lock and the weir, and there was the bottom of a pint pot. I didn't see who was in front of it, but I expect it was Bill—he was generally there. And then—That's pretty!—where have I heard that? It is a party singing an old, old madrigal:

"Down in a flowery vale, all on a summer morning,
Phillis I spied, fair Nature's self adorning."

Dear me! why that was the first thing I ever heard at Evans's, when I went there bent on my first London dissipation, and I fell in love with it; and how sweetly and softly they sing it. It is like a spirit song, and the weir seems to join in it as naturally as possible. Here they come—two barges full, and quite a pic-nic; and what old-fashioned barges! Some of the old City barges, I suppose; and how odd! What strange dresses, too! and that sweet sparkling woman, and the man with the pale, grave, melancholy face, and dark pointed beard, with a broad lace collar and

* Should this require explanation, it was just below Halliford, at Coway Stakes, where Cassivelaunus was said to have opposed the passage of the Romans; and the "Ship," kept by Mr. Stone, at Halliford, is one of the best inns on the Thames.

tall hat, tied up with a splendid jewel, and those pretty little children. I've seen them here before, surely.

"But if thy purse is empty
Come not to me a wooing,"

they sing as they pass through the lock almost like a vision. Who can they be? I know that man's face, so well—so very well. Who is he? * Ah! I see—yes, I see a crowd of upturned horror-stricken faces. A black platform before an open window in a wide thoroughfare, crammed with weeping people; a masked figure leaning on an axe. Not a word—not a sound—a praying form, and a hand uplifted. "Juxon, remember!" and then—then I wake with a violent start, for I can't stand any more of it; and I find that I have wandered in dreams "far and wide," and had a waking nightmare to conclude with.

Then Bill awakes, and Charley recovers himself. The noon is passed, the afternoon comes on, and to it we fall again. For half an hour the fish bite well, right well, and then they go off suddenly.

"What is the reason of this, Bill?"

"That 'ere blamed trout hev' come in the swim, I'll lay a quartern, master. Gi' me the ledger;" and, taking off the worm, he slipped on a neat little dace. As he did so there was a bustling rise and a dash from a big fish not ten yards below the swim.

"Tould yer so! There he be! Eight pound if a hounce! If ye gets hold o' him he'll gin ye sport;" and, pitching the dace two-thirds down the swim, Bill handed the rod to Charley. "Now, if you feels him touch the bait, sir, giv'm half a moment just to get the bait in his mouth, and don't strike directly." But Charley was too unused to big fish, and too nervous; for the next moment, just as Bill had dropped in a big lump of clay and bran to coax the little ones, there was a smart drag at the rod, and instead of giving to him Charley hit him hard directly. There was a rush and a dash out of water, a glimpse of 8lb. of silver, gold, and crimson, and the fish was away, *liber et exultans*.

* The picture of Charles the First with his Queen and children in a barge at Hampton Court is well known.

"Lord, lord, lord!" cried poor old Bill. "There, to be sure, if I'd only kep' the rod in my own 'and, that 'ere trout 'd a gone right up to London—right up to London! Wot a pity! Wot a pity!"

I said nothing, but thought a heap, and wished that I had had the rod. One good job was that the trout didn't trouble us again, and we soon got the fish on again, and we made a capital evening's fishing of it, catching plenty of barbel and bream, and one big chub of over 5lb., so that when we got ashore we had over a hundredweight of fish—roach, dace, barbel, chub, and bream; and if we'd only had that trout. If we—well, well!

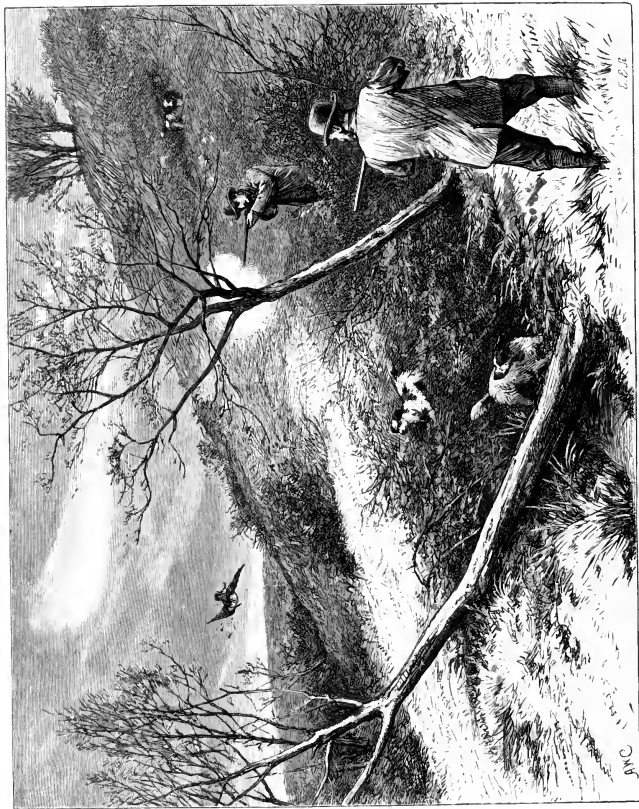
But the last 'bus waits, and won't wait any longer; and our old friend Clarke is on the box; and we've got to tell him all about the day's sport as we drive through Bushey Park chestnuts through the moonlight, and have to hear once more how superior the "humming 'air" is for roach fishing when you can get it "gev you by a lady," &c. Ah! it was a lovely drive, fit pendant to a real good old-fashioned Thames day such as I had many of in those days, though they are rare enough now; and when tired out at last, I rolled into bed with only one roseleaf crumpled. If we'd only caught that trout—

"Down in a flowery vale, all on a summer maw—aw—aw—w."



"MAN WANTS BUT LITTLE HERE BELOW."

THOMAS COLLINWOOD CHOWN,
GLENMORE, SILVERHILL,
ST. LEONARDS-ON-SEA.





MARK COCK!



AR-R-K COCK! I don't know when I first heard that cry, for I shot many a cock before ever I did hear it down in dear old Cornwall. Barren and brown thy moors, dotted with grey moorstone boulders which saw the Deluge if there ever was a Deluge in this country—about which I have my doubts—which look as if Titans had been playing at marbles, and had to leave their game in a hurry; with

here and there vast heaps of dirt as big as the Pyramids, and the huge arm of an ugly pumping engine working up and down with dreary monotony. Still, old friend, thou hast valleys and corners and crannies of unexampled beauty, with crystal streams (that is where the mines and the china clay don't get at them) tumbling from rock to rock in pretty pools amid feathery, heathery, ferny foliage—(delicious alliteration)—not to be beaten in Britain. When the mines or the china clay do contaminate them, however, nothing so weird and hideous is to be seen in nature.

I never shall forget the first time I saw a Cornish ravine with a stream

polluted with china clay running through it. It was so unnatural, so unaccountable, so ghastly, that it almost made me sick to look at it. There was the green foliage, the grey rocks, the heather and fern intermixed, to which the sparkling water would have made such a finish; and, instead of that, there was a milk-white loathsome channel running through the valley. You cannot realise the effect of this unless you see it; and (always supposing the china clay works do not belong to you) the indignation which fills one's bosom at this outrage on nature is exceedingly strong. These feathery streams and pretty valleys, in my young days, were rare places for woodcock, while the moorland abounded in snipe.

I remember my first woodcock, it was a triumph of stratagem and design which I have laughed over many a time since. I had a schoolfellow and companion, "Marshy B.," with whom I used to shoot. Near his place there was a little swampy three-cornered plantation in which I had discovered a cock. The whole place wasn't a quarter of an acre, but it was uncommonly thick, and three or four times I flushed that cock in that tangle; but it was so confoundedly thick that I never could get a clean shot at him. I always went in the same way, and the cock always went out the same way. One day I was shooting with Marshy. We had had a pretty good turn with the snipes, having got five or six couple in the Mainporth Marsh, and we came in sight of this thicket.

"By the way, Marshy," I said, in the most unconcerned, innocent way, "I was told that there's a cock in that plantation."

"Where? What, down in our 'Three-corner?' No, you don't say so! It's just the place for one! Hang it, we'll look him up." So we walked straight to the thicket.

Now Marshy was rather a jealous sportsman, and a wee bit selfish, and I had experienced this before, so I had no scruple in "landing him" as I did.

"Whereabout does he lie?"

"Right in the middle, I'm told. Do you go in and get the shot; I'll wait around in case you miss him;" and, seeing Marshy well into it, I cut round to a lane that ran the other side, and across which the cock usually fled from my attentions. Snugly I crouched myself behind a thorn bush so as to command the road both ways, with my gun half up and ready for the fray.

I heard Marshy bustling through the thick, and the next moment I heard the well-known "flop, flutter" of the cock, then "bang, bang," and great scattering of twigs, and the next moment the cock came skimming above the trees across the lane; and nearly over my head. "Bang," and down he came in the ditch most delightfully. Look at that lovely vignette of Mr Cooper's, and you will see exactly how he collapsed in mid flight. I was just picking him up as Marshy pushed through, much scratched and dishevelled. He took in the scene at a glance. I looked a little sheepish, I suppose, though I brazened it out, too.

"Made a pointer of, by George!" he growled, in intense disgust. I looked very innocent, and suggested that it was "very lucky I *happened to be* in the lane, or we should have lost him," but it wouldn't do.

"Made a pointer of! well, I'm blowed. The next time you want a little dog to flush cocks for you"—

"I'll do it myself, old man," I said, "and you shall stand in the lane. Turn about's fair play. I've flushed this chap four or five times and couldn't get him, so it's only fair you had a try."

"Ah, well! By George, he's a fine bird, tho'!—plump as a partridge and in grand plumage. I wish there was a dozen or two about."

"So do I; but I know where there's another, but it's a mile from here, and if you are game to walk across to the upper moor above Mainporth, you shall have the shot."

My exploit had made him keen, and we did walk across, and found the cock in a little ditch on one side of the moor. He had the shot and killed it; so the *entente cordiale* was restored, and after that we went to a "kittle-a-wink," which was the name of a roadside public in those parts and those days, and had bread and cheese and warm beer with a dash of gin and ginger in it, and as was our wont, played five games of *ecarté* with the most dilapidated pack of cards ever seen, for the reckoning; and, being imbued with the spirit of gambling, we played five more for the cocks and he won them, and I helped to eat them two nights after. How I remember every incident, the kittle-a-wink, dirty cards and all, though it is nearly forty years ago, and "seas between us braid hae roared" sin syne.

I remember gammoning a Frenchman and a stranger out of a shot at a cock not very long after at Standstead. There was a big rabbiting shoot on, and cocks were the only "feathers" allowable. Frenchy had marked a cock into a strip of covert, and, with a friend, was pointing out the locality.

"There's a ditch on either side," said I, "and the cock is sure to take to one or the other. You take one ditch and your friend the other, and you'll be sure to see him. I'll walk down the middle part, just for form's sake."

We did so, and to *our* great surprise *he got up in the middle*, and I shot him handsomely, which I am quite sure neither Frenchy nor his friend would, as they were a brace of duffers of the worst sort. Like Leech's other illustrious foreigner, I expect he would have liked to "wait till he stop," before he let loose his lead at a woodcock.

Some years ago—a goodish many—I met The O'Callaghan at the Cider Cellars, in Mrs. Rhodes' time, when Douglas Jerrold, Albert Smith, Leech, Alexander Lee, Morgan, John O'Connell, Chisholm Anstey, Sidney Cooper, the Kennys, and now and then the great "Book of Snobs" himself, and fifty other well-known writers, critics, artists, and wits, did congregate there. Ah, what days those were! What pages I could fill with the reminiscences of that time. There Douglas Jerrold said some of his smartest things, and at the risk of being thought a babbler, I must recall just one. There was present one evening an amateur critic, a gentleman who talked consumedly, and, as is the wont of that sort of animal, fixed himself on to the biggest professional one present, and Jerrold came in for the lion's share of his attention.

"My opinion about a five-act comedy, Mr. Jerrold, is that it's a mistake—a mistake. No comedy should ever be in more than three acts. My opinion about a farce, Mr. Jerrold, is so and so." At length he came to opera. "My opinion of an opera now, Mr. Jerrold,"—and Jerrold looked vicious, for this was of all things the thing he liked least, perhaps,—“My opinion of an opera is that grand choruses are a mistake. I never heard but one grand chorus in my life, that, as I may say, carried me completely away.” “I wish to God somebody would sing it now,” said Jerrold, in his surliest tones. There were shrieks of laughter, in which, after a minute or two, the victim joined. He had that grace.

But you will ask what this has to do with long bills? Well, perhaps Mrs. R.'s were not very short ones, as I remember; but wait a bit. Ross had created his most sublime effects in "Sam Hall," one night, and every one's blood been made to run so cold that many glasses of stimulating liquid had been found requisite. There were several Irish M.P.'s present—quite a division of them—and amongst them The O'Callaghan. I cottoned to The O'C., and asked him, with two or three more, to come down and dine with me at my little place on the Thames, where I had symposiums in those days. They did so. The day was great, but the night was tremendous, enormous, as Planche's neat parody, "The days that we got tipsy in," had it,

And no man rose to go till he was sure he couldn't stand.

But ere it came to that the wit, the fun, the chaff, the stories, the songs, the *omnium gatherum*, was something one never sees nowadays. It's gone—it's gone! I've seen a goodish evening or two at the old Albion, with poor Andrew Halliday, John Oxenford, C. Kenny, Potts Willips,* and a few more, that were not to be sneezed at; but even that is all gone now. We had been prattling sporting, and The O'C. made some talk of his woodcock shooting in Mayo.

"It's the foinest spoort, me bhoy; ye never seen the like of 't. D'ye mind comin' so fur now for a few days next sayson? If ye'll come, faith ye shall have the run of the barony."

The O'C. was well on, and I said yes, of course I'd come—thinking that he'd never remember a word of it in the morning. I never was more deceived. He said no more about it then, but next November I got a note from him, saying that he was going across, and as soon as the cocks were in he'd drop me a line, and I was to start on the instant.

Now, I don't mind owning that I was a seasoned vessel in those days, and never met the man who could put me under the table. Still, a week with The O'C. was not altogether a trifle when he was bent upon hospitality.

* The familiar name by which my old acquaintance Watts Phillips was known among his friends. Watts illustrated for me the first book I ever brought out. That amazing production called "Pickackifax." He was the best "all round" man I ever met; and as artist, caricaturist, author, dramatist, *raconteur*, and conversationalist, he was hard to beat.

The worst of him was that he never would go to bed; and when at last you did get to your room he'd saunter in for just a last glass and another story. I am proud to say, however, that here again I was mistaken; never did I spend a pleasanter week. The hospitality was, of course, unbounded; the evenings glorious; but not the least pressure was put on anyone. One thing is that I fear it was little needed.

Holyhead and the steamer were over, the railway across the island past. A long turn on Bianconi left me at Knockwhackmachree, where The O'C.'s "kyar" was awaiting me. Twelve miles round a mountain and across a moor, and there we were within half a mile of Clew Bay—in the snugget bachelor quarters it has ever been my lot to roll into. The O'C. was not quite impecunious, though he was gravitating in that direction, for which he did not care one fig. "When all his money was gone, faith! he'd then see about gettin' some more; and he'd get it, divil a doubt! The luck was always with the O'Callaghans, and what matthered bothering?"

For a pleasant retirement it would not be easy to beat Croaghmore Castle. Don't be alarmed at the word castle. They are fond of big words in Ireland. Every chief hotel, even in the smallest town, is the Imperial, and every gentleman's house pretty well is a castle. An Englishman's house is *his* castle, says somebody; and why shouldn't an Irishman's be? It lay in the embouchure of a wooded ravine, on a little plateau of half a dozen acres, and which opened towards the Atlantic. A salmon river ran within a couple of miles, and a lake, which held both trout and salmon, could be seen inland from the upper windows, though it was only two stories high. Three miles away was a range of hills where there was very fair grouching, and between, where the river meandered, was a snipe bog, or rather a series of them, which were not easy to beat; while on the seaside there was the bay with its islands innumerable, and all sorts of fish for the gathering. The ravine was the best cock ground in Mayo. It was about three miles long, well timbered with scrub oak, and an undergrowth of heather and bracken up to your waist—lots of rocks and unseen bog holes, very steep in places, and about as nasty walking as the soul of a bogtrotter could desire—wonderfully picturesque, with a little stream in the bottom that went brawling and clattering onwards to the sea—a long way from an easy place to shoot cock

in. You had to be mighty quick, and to keep your eyes skinned, as there was very little to hear. A cock often got up like an owl, without noise or flurry, and all you were apt to see of him was something brown whipping round a rock or over a brae.

There were four of us; The O'C. and myself; M'Grullegan, Q.C.—(one of the handsomest men I ever saw; a very smart fellow, a tremendous pet of the ladies, and one of the best *racconteurs* I ever met! tale after tale, and story after story, he would roll out with a lovely brogue, all new, all inimitable; where he got them nobody knew; half his time, I believe, he invented them out of very trivial foundations; he was what the O'C. called "the hoighth of good company"),—Captain P. of the —th Hussars (a very good fellow, who had seen a deal of service in India and elsewhere; his regiment was at the Curragh, and he had got away for a week). We were a capital party, and before the first dinner was half over every man had taken the measure of his neighbour to his perfect satisfaction, and burnt the tape, so to speak.

On that dinner and evening I won't dwell. In the course of the evening Mike, the keeper, looked in: he usually contrived to *look in* when his master was at home, to tell him the news of the bog, marsh, or moor for to-morrow; besides which he generally *dropped in* in a genteel way when his master was not at home, just to tell the news of the barony to Misthress Mulroony, the cook, towards whom he was supposed to have "intintions;" and in those days, in that part of Ireland, potheen was cheap enough and plentiful enough, and just took the place that ale takes in England; and there was always a keg on the broach with a welcome to all, at the hands of Misthress Mulroony, with due consideration for "Misther Michael O'Leary," as she addressed him before company, though "Mick, ye divil, be aisy, now!" was more the style of address she favoured him with in private.

"What sort of a day are we to have, Mike?" I asked, as I was filling my first pipe at the door.

"Ah! then, it'll not be such a bad day; Ould Neephin got his nightcap off 'arly this morning, and there'll be more sunshine than cloud."

"Mike, ye blagard, why isn't the car ready? Run and wake up that

everlastin' thief Terry, and tell him if the car's not ready in ten minutes from this the divil a taste of whiskey he'll get this day. And see, now, hurry up the cart for the dogs; and do you and Andy get away with them at once, or we'll be there before you. Hurry now, hurry!" And off went Mike, hot foot, and in three minutes more he and Andy were away with half a dozen spaniels, and ten minutes after the cart drove up. The guns and a hamper of prog were hoisted aboard, and up we got, two a side, Terry driving.

As we drove along we passed an old ruined church and graveyard half overgrown with thistles, nettles, and rubbish. As Terry passed it he crossed himself, and mumbled something to be "definded from" in an under tone.

"What's wrong with the place, Terry?" I asked.

"Sure it's the onlucky spot that, sir."

"Unlucky is it; and why?"

"Och, then! meself wouldn't be widin screech av it at nightfall after what happened me father there for a big thrife."

"And what happened to him, dacent man?"

"Sure, sir, it's a dhry story." (I took the hint and moistened it.)

"Well, sir, ye see this is how it was. Me father, Shamus O'Dowd, was a small farmer over at Killara, and he'd been one day to the fair at Ballaghoole, and was ridin' home at night pretty comfortable, though by no means *overtaken*; and as the night was cowld and the way long he'd a bottle in his pocket in case of needcessity,—for a needcessity in such cases made and purvided, your hanner, 's sartin to happin sooner or later," added Terry, with a twinkle of the eye. "He'd just come to the ford of Aghadar, when he saw a young woman with a cloak drawn over her head, sittin' on a stone by the ford, as though waiting for some one to give her a cast over. Shamus was always a good-natured man, and soft to the sex, so he pulled up and discoursed her. 'If its crassin' ye are, me colleen beg,' says he, 'jump up and welcome,' and with that she rose up, took howld of his hand, put a foot on his toe, and up as light as a feather on the crupper behind, and houlding on by his waist to steady her. 'Is it all right ye are, me dear?' says he; but the never a word she replied, and they entered the strame, and splashed across to the other side, and on up the long hill to the

high ground above. And after another mile or so, 'Which way are ye wantin' to be goin', me darlin'?' says Shamus, conversationally; but the divil a word did she reply, and just then, as they came in sight of the chapel, the horse fell lame. 'Bad luck to it for a road! Sure the crathur's picked up a stone. Howld on while I get down and see it,' said Shamus. And down he got; and no sooner was he down on the wan side than she was down on the other, and away over the field toward the chapel. 'Hallo there, me colleen! is that the way ye pay yere fare?' Thorum pogue, me colleen! Give me a kiss for my trouble; and faix, if ye won't stop to give it, I'm afther ye any way to take it;' and away he went afther her; and she ran and he ran, and she got to the chapel first, and over the graves and the stones went Shamus, tumbling up and down, and round the chapel afther her three times ran Shamus. 'Sure I'll just wait and catch her as she comes round,' he thought, and just then round she came right into his very arrums. 'Now, ye'll pay toll av them swate lips, my purty crathur,' says Shamus, and he throws up her hood; and sure he was just blindfolded wid horror when he saw there was no lips to kiss, and she'd niver a head on her shoulders at all, and was just a Dullahan—a 'good woman'; and Shamus near swooned wid fright to think he'd been huggin' a Dullahan; and just then a pale blue gashly light came up out av an open grave, where there was grate worrums a foot or more long, ache wid a light like a corpse candle on its head; and then, all of a sudden, a crowd av Dullahans jumped up from behind the tombs and gravestones all round him, and began dancing and pitchin' their heads—which they carried under their arrums—from wan to the other and up in the air, and the horrible pranks they played gave Shamus the blue shivers; and they made a ring round him and danced the likes was never seen. Then 'a health!' they cried, 'a health to Shamus O'Dowd;' and Shamus, remembering his bottle, thought best to pull it out, and—not wishin' to show bad manners—handed it to the young woman who seemed the chief among them. 'A health to Shamus o' Dowd!' cried she, pouring some of the liquor into her own mouth (which she carried under her arrum just then), and handing the bottle back to Shamus, 'Drink a health, Shamus!' cries she, as she pitched her head up in the air with a wheeze and a groan like a broken bagpipe.

"'Sure, thin, I couldn't do less in manners,' says Shamus; 'and here's

luck and success to ye all!' and he takes a drink, and no sooner had he swallowed it than he became a Dullahan like the rest. It's truth I am tellin' ye—me father would swear it, too, by all the books that niver war open or shut—and he began dancin' like the rest, and aff went his head too, a-spoortin' and jumpin' like trouts at a Mayfly. Ah! sure it was Meg's divarsion; and the way he pitched his head about was a caution, and at last he hove it up till it hit with a turrible crack agen the ugly nozzle of an ould ornamental wather spout that stuck out just under the roof; and the blow was that severe that fire flashed in his eyes, there was a noise in his ears, and all became dark, and he minded nothing more. And in the mornin' there he found himself, just inside the churchyard wall among the stones, cowld and stiff, with the bottle empty by his side, and his horse croppin the grass on the other side av the wall. People did say that he'd emptied the bottle, got severely influenced, and tumbled over the wall; and me mother declared it was at the Doolans, and not the Dulahans, he got influenced; and, faix! it was whispered that it was Black Katy Doolan lost her head and more too on that occasion; but Shamus declared that was pure invintion, and showed the big knock on his head which he got from the spout, and the dreadful headache which he had the next day in proof of his advinture;" and Terry grinned as he finished his story.

Half an hour's drive brought us to our destination, and here we found Mike with a couple of boys whom he had picked up as beaters—ragged, good humoured fellows, whose clothes neither brambles nor bogs would be able to damage.

A quarter of a mile walk across a bit of moor brought us to a singular ravine about two or three hundred yards wide, well wooded with plenty of undergrowth, a wealth of brambles, with patches of heather and fern, big lumps of rock, and bits of bog. In places it was abominably steep, and about as infernal walking as one could wish for. Now and then you would come in the midst of high fern on a dangerous little precipice of forty or fifty feet high, and, but for the careful tutelage of Mike, who beat down below me, between myself and the Counsellor, I make little doubt that I should more than once either have been bogged up to my waist or have pitched down and broken my neck over one of those blind precipices. Yet

it was while having to look to one's footing in this way that one had to keep a look out for the quickest and cleverest bird that flies—and anyone who says a woodcock is an ass doesn't know him. Unless it is an old jay, there are few birds who will put a tree, bush, or stone between himself and a gunner better than a woodcock. We arranged our beat two on each side of the ravine, one near the top and one half way down, with a beater between, and one along the little stream in the bottom. The Counsellor and I took one side, the Captain and the O'C. the other. I was the upper man, and as mine was the nastiest walking, though it gave the best chance of cocks, Mike kept within hail, and gave me notice when anything unexpected was before me.

As the Captain and The O'C. were going down to climb the other side, there was a solitary "bang" in the very bottom, and something brown which had just shot out over the tops of the short trees went back again, and the captain scored first blood, and poeketed our three sovs on the first bird. Then, all being *en régle*, the spaniels were set going at a whistle, and the line advanced. Stumble over a big stone I went, as I was walking without regarding my footing—squash over one knee in a bit of bog.

"Mark, y'r honour," called Mike, and I did mark; but with one foot two feet under the other it is not easy to do anything else.

"D——n the bog."

"Niver mind it, y'r honour; he'll drop on ahead, and we'll find him again."

"Mark, bang!" from the other side of the ravine, and "bang," "bang," from the Counsellor, his second scoring as the bird flew across. Then "mark" again to me, and this time I did manage to let go, but into a rock round which the cock dodged; but the next second another rose out of some fern fair before me, and, there being nothing in the way, I floored him.

"Hurroo, that's wan to us!" cried Mike, "bring him here, my beauty," as one of the spaniels retrieved the bird in a twinkling. I never saw a better trained team than Mike's beauties. They never went thirty yards away, but they did not leave an inch of the ground unbeaten.

The sport now began to get lively. Hardly a minute passed but one or more barrels pealed out and went thundering down the ravine. Often two

or three cocks would be sprung at once, and then a perfect *feu de joie* went on. Tearing, stumbling, scratching, on I went.

"Take care, y'r honour; mind that drop in front av ye," cried Mike; and twenty yards ahead I came upon one of those little precipices feathered to the very top with bracken almost up to my shoulders. It was a sheer drop of forty or fifty feet, with fragments of rock half grown over with moss and fern at the bottom; but for Mike's warning over I should have walked.

As I looked over I saw one of the spaniels very busy at the bottom, and "Whoop" cried Mike as a couple of cocks rose into the air together, one dodging to the right down the ravine, and the other taking back to the left. The place was open before me, the birds just level with me; it was a lovely shot. I pitched the gun well forward at the dodger to the right. I couldn't see for the smoke what happened to him, so I wheeled about and sent the second dose after the levanter to the left.

"Whoop! Hurroo! That's grand intirely!"

"Did I get either of 'em, Mike? I couldn't see for the smoke," I called out."

"Get ayther av 'em! Sure ye got the pair av 'em, both; as nate a thing as ever I seen; and the Captain can't bate it. Sake him, ma bouchal, sake him; sure that owld bitch makes woodcocks, she does."

The birds were soon to hand, and on we went again. Meantime, my friends below were not idle, and a cheery call from one to the other now and again conveyed warning of a cock crossing, but, though a good many came to grief, more than as many got away—some quite unseen by the gunners, and some getting out of the charge cleverly, while others were missed handsomely, and some saluted under difficulties which ensured their escape.

Though the travelling was nasty at times, it was splendid sport. Now and then a cock would go skewing and twisting up through the trees in a way that made one almost despair of getting on to him, when a quick toss of the gun and almost a snap shot amongst the tree tops would fetch him headlong down on the moss, to one's huge self-congratulation. Now one would flop up under one's nose, like an owl, and seem to hang in the air; and, to your intense disgust, you would miss him, all because he was too

easy, while the admonished long-beak shut down the safety valve and whipped off round a bush and over a brae at the highest pressure. Now an unfortunate bunny (of which there were a goodish many in the drier spots) came scuttering along, and received a dose of No. 7's in his poll. In one place a pair of ugly great herons rose out of the stream below, and came sailing over me.

"Soul to glory! Don't miss them divils," roared Mike. One was only about twenty-five yards above, and was making superhuman efforts to quicken his way, when I bowled him over dead into the ravine. The other was further off, and I let him have it. I heard the shot hit him, and I saw some feathers fly; but he went away down the ravine, very much quickened by my attention. I was watching him, and he hadn't flown above seventy or eighty yards, when suddenly he turned sideways, rolled over, and down he went flop into some bushes.

"Glory!" shouted Mike; "the owld baste's on his back. What's happened him?" I knew what had happened, for I saw his left wing double up. I had sharply bruised a pinion bone, and in the amended efforts he made to get away, it cracked, and down he came.

"You'd better run on, Mike, or he'll murder the dogs if they get to him before you."

He did so, and just as he got up I heard one of the dogs yap. Fortunately, the dog saved his eye, but he got his cheek ripped open from the heron's sharp beak; but a rap on the head from Mike settled him, and we gathered the "cranes," as Mike called them.

"They're two ould 'uns, sure, with beautiful glossy hackles,* and will make mortel fine flies for the mather, an' I was wantin' 'em badly, and the trout, too, 'll give them lave of absence, not to mention the little grouseens with all the pleasure in life. That's grand!" and Mike fisted his prizes. "And there's Andy with the lunch, too, and the throat o' me's burnt to chips for want of a drink; and there's the mather's whistle. Hurroo!"

On a level bit, like a soup plate, Mike and his *aides* were soon busy

* The black shoulder feathers, only glossy black in old birds, and in much request for some flies.

beating down and pulling up the dry bracken which they piled up so as to make four comfortable dry seats ; and here we sat down and talked over the sport as we discussed our sandwiches, moistened with potheen and cold spring water, while Mike spread out the bag, which made a brave show—nineteen couple of cocks and fourteen or fifteen bunnies, with the two herons and an old blue crow which The O'C. managed to turn over to Mike's great satisfaction, as they be wary fellows, not often amenable to powder and shot ; but he happened to come swooping across the ravine at a moment when things were pretty quiet, and thus fell a victim to his confiding nature. Mike and his assistant worried some cold bacon, and washed it down with about half a pint each of raw spirits.

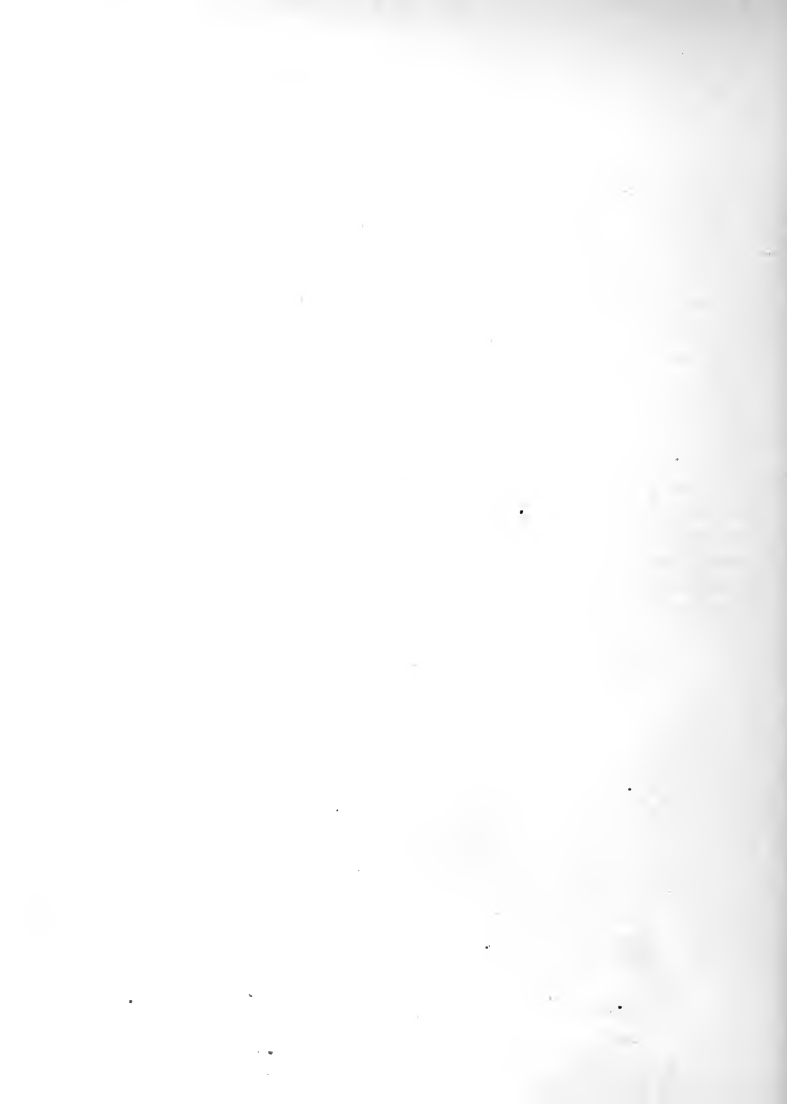
We did not waste much time over lunch, as we had still a long stretch to beat before dark, and the days were short ; so, after our pipe and a legendary tale from The O'C. of two giants, "the owld O'Callaghans" of course, in Brian Boru's time, who must have been by the bones disinterred "just above on the brow yonder," about eleven feet high, though no one knew what had become of these bones, which seemed to be as legendary as the tale, we once more took to the hillsides, and went on with a renewed series of plunging, stumbling, and shooting. We came here upon many of the cocks we had flushed above, and they seemed very thick, "as thick as fleas in a dog's back, for the place was crawlin' wid 'em," as Mike said ; but, whether their disturbance had made them wary or no, we did not get on quite so well with them. They mostly went up the sides of the ravine, and wheeled back behind us towards their old quarters, and they were remarkably quiet and quick in whipping up the brow ; and, finding this to be so, at last I climbed higher up, nearly to the brink ; where the wood was thinner and the walking much easier, and I plugged several cock thus, which were making tracks back again, and seemed very surprised and disgusted to find a gun there. After this we got on better, and towards the end of the ravine, as we were working towards home, the cocks seemed to get more and more plentiful. Most of them, of course, had been driven, and the wind-up was particularly brilliant, the cocks bowing to our superior skill in all directions ; and when we struggled up the ravine to the little plateau where the castle stood, and turned out the bag on the lawn, while we smoked

a cigar and liquored copiously, we reckoned up thirty-six couple of cock, twenty-seven rabbits, a brace of cranes, and the crow. Not so bad, considering the place.

The next day a favourable slant of the wind sent us into the bogs after snipe, and we did very fairly; and the day after we went out and laid a long line for turbot, &c., and capital fun we had, bringing in a boat-load of fish of various kinds, and, having picked out a dozen of the best for our own use, we distributed the rest, as, by the bye, we did the rabbits, among the poor cottagers; and Mither Michael was a great man on such occasions, dispensing his gifts with immense condescension and patronage. The next day we had another day at the cock, as we did on the day following. As a change in the weather would take them all away suddenly, with very little warning, we made hay while we could, and, being better used to it, we got on better as regards the walking, killing twenty-four and eighteen couple, with a few rabbits, on each day respectively; and, having had the jolliest week possible, with a hamper of cock each to take home to our friends, we bade The O'C. what he called "a timporary ajew," for he engaged us all to come again next year, but next year never came for The O'C., for he was killed out hunting very soon after.



A NOTED (LONG) BILL DISCOUNTER.

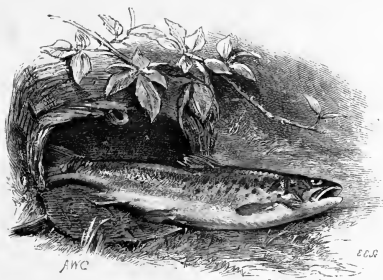


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THE
S. J. WOODRICK



THE
FISHING
PART



TROUTING.



ERHAPS there is no sport which prevails over so wide a range as that of trout fishing. First, there is the system of trolling for the great-lakers in Scotland, or elsewhere; then there is spinning for the magnificent Thames trout, often fully as large as his great-laker cousin. The first is rather a monotonous proceeding if sport is slow. You sit in a boat, with a couple of rods over the stern, waiting for a run, with the lines trailing away with a real or artificial bait full fifty yards behind you; you row along at the rate of about two miles an hour, for the slower you go, provided you can keep the baits spinning, the better. Mile after mile you row past low sandy spit, high rock, or rounded wooded promontory, one after the other. The invariable hill changes from a cone at one end of the lake to a tent roof in the middle, and to a cone again as you reach the other end; and yet no tug at the rod top. You read, you smoke, you have long ago exhausted the taciturn Sandy's stock of conversation; you yawn, you nod, you are half asleep, when suddenly there comes a great bang at one of the rods. Then a screech of the reel as you dash at it and

raise the point in the air, and Sandy winds up the spare rod and lays it aside, so as to be out of the way, and resumes his oars, watching every sheer of the fish, and answering it with a touch of the scull to this or that side; and for the next twenty or twenty-five minutes your blood is coursing through your veins as though you were twenty instead of fifty. Then he comes sliding out of the depths up to the surface, and makes a spring and a plunge that send your heart into your mouth, and a "canny, sir, canny," from Sandy warns you duly; and a big golden and bronze side if he be a laker, or a leaden or steel-grey if he be a ferox, displays itself to your longing gaze, and when, after many dangers, you see him safely panting in the net or flopping on the bottom of the boat, you are broad awake for the rest of that day.*

As for Thames trouting, that, too, is a task of expectation. If you can fish for a fish for a fortnight, seeing him from time to time, and always just where your bait isn't; if you can sit on a weir beam eighteen inches wide, with tons and tons of water thundering down under your feet for hours together, and not feel a bit giddy or excited, but calmly spinning in and out of every little eddy, pitching your bait to an inch, and then, after all, see some duffer with jack gorge tackle, or a big perch or barbel hook, haul your beauty out by the hair of his head, and then go on fishing again for another, you may in time make a successful trout fisher. I fished very hard when young, and never caught more than six in several seasons. I suppose I was abominably unlucky; indeed, I know I was.

The late William Bolland, who was fond of the river, I remember one season stayed at Hampton Court; and I fished five days a week, and throughout most of that season I never got a fish. W. B., who only fished on the odd day, when I couldn't, nearly always got one. I was a very skilful hand at it, and he couldn't throw ten yards of line. I never could make it out, and threatened more than once, when I was saluted with, "Muster Bolland got a nice fish to-day, sir, 5lb.," on my arrival

* One of these fine fish, an 11-pounder, caught last year at Rannoch by me, was presented to the Piscatorial Society, and was set up by Cooper. It may now be seen in "The Field" window. It is a very handsome common yellow trout. There are two other sorts of large trout in Rannoch besides the *Salmo ferox*.—F. F.

home, to give it up altogether. At last one day he got hold of one 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb., under the most atrocious circumstances. He dropped his bait into the side of the weir, and *found it* stuck fast.

"Here, Bill, I've got hold of a pile or a bough, or something; see if you can clear it;" and he handed the rod to Bill, who, receiving it and raising the point, said in his forcible style:

"Bough, be ——! It's a something, something, somethinged, great trout;" and so it was, and they had the luck to kill it.

Now, that never would have happened to me. No trout ever would have come at me like that; and, if he had, all I should have felt would have been a severe tug at the rod point, and nothing more; or, if it *had* happened that he managed to hook himself, he would at once have gone under the weir apron, or round a pile, or even two piles if one was not enough. No, those lucky chances never by any fluke happened to me.

Then I vowed I wouldn't go out any more. Yet when the morning came I was once more deluded to go, and I went up to the very same spot, and had no sooner dropped my dace in than at last I felt the magic tug, and, after a very moderate fight—for the fish was so fat that he couldn't fight much—I got out the handsomest trout I ever saw, weighing 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb., a female, with a little head, hog back, and perfect in every particular. Cooper, senr., set that fish up for me, and, though it has been in a case nearly thirty years, it looks as well as ever, and every-one says, "What a handsome fish!"

But the trout fishing that one usually commences on is worming in small streams. There are two or three ways of worm fishing. In one, which is practised in rather larger streams, you fish with fineish tackle, but with a brandling, and cast up stream almost like using a fly; in the other you trundle a bigger worm down stream, following it along, and keeping out of sight as well as you possibly can; and in the last you use a quill float, and fish the eddies in thick, high water. The second is the method I enjoy most. I have given two or three descriptions of this kind of fishing in different publications; and, as it is not easy to give yet another in other language which shall convey the same views, I will e'en select that which is the best of them, and reproduce it here.

I take, therefore, the introduction to worm fishing, published in my "Book on Angling:"

"I know nothing more pleasant than wandering dreamily away up amongst the hills by the side of some tiny beck new to the angler, with no sound but the pipe of the plover or the curlew, or the distant tinkle of the drowsy bell wether; no encumbrance but a light rod; no bother about what flies will or will not suit; no tackle beyond a yard of gut and two or three hooks in a piece of brown paper; a small bag of moss with well-scoured worms within; a sandwich or a cold mutton chop—the latter for preference—in one pocket, and a flask of the dew "that shines in the starlight when kings dinna ken" in the other. Far, far beyond all care; away from rates, taxes, and telegrams; proofs, publishers, and printers' devils; where there are neither division lists, nor law lists, nor stock lists, nor share lists, nor price lists, nor betting lists, nor any list whatever; where no newspaper can come to worry or unsettle you, and where you don't care a straw how the world wags; where your clients are trouts, your patients worms, your congregation mountain blackfaces, water ousels, and dabchicks; your court, hospital, or church, the pre-Adamite hills with the eternal sky above them; your inspiration the pure breeze of heaven, far, far above all earthly corruption. Here, in delightful solitude, sauntering or scrambling on and on, and on and on, upwards and upwards, from wee poolie to fern-clad cascade, casting or dropping the worm into either, or guiding it deftly under each hollow bank and past each ragged stone, pulling out a trout here and a trout there in the fair summer weather, with now a whiff of wild thyme or fragrant gorse, and now a shaugh of the pipe, and an amazed and charmed gaze at the mountain crags above, and the ever-changing scenery of the hills as the clouds flit over them, with just sport enough to give amusement without enchaining the attention so much as to prevent us drinking in all the delights that nature spreads for us. This is, to my mind, the true delight of angling. This was my first experience—my first angling love—and will be my last. What though you never get a fish over half a pound? Why, the half-pounder is as much the hero of your day as the two-pounder is of your more pretentious friend who spent the day up to his middle in the main river, and never noticed a

thing all day but blue duns and fluttering willow flies. And you do not indulge in such a ramble for the sake of showing your fish against all comers, but for solitude and self-communion among scenes that tell no lies and brook none."

It is not necessary to prolong the description of the delights of worm fishing after this. In the little Cornish brooks, where I first began to trout fish as a lad, this was much the sort of sport we enjoyed out away upon the wide moors dotted with moorstone and heather. How well I remember them, and how I love their memory! We never got a fish over half a pound, and I only remember two or three of that size. Three to the pound was a very good fish, and the average would run of about five to the pound; and of these we would catch from two to five or six dozen in a day, and I have caught as many as ten dozen in a day. That dear old College brook behind Penrhyn, where every half-holiday was spent, and some which we stole from good Master Kemp, or as it was termed "minched," when the day "was quite too irresistible altogether, don't you know?" And though that is forty years ago, how well do I remember still every stretch and turn in it, from the little artificial fall at the end of the woods, to out away past Mabe Church, and towards Constantine moors. Many a day of calm delight have I had in bonny Hampshire beside the finest trout waters perhaps in England, take them as a whole. Aye, many and many and many a score. And many a doughty Derbyshire day have I reckoned; while Berkshire and Bucks, Devonshire, Oxford, Kent and Surrey, Shropshire, Northumberland, Wales, Ireland, and Scotland have contributed their share to my trouting piscatory delights; but somehow I seem only to love the yellow gorse, the grey moorstone, and the blooming heather the better.

Memoria est per quam mens repetit illa quæ fuerunt;

and the things that *have* been *only* come back to us in memory, alas!

"Worthy Master Crayon, wend you along with me to where the crystal Anton springs new born from its chalk bed, and runs through many a charming mead, past town and village, sparkling and dimpling in sunlight and shadow, gurgling under many a rustic bridge, where the long weed sways to and fro over the golden gravel, and many a two and even three

pound trout has his hiding and his feeding place, past many a pretty peaceful church, too, deep-bosomed in sheltering trees, with the neat parsonage and its trim grounds adjacent. Past many a fretting hatch and weir, and many a picturesque old mill with flashing wheel and hurrying mill stream. Wend you with me, fair sir, and I warrant me that you shall see one of the sweetest trout streams in merry England, and with the pleasantest variety of water too, with here a fine deep mill head that gives rare fishing when a strong sou'-wester blows, and there a rattling, rushing, brattling stream, rippling over its troubled bed like any Highland burnie; and here again a wide, quiet, shallow, weedy now, and now scowery, and then a strong, full-flowing stream, with curls and dimples over all its face, and all well stocked and thoroughly with famous well-fed trout and gamesome."

And worthy Master Crayon, like a blushing bride, breathed forth the tender sympathetic words, "I will," and "wended."

The South-Western Railway, being one of the stupidest lines in England, promotes travelling on its rails by making it as inconvenient, interrupted, and difficult as possible. Its junctions appear to be injunctions to restrain people from using them. Its branches, which should be the feeders of the main line, feed nothing - not even themselves; and its times and trains are calculated apparently upon a system of dislocation, so that no one shall be able to catch anything anywhere. Accordingly we have to take a fly from Twickenham to Surbiton, and to pay five shillings for it, as the best way of getting on the main line. However, we are landed at the Surbiton shed, dignified with the name of "station," at last; and, having taken our tickets at the dog kennel called a "ticket office," we seek the other side, and seat ourselves on the inhospitable knife-board; and, in the fulness of time, we leave all this discomfort behind, and are off. My spirits always rise, even under such depressing circumstances as these, when I am starting on a fishing or shooting trip; so do Crayon's. We have the carriage to ourselves, and are exceeding cheerful. Crayon waxes mirthful; and I improvise in a brilliant manner somewhat thusly:

I'm afloat, I'm afloat, on the fierce rolling train,
I fear not the weather, I heed not the rain;

(not that there is any at present; but in the exigencies of rhyme the introduction of an irrelevant element or two is allowable)

Up, up, with your meerschaum, and light your fuzee,
I'm afloat, I'm afloat, and Piscator is free.

At Weybridge and Walton we are not deterred,
For to Woking our engine skins on like a bird;
Past Farnboro', Winchfield, and Basingstokee,
Till at Andover Junction the Rover is free.
Till at Andover Junction the Rover is free.

And the gaping portals of the White Hart are open to receive us with host Reeks beaming on the doorstep, and the feminines of the establishment smiling a welcome on us cherubically; we proceed to make ourselves very much at home.

It's all very well going out a-visiting when you go fishing, as I have often. It is cheaper, I admit; but, after all, as someone says, your warmest welcome is always at an inn, and innkeepers as a rule do their very level best to make one comfortable, and they very often succeed, and you don't have to thank anyone for it. You are jolly independent; and if you like to put up your feet before the fire and go to sleep after a long day, you can do so without feeling that you have injured anyone. As for dressing for dinner, so you can in slippers and shirt sleeves if the fancy so takes you; and your hostess will not look aggrieved or horrified—and if she does, what is the odds?—and as soon as you have eaten to repletion you can put on your pipe without having to wend along through dreary passages and green baize doors to a doleful den, far removed from civilisation, and called the smoking room, because it is the coldest, most cheerless, and most inconvenient room in the house, hours after you have been dying for a weed. No; this kind of thing doesn't go well with fishing. I like to take my fishing neat, and, so that the wines are not bottled bile and the spirits are not diuretic, give me my snug hotel.

MY SNUG HOTEL.

Oh, if you ask me whereabouts
My soul delights to dwell,
When I am on my fishing bouts—
'Tis at my snug hotel.

There I can order my own meals,
 And drink whate'er I please,
 And tuck my toes up afterwards,
 Reclining at my ease.

There I can go out when I like,
 And come in when I choose,
 With none to ask me where I've been ;
 Or "Won't you wipe your shoes?"
 No solemn waiter waits on me,
 But Phyllis spreads my cheer ;
 I always call her "Mary," and
 I sometimes add "My dear."

If Boots does not the bootjack bring
 When I retire to bed,
 Pickwickianly speaking, why,
 I heave it at his head.
 Such trifles fret no one; for why
 They never take 'em ill,
 They pass them over, put 'em by,
 Or stick them in the bill.

And when we leave, the kindness is
 Quite wonderful to note—
 How one will bring your carpet bag,
 Another fetch your coat.
 So give to me my snug hotel,
 When fishing I begin ;
 As someone says, our warmest wel-
 Come's always at an inn.

If you like to sing it as I did, you can. The tune is a sort of a modification of "Oh! give me but my Arab Steed," a rotten old song they used to sing forty or fifty years ago.

Crayon sips his Glenlivat, and smokes and smiles approval to the ditty. Evening closes, we retire, and there is no hiatus bootswardly.

The morning breaks. The wind is still S.W. It is cloudy and moistish—a good kind of day if there is plenty of fly on. Breakfast is nearly over.

"Please, sir, Penton's here, and he wants to know whether you'll begin on the upper water or go down at once to the lower," says Phyllis.

I am dodging a bit of marmalade, which threatens to go through a hole in the toast, and, having dodged it successfully, I go down to interview Penton, the keeper; and we agree to walk down and take our chance, as no

one else is on the water to-day that we know of. Lunch is packed, weeds lighted, and we make for Pitt's Mill. Behind this, in the mill tail, there is often a good trout or two; but it is not easy to fish, for a lot of apple trees and a high bank. Like Adam, I often wish there weren't any apple trees, and like him, too, it is when "'Eve' falls" that I often wish it most. That's one to me. So, though we see a rising fish or two, we don't pause, but walk on down the long deep mill head, which holds some capital fish, but wants a good rough breeze or the dusk of evening to make it give sport. Below Rooksbury—the next mill—is sometimes our choicest bit of fishing for good fish. The first meadow is a peculiar one, and wants knowing. Go there in April or early in May, and you wouldn't think there was a fish over half a pound in it. Wait till the warm weather in the middle or end of May and later on, and you may perhaps see, when the fish are moving, a different state of things. But the fish want a lot of catching here; the ground is high, the water smooth, and you must stoop and do your longest, tallest, lightest casting with a dry fly.

The very first time I ever fished it I got two brace of fish all over $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb.; but it is no use to-day. We'll look at it again in the evening. There is very little fly, and no wind strikes; so we get over the stile into the next meadow.

Here is a nice bit of water, a smart, roughish stream running down to a hatch hole, and then another nice rough bit, which curves round to a bridge over which the road runs. Every bit of this is at times choice fishing, and you may just as likely get hold of a two or three pounder as not.

"Crayon, my friend, go on down to yon hatch hole, fish both sides carefully, and work down the rough stream. By those trees are two or three sockdollagers; I've seen them. I'll fish on down to the hatch, or rather I will walk down to the hatch and fish up."

Two years ago this bit of the stream wasn't worth a rap. It *held* tidy fish; but it was quite open and clear of weed, and there was no shelter, and the fish wouldn't take the artificial fly in it. Now* there is a ridge of weed down the middle, and it is one of our best bits. I mount a nice

* In 1877.

little blue dun—only one. You daren't use two flies here. I stoop down and pitch it up on the other side of the weed where I see a good fish rising—One, ah! he looked at it. Two, another look. Beware, beware, my spotted friend! I fear you are doomed to smell the inside of my creel. Ah! I thought so!

“Dash my wig, he's a good one, Penton.”

“Tidy fish, sir. Don't let him go up, or he'll disturb the water.”

“Ah! and if he goes down he'll run through the hatch. Now he comes through the weeds, and on this side, I don't so much care. Steady with the net, now. That's it! So—a pound and a quarter, good—I thought he was bigger. They fight well here. Run to Mr. Crayon; I see he has a fish in the hatch.”

A few flicks to dry the fly, and I cover another. He is only a little one, and returns to the water, as do two or three more nine-inchers. They'll make nice trout next year.

“Confound that fish! I believe he's a big one, but he won't come at me, though he takes the natural fly fast.”

“I believe that's the fish Mr. M. lost the day 'fore yesterday, and he is a good one; 'tween two or three pound,” says Penton, who has landed a nice little fish for Crayon.

“No; he won't come. There's another just above; and quite as big. That's over him and in him,” as I erect the rod in a lovely curve. “Ah! confound him! He's into the weed; I'll lose him for a certainty. Take the rod, and I will stir him up.”

I pull up my stockings and walk in; it isn't over two feet deep there. But the weed is thick and matted in mid-stream, and here the fish has taken refuge. Gently I push the net under the weed. If I can get sight of him I'll land him, and chance the tackle. Gently, gently! Ah! I touched him, no doubt, for right under my nose darts out a fish of close on 3lb., and goes up stream like a rocket, carrying off my fly in his bolt.

“My eye! he was a topper.” Well, it's no use fretting, so I whip on another fly, and soon stick in a two-pounder, which comes out. Then I get three or four more stores, for, as the three-card man said, “We can't pick them” here.—By the way, that is a good story. G. M., the betting man,

a very shrewd, smart fellow, whose name stands high in speculative circles, told it me the other day in the train. He was at some race meeting, when one of the rigging fraternity came running out of a tent to him. "Look here! You know the horse that won the Chester Cup in such a year?" "Yes, certainly."—"And who rode him?"—"Well, I think I ought to." "Well, now, here's a chap in here who'll bet a tenner on it. We can't make up a tenner among us. Come in and land him." George was by no means the sort of man to be had in that way, and no one would have thought it for a moment. "Look here," he said; "what the deuce made you pick *me* out for such a game as this?"—"Pick be—! We don't pick 'em here—we take 'em as they come. 'Old hard; there's a cove there as 'll bite for a dollar," and he scooted.

But to our fishing. I next walk up and try for a big 'un under the spreading tree at the top of the stream. Twice he peeps, and the third time he takes, and a nice job I have with him, the boughs being close down on one part; and this the fish affects, of course, for he seems to know all about it; and do what I can he sticks my line in one of these pendent twigs in spite of me and leaves me—wild.

Then I go on to Crayon, who has also taken his brace, and lost—"Oh, such a whopper, just by those trees where I told him." The fish came head-over-heels at the fly, took nobly, gave one turn over, and off he went, the hold breaking. Of course he was *the* fish. But while we lamented him, we got on the bridge. There were some nice fish rising on the lovely shallow between the two withy beds below, but the sun was out now, and you would have to wade down, so we didn't trouble them. Below this there is another hatch, and above it is a nice bit of water, which often holds some rattling good fish.

As it is still sunny and the water is smoothish, I set Crayon at work in the hatch hole—a deep rough hole, which holds a lot of very large fish, but they rarely rise to the fly. Once in a way a good one backs on to the shallow below and gets caught, which a pound and a half fish does now, showing capital sport all round the hole and over the shallow, till I dip the net under him, and translate him to another element.

Then I fish the stream below towards the church. This is a very

favourite bit of mine. It is a very free rising bit, and the stream is sharp and ripples over lovely gravel. The fish are always in fine fettle, and often of good size; here I nearly always get a fish or two, and sometimes more. To-day I delude a nice fish of a pound and half, and one of three-quarters, and then we walk on past Mr. Giles's water and his mill, till we strike the top of Ladymead, a stream famed for its superior trout, and not locally only: they do say that the trout here were known in London formerly. But Ladymead is too calm to-day, so we skip about a mile of water whilome belonging to others, but which happily at this time of printing belongs to us, and get down below the next mill, over a high bank, through a bit of boggy stuff, and here we are upon an exceedingly useful bit.

This wide open shallow holds a great quantity of trout, and, though the great bulk of the fish do not run large, there are very good ones among them, and the beauty of this reach is that you can always find a rising fish or two somewhere about it, either in the bits of sharp, or in one of the many little eddies, or under the banks, and there is another good point in it, viz., whether you see fish rising or no, you may fish it blind and still catch fish. At present all seems pretty still. The fly often is late in coming out on this lower water, but nevertheless, put you on either a blue or olive, and a yellow dun, or put on a small governor for a stretcher, and use a Wickham's fancy (a capital fly for this river) as a dropper, and it is a curious fact that with those five flies you may fish this river all through the season more or less.

"So, that cast will do—cast away as far over to the opposite bank as you can, touching the opposite grass almost, when you can, and it will be much to me if you don't pick up a brace between this and the hatches. Penton, do you go on down to the hut, and see if you can see any fish rising down there; I'll land Mr. Crayon's fish."

"Ay, there he was; did you touch him?"

"I felt him touch the fly."

"Then it is no use to try him again. They will do that sometimes with the wet fly, and when they do they won't come again. You had better go across to the island and fish that down; it is nice water and you should get a fish there about the top part; and sure enough there he is, a nice pound

fish! Lead him in here. Yes, a nice little fish of close on a pound. Ah! you didn't see that fish."

"No; but I fancied that I had a rise. He came under water, and yet he made no sign."

"Yes, he did, and it is the only sign a fish of that kind does make oftentimes. The line as it was curving round stopped for the briefest half second, as if it had touched a twig. Always strike when you see a check. Pitch closer to the bank; I thought under that burdock I saw a dimple, and if so, it will perhaps be a good fish. Ah! as I thought, I saw the gentleman, and a good one he is!"

"Confound him! Now he fights for those reeds. Now he slides out again! I'll bring him round into that little bay."

"He's not half done yet; and if you get him in too soon you may get into grief. Now you may persuade him if he will come! No, what another shoot? Now then for it!" Yes, the best fish yet—a pound and three-quarters nearly—not quite so well made up as some, but a bonny fish. Well, Penton, and how goes it below?"

"There's a fish or two rising, sir, in the pool and below the hut; but the fly is not on yet, to speak of."

"Go round the other side and peep over that hedge just above the hatches in that bit of eddy close under the bank. I have seen a big fish there once or twice. Bring me word if he is there, and if he looks like feeding."

Anon Penton returns with the tidings that there is a real good one there—two pounds and a half—and he looks as if he was likely to take, though not rising at present."

"Can you get below where you can see the fish, and tell us whether he moves at all?"

"I can do that, sir, from the hatches."

"Then go and stand there and let us know. Now, Crayon, pitch your fly across just below that spear and let it go quietly down. Did he move, Penton?"

"No, sir, not that time."

"Again!"

"He turned a little then, sir."

"All right, you'll have him. Carefully, carefully! Whatever you do don't make a bungle. That'll do fine! Ha! I saw him turn that time! There! and by George you're in him, too! Get up stream with him, away from the hatches all you can!"

"What a strong brute it is! I can hardly turn him from that hatch!"

"You must, or be smashed to chips! Put the pot on; you may as well break this side as t'other. The other's a certainty; this isn't. Well done! well played! Go and stand at the hatch with the net, Penton; and if he comes near it, splash like forty thousand dolphins or devils, and drive him up. There he goes again! Well done, Penton! well fought, fish! well played, piscator! That last go was on the brink!"

"He seems weaker and shorter; but I'm afraid to bring him in, for there's a kick in the old hoss yet!"

"Yes, but he is pretty near done. Sink the net well under the surface in that corner. Now then! Well done, Penton! Hooray! Two pounds and a half good, and a capital fish. Hooray! again. Bravo Crayon!"

Crayon beams like a halo, and looks as proud as a dog with two tails, and the fish receives the usual obituary notice. The scene is capitally drawn in the illustration by our friend Crayon himself. He hasn't done justice to himself, but then artists rarely do. The back view of Penton is, however, fine.

Then I go down to the lower water, a fine streamy strong bit below the hatches, running for half a mile and more down the stream, and full of capital fish; and although one of much over two pound is not common, pound-and-a-halfers may be met with, and pounders are tolerably common.

I sold one of our friends a bit of a bargain over these two lengths of water a little time ago. Having fished the water for two or three seasons, I knew the value of the various stretches, and what time suited one and what the other. My friend was parcel of a jealous fisher, and seemed possessed of the notion that everyone else was. As he was a new

man, I was anxious that he should have sport, and I gave him the best advice I could as to the best places to get it; but I found that he was seized of the notion that I commended to him the worst places under a desire to get the best myself—a practice which no one who knows me would, I think, accuse me of. Coming down to this water, I knew that, as there was no fly to speak of up yet, there would be no chance at all on the lower water; but this makes no such difference on the flats, and I advised him as his best chance of getting a brace of fish to fish the flats, and I went on to below the hatches to bide my chance, leaving the flats to him.

“Now,” I said to Penton, “you’ll see he knows a deal better than I do. He won’t believe that I have given him the best chance, but he’ll think I *want* to fish down here, and he will come down below me to the next meadow; and if he does, I’ll go up on the flats and catch a fish or two.” Sure enough, five minutes hadn’t passed, when down came my friend hot foot. As he was passing me I looked round.

“I am going down on to the bottom,” he said.

“All right,” quoth I; “then I’ll go up to the flat;” and up I went and killed three fish and lost one on it. I had just landed the last, having worked the water down, when up came my friend again, with his rod over his shoulder, looking rather sold.

“Did you do anything?” I asked.

“Never got a rise,” he replied.

“Didn’t think you would,” said I; “I’ve got a leash and lost one.”

He said nothing, but walked on; and after a time, when the fly came out, I went down and made out another brace or so.

An hour passes pleasantly. Crayon fishes the rough pool below the hatches, through which certainly the finest stream on the water runs; and from that down to the luncheon hut and round the bend he picks up another fish or two, and loses ditto, while I fish steadily up and get two brace, losing also a quota. Then, having worked up to our *Templum Sandwichii*, we take our ease in a lull of the rising, and eat our lunch, and have the fish laid out, &c., &c. Another faint rise

of fly comes on, and once more we set to work, but it does not last long—it never does; and about half-past three or four it is clear that the rise here is done for the day. So we turn about and walk up.

“Now, there is only a spot or two between this and Rooksbury meadow where we can find a rising fish now. The first is in the bend at the top of the flats yonder just above the island.”

This we visit, and we find two fish rising; Crayon hooks one, but he gets off, and disturbs the other. Then we proceed on up to Ladymead, and at the top, opposite to Mr. Giles’s garden, I pick up a nice fish, and lose a screamer, which is rising just at the tail of the big mill-pool. The trout makes a furrow like a boat over the shallow, as he starts up for the deep water, taking out yards of line. I am just beaming with delight at the unusual chance, when the fly comes home empty, the barb and point of the hook are gone.

“They make the hooks of cast iron now—awful rubbish; but it’s no use waiting here; so across the meadows up to the second hatch, we may find a fish in that; or you can wade up the shallow to the bridge while I try the little Fifield brook. There are some good fish in the first meadow.”

I walk up a little tributary brook which runs in here and often holds some nice fish; but I do no good, nor does Crayon, so we go to the rough water beyond. Crayon goes up to the hatch hole, and under a tree on the far side in the bend I hook a lovely two-pounder, which shows me rare sport, and when he comes out is as handsome as a picture, or rather handsomer than any picture, for brush could not reproduce him. Crayon gets another fish at the hatch hole, and I get one out of the stream beyond and lose another in the weeds.

The fish are now quite off, and we repair to the upper hut, whence we can command the distant meadow, and chat and smoke for some time, then our worthy lessee, Mr. F., turns up, and we have a general chat and smoke, with desultory casting now and then, till evening comes on. It is getting towards dusk, and up at the upper part, where the stream bends round, and is both wide and deep under the opposite bank, there are two fish rising. I cast across, and one takes the fly at the very first cast. It is so

unexpected by me, that I hit him too hard and smash my cast, leaving the fly and a foot of gut in the fish's mouth.

After five minutes' rest I try the companion ; he won't take till I change the dun to a Wickham, and then he comes nobly, and, after a fine bit of sport, comes out $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. I see another fish put up just under the bank, but, having disturbed the water, I leave it, and go up for a turn. I do not do any good, and after going up and taking a look at the millhead, I return and find a good fish rising about a yard or two from the old spot. Once I come over him, and he moved again; and he takes. I had a short fight with *him*, and got him out—he is an ounce or two heavier than the last, and own brother. I disengage the fly, when, "Hallo! what's this? another fly! By the immortal Jingo, my own fly; and this is the same fish that carried it off five and twenty minutes' since.* There is no mistake about it. There is the little blue dun I know so well. It went at the knot, for there it is at the end of the link." I hand it to Crayon, who has bagged another brace of nice fish, $1\frac{1}{4}$ lb. and $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. each, as a curiosity, and he puts it on his line as a curiosity, and five minutes' after he strikes a fish, and something goes, and when he looks, it is the hook, so that while the hook last time was strong enough to break the gut, the gut this time is strong enough to break the hook.

"Rum things happen in fishing," soliloquised Crayon, as he put on another fly.

We did not do a great deal more here, for evening fishing is not the strong point of our river. As we walk up the long still millhead, on which the shadows from the trees are falling, not many fish are rising; at one sharp bend, however, I saw one good fish keep on rising, so I stopped and bullied him. Once or twice he came and looked at the fly, but he wouldn't have it; but, as he kept on rising I knew that it was a chance if he did not make a mistake, so I kept on too.

"He makes a very small rise," quoth F.

"It is anything but a very small fish, though," said I; "take my word for it, if I get hold of him, he will show you some sport, and the next moment, when I covered him for the sixtieth time (about), there was a

* Fact. This happened as described, and I have seen it done more than once.

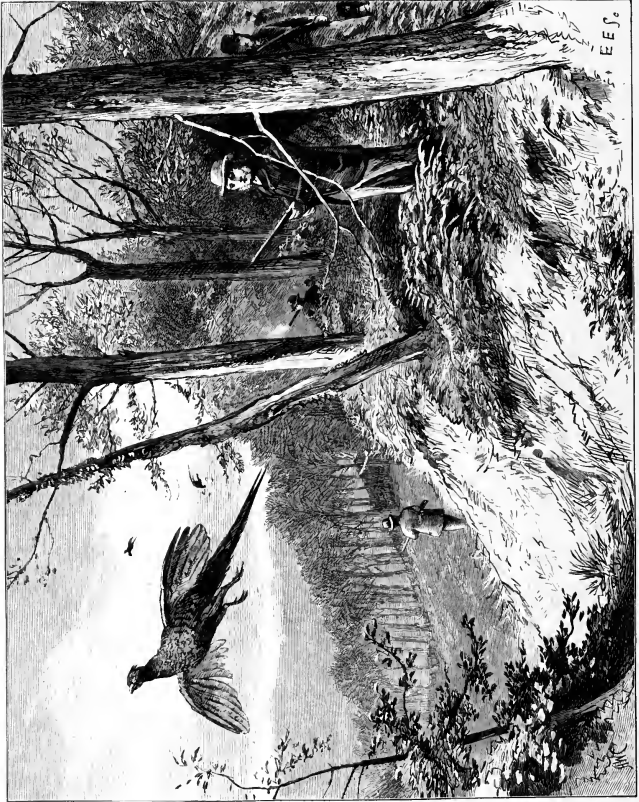
tender dimple on the water, a chuck of the line, and a prodigious rush. He was a good fish, and fought well, but the water was deep, the bottom clear, and it was a mere question of time, for out he came at last, 2½lb. I was very proud of that fish, and we walked slowly home to dinner with such a dish of fish as hadn't been seen that year, having about twelve brace between us that would go handy to 35lb., three of them 2lb. and over, and several getting that way; and, as the Claimant once said to me, "That shan't be bad fishing."

The pretty little sketch in the tail piece is an original sketch of the sheep bridge at Houghton, made by Mr. Cooper for this purpose. The Houghton Club formerly was very well known in piscatorial annals. Men eminent in art and literature, of high rank and social standing, were the members or visitors of this club. The club has often been written about, and the sayings and doings of its members have been chronicled by pen and pencil. Many of the subjects, scenes, and incidents in "Penn's Maxims on Angling and Chess" were taken from it, and were drawn by Seymour. The old plank bridge has seen many generations of anglers pass over it with their long rods and huge landing nets. It is a favourite gossiping station, and from it the anglers may behold on the magnificent shallows, above and below, many a splendid fish rolling about, and making circles when the fly is on. The old club has resolved itself into the Stockbridge Club, pure and simple. The Houghton water has fallen into the hands of Dr. Wickham, who has made a new Houghton Club, and has vastly improved the water, as well as the stock of fish in it since it has come into his hands, and for big fish I doubt if there is a better water in England now.



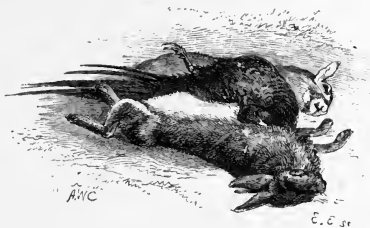
"SPEAK WELL OF THE BRIDGE THAT CARRIES YOU OVER."

**THOMAS COLLINGWOOD CHOWN,
GLENMORE, SILVERHILL,
ST. LEONARDS-ON-SEA.**

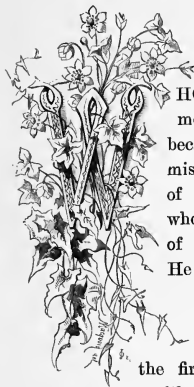


E. J. C.

AMC



LONG TAILS AND SHORT ONES.



HO does not recollect his first pheasant? I don't mean the first he bags, but the first he shoots at, because nine times in ten he contrives to score a miss, or he bags half of a tail feather, or something of that sort. To an unaccustomed gunner, or one who has previously only seen small game, the rise of an old cock pheasant is something prodigious. He shines so, he makes such a row, and vanishes from your gaze so speedily as you look after him, that it produces very much the effect which it did upon old Briggs when he flushed one for the first time, namely, a sort of sensation as if an ornithological Catherine-wheel had combusted almost under his nose. The ordinary observer, who sees pheasants get up and fly away, wonders how you could possibly miss such a great big lumbering bird as that; but put the ordinary observer in a corner where the trees are pretty close, or in a narrow ride with a five or six years' growth on it, and with a lot of strong, wild, rocketting pheasants processing to and fro overhead and around, and he will wonder no longer, unless he changes round, and begins to wonder how you can hit them. There

is one great thing to remember in pheasant shooting, and that is to hold far enough forward, and that is the difficulty. A pheasant well on the wing goes a tremendous pace, and unless you pitch the gun a foot or two or more, according to distance and pace, in front, you will be exactly that distance behind the bird when the shot reaches *his* distance. Of course, the further the bird is off, and the faster he is going, the further in front must you pitch your gun to get on him; and it is the instinctive calculation of eye and hand in this particular that makes the good pheasant shot. It is astonishing, sometimes, how dead a bird will come over when you have pointed as you thought perhaps almost too far in front. You may kill any number of birds hand running flying away from you, unless they are rising at the same time, as they mostly are, when you must shoot high; but aiming across or over it is another pair of boots.

I shot one the other day. I am ashamed to say that he was something like sixty yards off; but it was rather an experiment. He was harking back and coming down the middle of the wood well above the hazels forty miles an hour, and apparently had dodged all the guns. I was standing on an open, high bit, and could see well over the bushes. My gun shoots very close and hard, and I determined to try for him; and I pitched the gun about four feet or so in front of him. I thought at the time it was too far, but he came over as dead as a stone, and left quite a cloud of feathers in the air."

"Who shot that pheasant?" cried a voice just under the feathers. It was my host on whose head almost I had dropped the bird.

"I did," I called out.

"Deuce of a long shot, wasn't it?"

"Rather. Is he dead?" I asked.

"Dead as a stone. That gun of yours must be a tearer. Hare to the right!" Bang! bang! and over went a brace of somethings, for my friend is a tearer too, and when he pitches lead does it to some purpose usually.

Cover shooting, under any circumstances, is more or less dangerous, and no matter how careful your shots may be, shots *will* glance; and you never know exactly where everybody is, and when it comes to ground game—unless it is going back—it is always more or less dangerous shooting, more

particularly if you happen in your company to have a careless or over-eager shot. Some men are simply frightful in this way, and will be cutting the twigs about your ears, and the sensation of hearing the "whish" of shot and the shower of twigs just over your head is anything but good for one's nerves, and the wonder is that so few serious accidents yearly happen.

There is an old story—a very well known one—of how a shot of this sort was served out. He had very nearly peppered his next neighbour several times, and had been warned pretty forcibly. Indeed, on the last occasion, the victim had used strong language, and avowed that if his friend did it again he would "warm him" in return. Once again the shot came hurtling around his head.

"Who shot then?" he called out.

"I did," said his friend.

"Where are you?"

"Here!"

"Where? I can't see you. Hold up your hand."

Up went the hand. "Bang!"

"Oh! you've shot me in the hand."

"Told you I would," growled the injured man. "D'ye think I'm going to let you shoot at me all day without having a turn at you? Not exactly."

I don't know whether the story is true, but it is *ben trovato*, if it isn't, and I always tell it when I find a fellow shooting all over the shop, as if there was no one else within a mile or two. Unless I know that the way is quite clear I never shoot at ground game. I don't like shaves, and I don't like standing back a yard or two in the bushes for a man to pot a rabbit in the ride in my direction. It may be clever, but it is deuced unsatisfactory. Let the beast go; you'll have him another day.

I never shot but one man in my life, and he was a bricklayer, and earned it. We had some pigeons in a private field out at Clapham when I was a youngster. There was a high wall round a good part of it. There happened to be some houses building in the neighbourhood, and two bricklayers climbed up and looked over our wall, leaning on it to see the sport. They were warned again and again that they were in a very

dangerous place, and informed that they were trespassing; but they chose to stop. A bird got up and skewed round to the left. My friend missed it, and I wiped his eye and the bricklayer's arm at the same time. I did not see him at the moment, and thought they had gone. It happened that there was a road some distance off on the other side of the wall, and it was just within the hundred yards. The result was a summons to Union-street, and old Hall, the magistrate, adjudicated. He heard the case.

"Let me see the bullet," he said, and three No. 6 shot, which had been picked out of the man's arm, were handed in.

"Well! well! well!" he said, "that wouldn't hurt much."

I thought to myself, "Old gentlemen, if you'd give me a running shot at fifty yards I think I could convince you to the contrary!"

We had to arrange with that son of labour at the rate of half a sov. per shot, and then his mate, who hadn't been shot, wanted compensation too—which, of course, we declined; and accordingly he went back to the worthy magistrate and asked for a summons.

"But," said the magistrate, "you weren't shot!"

"No; but I might have been! Sure, didn't I run the same risk, and haven't I lost the day's work coming here?"

"Go away, man, and don't waste my time talking!" and the irate Hibernian was handed down, to his intense disgust. He couldn't understand it at all; and then that miserable old *Morning Herald*, I remember—which very properly died for its sins years ago—had a wretched quasi-funny article about three Cockney sportsmen who, &c., &c. The Cockney sportsman was a great and all-pervading institution in those days. Thanks be, he's quite dead—and very much buried too.

I don't care much about a regular slaughtering day with a spare gun and a loader. If I can shoot fifty or sixty cartridges it is good enough for me, and if I can account for two-thirds of them I am satisfied that I have done better than usual; and if a cock or two intervenes it spices the day. But an incessant fusillade with lots of hot corners, and a pile of dead to collect every now and then is rather too much of it. Enough is as good as a feast; and one gets stagnated with a surfeit. I am afraid in this respect, however, that I shall find few persons to be of my

opinion. The mania for killing, when once it is set a going, grows by what it feeds on; and though there is a line beyond which sport declines into mere butchery, where that line precisely is to be drawn depends upon a great variety of views; indeed, as regards pheasant shooters, I fear it would be "Quot homines tot sententiæ."

"Telegram, sir," said my servant, as I stood rod in hand on the bank of the Thames, trying, for lack of better amusement, to beguile the wily dace in the latter end of a fine cheery October. Summer had been late, and though a few frosts early in October had gilded the leaves, and scattered some, a week or two's fine weather had made things pleasant and brisk again, and a few stray flies had tempted the grandfathers of *Cyprinus leuciscus* and the younglings of *Cyprinus cephalus* to sport in the streams and look about for surface food. I had picked up an odd dozen or so, when "Telegram, sir," from my servant, who came up in hot haste, arrested me. "Telegram, hum!" "Was Jinks going to settle?" or "had Spooks got an offer at last for my uncle's Tierra del Fuego stock?" or had any distant and unknown relative died and left me a legacy? Telegrams may contain anything—good, bad, or indifferent, and I twiddled the bit of pink paper between my fingers doubtfully, and at length opened it. "Raymond Bush! What can he have to telegraph about?" Oh, "Come and shoot pheasants to-morrow, and meet me at Scrunchem Station at 9.45." Scrunchem, eh! Let's see; there's sure to be a train to Kingscote in time for that, and it's only two miles across to the X Dividend line. I can do it easily. So I scrawled on the other side, "All right—9.45;" handed it to my man, with the indispensable shilling, and went on with my fishing.

Raymond was one of those fortunate fellows who had prospered in all that he took in hand, and who had some shooting down the line, and it wasn't likely to be very bad, as he knew what was what in most things. So, having filled my cartridge bag, ordered Thane, a favourite retriever, an extra biscuit for his supper, I went to bed and perpetrated a swindle by sleeping the sleep of the righteous; and, after properly fortifying the inner man next morning, lighted my weed, jumped into my cab with my belongings, and drove off to the station. 9.45 saw me at the appointed place, and in another quarter of an hour the station-master,

with strident voice, announced "Down train coming in. Passengers for Chipwax before—passengers for Kingscote behind;" and the next minute Raymond Bush turned out of his cell in full shooting tog, followed by his brother Fred. A fly was waiting; we tumbled in, and drove four pleasant miles across to Wingham Willows, where he and his brother rented some 3000 acres of fine covert and partridge ground judiciously mixed. "Now," said Raymond, as we drove up to a very snug cottage, with every convenience adjacent, "if that blackguard Fipps is only out of the way—and he ought to be, as it's Snigswig market day—we shall have a perfect day."

"Who's Fipps?" I asked.

"The poachingest cuss in this country; he's a farmer who rents about three hundred acres, that run in and out with our coverts in a way that is simply infernal. He won't let us the shooting, having a sort of spite against my landlord, and I do believe he shoots nearly as much in his three hundred as we do in our three thousand. There's no having him anyhow. He won't be friendly; he won't do anything but shoot—and, d—n him! he can shoot some—and he has a familiar demon in the shape of a rat-tailed, mute-hunting, ragged-haired spaniel, half Clumber, half Norfolk, with a touch of Scotch terrier and a wipe of retriever in him, that's a worse poacher than himself. That dog Sir, that dog is a sort of Snarley-yow or dog-fiend, he is diabolic; no game has a chance with him. The pair of 'em are enough to give a fellow the horrors. Why, I'm something'd but he made me pay him 10*l.* compensation last year for damage to his buckwheat, because I was weak enough to put a hatch of squeaker pheasants down in Chizzel Cope near his beastly 'nine acres,' every blessed head of which he shot in that very buckwheat, planted there for that purpose;" and Raymond looked at me with the air of a desperately injured individual, and I confess that he had reason.

"But why did you pay?" I asked; "it was a gross swindle."

"Why? Because I didn't want the expense and worry of a law-suit, with the certainty of having a jury of his friends at Snigswig against me as a consequence. In this free and enlightened country, sir, any blackguard

may bring an action against you, with the certainty of finding thirteen other blackguards to back him, particularly in a game case. The man who breeds pheasants and spends no end of money in the country, which the country would very soon miss if he didn't, deserves no mercy. He's a bloated game preserver—sit on him, scrunch him, pickle him! However, let's hope that Snigswig market will be busy to-day, and the tobacco and gin-and-water extra attractive afterwards."

At this moment up came Johnson, the head keeper, with his terrier at his heels. "Well, Johnson, what are we to do to-day?"

"Well, sir, there's a decent sprinklin' of burds, and the tame ones is werry fine and farrard. Hares there's a goodish few, and rabbits midlin'. The leaf's 'ardly enough off for Chickweed Oaks and the thick part o' Timwillows; but I dessay we shan't do that bad on the whole; and if that 'ere Fipps don't turn up, why ——"

"Oh, he won't turn up to-day. It's Snigswig market, and he don't know we're goin' to shoot, for I only made up my own mind yesterday afternoon."

But Johnson shook his head doubtfully. "He be at market I knows, 'cos I seed 'un goo, and he dwoan't know *as yet* that you be goin' to shoot."

"As yet! What do you mean?"

"Well, that 'ere little imp o' Rackstraw's see you drive up, and I see him a-talkin' to Joe the higgler just arter, and he'll be sure to be for Snigswig; and it's much to me if Fipps don't get the office afore noon."

Raymond's countenance perceptibly darkened.

"Imp of Rackstraw's! ah!" and he pondered. "By the way, I think a little schooling would improve that young gentleman. My friend Clippings is on your school board; I'll give him a hint to look up Rackstraw's imp, and we'll see if we can't get him some other occupation;" and he performed a graceful wink to Johnson, who beamed all over, and grinned huge approval of the suggestion.

"However, let's be off; Captain Charles and Mr. Mouser are waiting for us at the cross-road; so we'll start."

Ten or twelve minutes brought us to the cross-road, where two gunners were idling against a gate, smoking the matutinal weed. Captain Charles was a very good fellow home from India on sick leave, who could do many things better than most—thrash a cad, turn over a rocketeer, nurse a break well on the green cloth, go across country like an angel with wings (as little Mouser, his admirer, said), speak three languages, give most amateurs a bisque at tennis, and could sing a good song—and write one, too, for that matter. Mouser was a good little chap; everybody said so; and, for once, what everybody said was true, though it isn't always by any means. He stuttered slightly, and wore an eyeglass.

The "mutual" was duly performed, and we were all aware of one another.

"We'll take this 'ere spinney and hedgerow first. Mr. F. and Cap'n Charles, take each corner of the spinney there; Muster Raymond and Muster Frederick, take that 'edgerow down; Muster Mouser, take the middle of the spinney, please. One o' you beaters"—to ten or a dozen stick men of the usual stamp—"goo either side of Muster Mouser; the rest on ye glang on to tha' 'ood an' wait there."

All this was duly arranged without fuss, noise, or confusion, and this argued well for sport, as nothing is so provoking and so likely to spoil sport as bad generalship and inefficient drilling in this respect. I walked to my corner, slipping in a brace of gastight greens as I went; Captain Charles walked to his corner; little Mouser to the further end with his beaters; while the Bushes went down the hedgerow with Johnson and his terrier Rat. This hedgerow, like all the hedgerows in these parts, was a good thick one, some thirty or forty feet deep, and pretty close at bottom, with trees at intervals. There was always a stray pheasant or two in these rows, with now and then a brace or two of partridges, an odd hare or two, and a few rabbits. It was pretty work; indeed, good hedgerow shooting is as pretty as any I know—real jam. Now a rabbit pops out and in again, as the terrier or spaniel threads the runs and bustles them up; then a hare makes a dash for the open, only to be rolled over and over with a charge of No. 6 in her poll; anon a cock pheasant, glittering in the sunshine, rises with prodigious emphasis for the last time in his mundane

career; or a brace of cunning old birds, whose brood has gone astray somehow by reason of cats or other vermin, skim out towards the distant mangold they are never destined to reach.

Meantime I have ensconced myself behind an Irish yew bush, on either side of which I can command the spinney. Now I hear Mouser coming down from the far end, and the "tap, tap" of the beaters. A pigeon comes whistling through the tree tops. They always come first—wary dogs; and, as he can't see me, I double him up neatly. Then Mouser speaks. "Bang!" A bunny come to grief, I take it. "Mark!"—bang!—"mark forward!" I hear the flutter of wings, and the next minute Captain Charles is heard from. There is a crash in the bushes, and no more flutter of wings. "First longtail!" "mark!" bang! and Mouser evidently scores one. "Mark forrard to the right!" and a pheasant comes rocketing over the larches. I am not quite as good at a rocketer as at some other things, and don't pitch quite far enough forward with the first; but the second fetches him, and down he comes like a bean bag. "Hare forrard to the right!" Bang! bang! Jeerusalem! Mouser missed him. "Hare forrard!" I peep round the corner and see puss coming down the hedge like an express train with a kick in it. I wait quietly until she is within thirty yards, when just as I finger the trigger she pops short into the plantation again, "Hare to the left!" I shout, and the next moment Captain Charles speaks again. And so the fun goes on for a few minutes longer, the tapping and rustling coming closer, till I see little Mouser pushing aside the bushes in a bit of thick close at hand. A rabbit or two have been added to the score, and the spinney has produced three pheasants, a hare and four rabbits, and the pigeon. Meantime our friends at the hedgerow have not been idle, and, with the assistance of Johnson and Rat the dog, have bagged a brace of pheasants, an old cock partridge, three rabbits, and a hare. Not so bad for a beginning, especially as nothing to speak of has got away. Then we go on to Timwillows, a low scrubby cover, with a withy bed adjoining, and standing round the withy bed at judicious intervals (for it is too thick to shoot in), we wait the beaters.

"Please shoot all the rabbits you can, gents, as the tenant complains o' their barkin' the sets. I says as it's rats; he says 'taint." And here,

with the assistance of Rat the dog, a goodish many rabbits are hustled about, and seven or eight come to grief; and another brace of pheasants fall a neat right and left to Raymond, who shoots very prettily.

"Muster F.," whispers Johnson, "I see a dom'd old brindled cat a bit back; ef you sees'n, sir, give *him* a dose, please, and say nothin' to no one." Five minutes afterwards I did sight that cat, and she saw me, but just a shade too late, for the No. 6 had chawed her up righteously. I pointed over my shoulder pussywards to Johnson, who bored in under the wands, shoved grimalkin into a convenient hole, covered her with sods, and battened her down. "Many a young pheasant and patridge he've had, a old divel; and hadn't he some teeth and claws! I'll gie ye a tip for that, Muster F. Look 'ere, sir," drawing me close and whispering a great secret, "I see a cock yes'rday up in the noth end o' Baskerville Copse. Only you an' Muster Raymond knows on't. It'll want two guns to sarcumwent him, if he's there; so do you look out, and he'll do the same."

"A cock, Johnson! What, so early as this! Never; you must have been mistaken."

"Not me!" said Johnson; "he were bred here. There were two on 'em; but I 'specs that 'ere blamed Fipps 'a got one on 'em."

Then we shot another little wood, and scored a few more hits and misses each, all in the usual way, and then we came upon a cart standing in a ride, and therefrom was produced snowy napery, a cold round of beef, half a Stilton, and some jars and bottles, and the next half-hour passed pleasantly enough.

What a jovial, jolly lunch it was! how joke and jest flew round, bounding and rebounding from one to the other like tennis balls from a racket! We ate our beef, and in sooth mirth furnished the mustard, as we lolled about in every attitude of careless abandonment amidst the feathery bracken, literally *sub tegmine fagi*. And how lovely the woods were, too, with their gold and russet leaves rich with the first touch of the Frost King's paint brush! Beech and oak and graceful larch, opening out vistas and peeps through the varied foliage in all directions—now down a long green ride, across which one almost expected to see a herd of deer go bounding; now through a little forest glade, down into a tangled dingle with

a sparkling brooklet at the bottom; now away through a natural tunnel of verdure of Nature's own devising, with its peep of blue sky at the far end, and alternate slants of sunshine and shade breaking through upon the ferns and glorious heather beneath. Rarely have I set eye upon a lovelier scene than surrounded our merry luncheon party.

"No Fipps as yet, Johnson! I expect he's nailed for the day at Snigswig. Fipps and Fippeny is about the size of it;" but Johnson shook his head doubtfully. Fipps was not a subject to joke on; for Fipps was no joke to poor Johnson, who would have been happy to homicide Fipps if he could have found any decent excuse for it.

Lunch over, and the ten minutes allowed for refreshment tobacco-wise being consumed, we took in fresh cartridges and made tracks.

"Where next, Johnson?" Bask'ville Copse, sir. I sent Jem on with the net to stop heverythink back as we can, 'cause that's Fipp's t'other side. Muster F. and you'll take the houtside along 'tween the ride and bank, and please don't go'n send nothin' you can't 'elp to Fipps, and please don't 'e set foot on his laud, Muster F., or he'll summons 'e for sartin.

For some time all went well. There was plenty of stuff, &c., of one sort and another, and we bagged a fair share, little going Fippsward; but I had the cock in my mind, and was looking out sharp for him. Five minutes after crossing a gully we struggled on to a bank, where stood some hollies. Tap—tap—rustle. "Mark cock!" shrieked Johnson. Bang—bang! "Missed, by the Lord!" "Mark cock!" yelled Raymond. Then I glimpsed him through the tree tops—bang! "Missed him, by George!" Another glimpse—bang! "Missed him clean, by Jingo! O Lor'! O Lor'! and the first cock of the season, and I might have been a par. in the papers too. "Mark cock!" I shouted. Bang!—a solitary barrel, and *outside the covert!* what could that portend? I rushed to the hedge and looked out, and there was an ugly beast, in a brown velveteen shooting coat, and drab gaiters to the knee, with a dishevelled, ragged, diabolic-looking spaniel at his heels, picking up *our* cock, as I live and sin.

"Fipps, the poacher, by all that's wonderful!" I exclaimed.

"Fipps and his dorg, by all that's damnable!" groaned Johnson over my shoulder, paraphrasing Sir Peter Teazle in the screen scene.

"Thank ye, sir," said Fipps with a grin and mock politeness, as he pocketed the coveted prize. "You ain't got no more o' them as you want's my 'elp with, has yer? No; I 'spec's I've 'ad the lot now. Mornin', Muster Johnson. Pity's ye 'adn't let me know's you was goin' to shoot to-day, I mout 'a helped ye a lot more. Howsomever, better late than never, as you says."

"You be ——!" said Johnson, sullenly.

"Thank'ye, but not afore you, sir, not afore you. You always was civil, and I'm obligated; but I wouldn't come afore my betters if I knows it."

Here Raymond broke in. "You poaching blackguard; if you'll only come this side of the ditch, I'll give you such a jacketing as you haven't had for one while."

"Will 'ee, now! I've a darn good mind to take 'ee at ye're word. Howsomever, we'll talk about that another day. Meanwhiles you hain't got no more o' them ten-pun notes to spare, have you? Don't want to spekilate in buckwheat? No? Well, never mind, then; but don't let me spile your sport, sir; pray goo on;" and he turned away, having chaffed us all round, and had all the best of it too, as Raymond was forced to admit.

Whether it was the excitement, or what, I don't know, but neither Raymond nor I could shoot a bit after that. Several birds and a hare or too went Fippsward, and every now and then that single barrel spoke out like a warning trumpet, and carried dismay beneath our waistcoats. We shot quick and fired all our barrels, and wasted no end of cartridges. We tried to be deliberate, and shot slow. All wouldn't do; we were either behind or before, and rarely between. Fipps got a regular bumper, and scored all the honours. Exasperation could no further go, and Fipps was cursed after the fashion employed by the cardinal in the "Jackdaw of Rheims"; but, like the audience there, he didn't seem "a penny the worse."

The others did pretty well, and we finished off with a decent bag enough—twenty-one brace of pheasants, a leash of birds, a dozen hares, a score and a half of bunnies, half a dozen wood pigeons, and a jay which I potted for fly-making requisites.

Having had a pretty good day, I stood and delivered to the tune of half a sov. to our friend Johnson. I have a sort of rule in this department: when we kill fifty or sixty head, I think 5*s.* enough for the keeper, when we progress towards one hundred head I make it 10*s.*, two hundred head and over 1*l.*, and that I never exceed, under any circumstances, and I think those who do are very foolish for their pains. No doubt men will pay to get warm corners, but I don't think it is fair to the other guns, and were I the owner of fine coverts I should put a stop to it by taking it into my own hands to place, as well as to select, the guns instead of leaving it to the keeper.

"You want two guns at the end, eh, Johnson? Mr. Smith, Mr. Brown, will you go to the end; you will have a warm time there presently." And the next time I should send Mr. Jones and Mr. Robinson, then Mr. Walker and Mr. Thomson, until each had had his share. It is quite right that the keeper should be encouraged, and a gratuity of some three or four week's wages in a day's shooting, is very decent encouragement according to my way of thinking.

Keepers, too, have too much to say in respect to the making up of parties to shoot.

"Johnson, I must have a party to shoot on Wednesday, I think I'll have Mr. Brown and Mr. Smith."

"Well, sir, Mr. Brown shoots tidyish; but Mr. Smith, he can't shoot a bit!"

"Really?"

"No; I don't think *he* be much use."

"Well, then, Mr. Thomson?"

"Mr. Thomson's a pretty shot, sir, very."

"Well, then, there's Walker: Mr. Tom Walker?"

"Blowed two birds all to bits last time he was here, sir; I'd rayther he'd shoot hard and miss 'em altogether, like Mr. Smith, than do that—he's a dreadful jealous shot, and I can't abear a jealous shot."

"Nor I. Then there's, &c., &c."

The whole of which means that Brown and Thomson came down with

a sov. each, while Smith and Walker, who are perhaps better shots really than the others, only dropped half a sov.

"William, I hear that you don't shoot so well this year as you did last year and the year before."

"No; I don't, John," said the party addressed, to his friend; "only half as well, just exactly half."

"Why, what do you mean?" quoth John.

"Why, last year I used to tip Johnson a sov.; I thought it was too much, as some of the others were not so well off as I, and I reduced it to half a sov., and I've been expecting to hear that my shooting had declined to that extent for months."

There is no doubt that the system of tips to keepers had at one time reached a pitch which became a serious question to persons of moderate means. The keeper who "never took gold," and the shooter who "never gave paper," and so pocketed the offered sov., are on record. It may not be a strictly true story any more than that other tale about the bill for powder and shot which was placed upon the guest's dressing table the morning he was leaving (he having neglected to "tip" properly in some big establishment); but they are illustrations of an evil which was a disgrace to owners and required checking. I can speak of my own knowledge to one honourable exception, which deserves mention. I had leave to fish his waters from the Duke of Bedford a year or two since, and on leaving I offered old Anthony, the keeper, the usual gratuity for two days (half a sov.), and my friend the same. The old fellow (a very good sterling old chap) refused it. His orders were to accept no tips whatever. His wages were good, and he wouldn't break his orders. I greatly respected the old fellow, though compelled to pocket my money. I think in this matter His Grace sets an excellent example, which, I believe, runs through his entire establishment and estates, vast as they are.

But our friends are washing their hands during this discussion, and we rejoin them, and then sit down to feed, and after a comfortable dinner and an hour's chat and smoke, we mounted our trap and caught the last train up.

About a month after, Raymond came into my place. I hadn't seen

him for some days. He had a green shade on, and appeared to have been in the wars, which wasn't so remarkable then as it would be nowadays.

“What's the matter, old man?”

“The oddest thing. That fellow Fipps, you know, came up to town the other day. He called at my chambers. ‘Look here, Muster Bush,’ said he; you said t’other day as you’d give me a jacketing. No man never said that to me, sir, gentle nor simple, as I didn’t give him a chance for to do it. Ef ’twas bounce you’ve only to say so, and I begs your pardon for intrudin’ on ye. Ef ’taint, and ye means it, here I be, and, if you *can* jacket me, darned if I don’t let ye the shootin’ if ye’ll give me a walk now and then.’ I said nothing. I knew I’d a tough customer to deal with, and resolved to be cautious, and it was well I did. I got up and took off my coat and waistcoat and so did he; we shoved the table and chairs in a corner, shook hands, and at it we went. You know that I’m pretty good at it—above the average, I may say—but, if I hadn’t been a wee bit cleverer and more cautious than he was, he’d have thrashed me hollow; but, after as hot a twenty-five minutes as ever I had in my life, and when I was as near pumped as need be, he cried a go—‘not,’ as he said, ‘but what he could have stood another round or two, but he was satisfied that I was best man.’ Blessed if I was, though; but all’s well that ends well. Then we shook hands again, washed ourselves, drank doch-an-dhurris, and parted with mutual good will. He lets me his shooting for 20*l.* a year and a walk with us now and then, and it’s worth a hundred to us. Rum chap, you know, but not half as bad as we thought him. Things look so different from different sides of the hedge. He told me the story of his row with my landlord, and I confess he hadn’t been quite well treated. He shoots with us next Wednesday. Come down and meet him.”

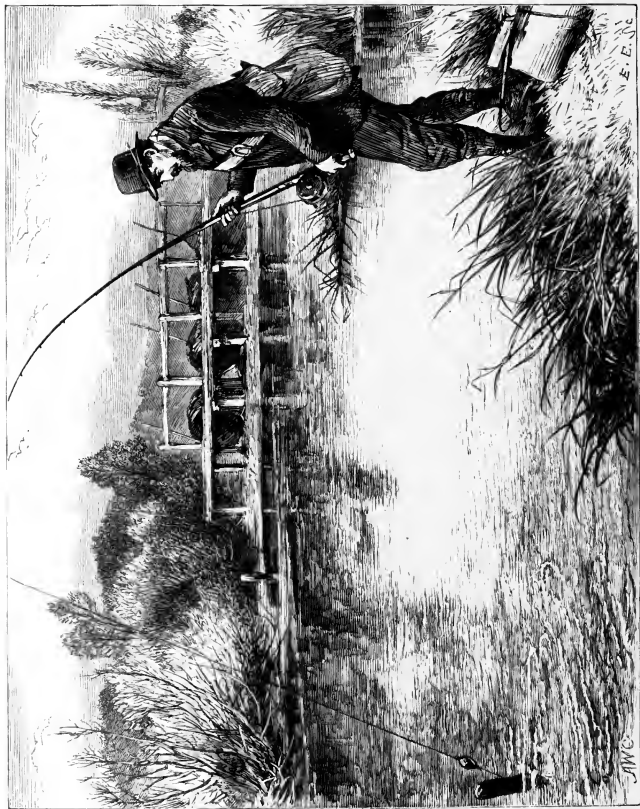
I did; and I often met Phipps afterwards. Not half a bad fellow either—a right good shot, a capital sportsman, and worth twenty keepers. As for the diabolical dog, Budge by name, we quite adore him. He’s the funniest, cleverest, best-natured dog I ever saw, and that’s saying a lot. Raymond lost his pocket book one day in a thick copse, with lots of notes and papers of importance in it. We looked for it for hours; then we thought of Budge, and Budge found it like a detective. I beg pardon, I should have said

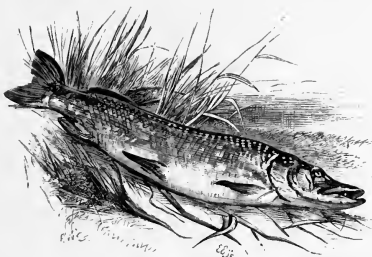
unlike a detective. Fipps is devoted, and he'll just as often walk and beat for us as shoot. He likes the fun royally. He had some money left him lately, and is in easy case. Johnson and he became sworn brothers; never were such friends and allies. When the young pheasants are on there is not an ant's nest far or near that Fipps doesn't know of, and if the birds were his own bairns he couldn't take more interest in them. As for poachers, Fipps tackled the worst and biggest one—Bullying Ben, as he was called at Snigswig Market—one day, and thrashed him within an inch of his life, and promised him some more if he ever caught him about our place again. Master Rackstraw was looked after by the school board, and, as he didn't like it, he ran away to sea, and (as all such characters are) was no doubt wrecked, eaten by savages, and made a tract and an awful example of, so there was an end of him. And higgler Joe was unfortunate, most unfortunate; he moved to Portland, having taken a long contract there, which he couldn't throw up, to break stone or something of that sort—I'm afraid the contract doesn't pay so well as higgling and fencing. And all the rest of us are very well, thank you.



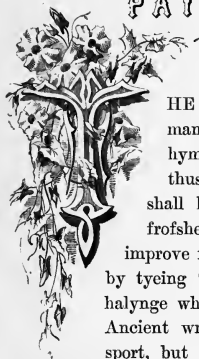
“A CARRIER BY ACT OF PARLIAMENT.”

THOMAS COLLINGWOOD CHOWN,
GLENMORE, SILVER HILL,
ST. LEONARDS-ON-SEA.





PAYING THE PIKE.



THE PYKE is a good fysshe: but for he deuouryth so many as well of his owne kynde as of other, I loue hym the lesse, and for to take hym ye shall doo thus," says Dame Juliana, who then relates how "ye shall have hym" by baiting with a fresh herring or a frofshe*—the latter may be put in assafoetida to improve it; and, lastly, you may set your bait a travelling by tyeing "the corde to a gose fote, and ye shall se god halynge whether the gose or the pyke shall have the better." Ancient writers extol the pike, not only as a medium of sport, but as a royal dish for the table; and a big fat pike with pudding in his belly, and spices, sauces, gravies, and all manner of incongruous condiment was greatly in favour at high feasts and festivals. One can see him, hard on five feet long, borne aloft by two stout serving men up through the goodly companie, grinning ghastly with a lemon in his jaws, and figuring in the bill of expenses as, "To one great pyke fysshe for the dinner to the Kyngys Majestie, one shilling and two pence, and ye chamberlayne did thynk it dere."

* Frog.

When we were boys we were dreadful gobemouches, and believed well-nigh anything, and the more unlikely and extraordinary it was the more we believed it; and I never, till I grew up, doubted for a moment that story of the Manheim pike that was 19 feet long, and wore a collar put on him 260 odd years previous, when he was turned into the Kaiserwag Lake by that wag of a Kaiser Frederick, who styled himself "The Sovereign of the Universe." Change for that sovereign, I should think, might have been obtained even in those days. Examination by experts, however, has shown that the 19 feet was made up of some extra feet piled on by means of false vertebra, and the pike had double as many vertebra as he ought.

Then there was that extraordinary story of the Lillieshall pike, which weighed *upwards* of 170lb., and had a watch, with ribbons and seals, inside him. And why shouldn't he? Hadn't sharks been caught times and again which had anything in them, as Jack used to put it, "from a milestone to a street pianny," and wasn't the pike the fresh-water shark? Time, however, showed that the report was traceable to an innkeeper, who exhibited the identical watch and seals, and got much custom thereby; and this custom was clearly the discount to be charged to the story.

That pike of very large size have been taken there is no doubt, and it is quite possible that they may have been caught of 100lb. weight, though we have no well accredited instance of such a monster being taken; 70lb. or 80lb. is the outside that can be registered safely in this kingdom; and that would be an awful beast, to judge by the head of a 40-pounder which I have in my hall, and which was caught in Sweden by my poor old friend "The Old Bushman," who sent it to me not long before his death. It had been hung up to dry, and was never properly preserved and set up, so that it does not show to advantage.

Paddy Hickson used to tell a tremendous yarn of one he hooked in Loch Corrib, which towed the boat for many hours. "He was a turrible monsther, an awful baste," and when he gaped at Pat I forget what he said he could have put in his mouth. "My honour's carpet bag" would

have been nowhere to him, and the gist of the story was that, while Pat was playing him once, when he got under the boat his head was under the stern and Pat's companion struck the gaff at his tail, which "prothrued under the bow of the cot." They didn't land him, of course, though equally of course they ought to have done, and likewise "it wasn't anyone's fault" that they didn't; and as the baste was still in the lough, of course "my honour might have the luck to land him."

I wonder how many tremendous lies about monster pike I have heard on Irish loughs! Scotchmen sometimes have rather vivid imaginations as to the size of fish in their lochs. I remember one old fellow on the coach to Ballater years ago telling me of some lake we passed on the road, where, as he averred, there was "graun pike fish as long as that," opening his arms to their widest extent (about a fathom), "and," he added, "with hair on the backs of their heads." Was there a barber in the lake, I wonder?

That a pike will sometimes "fly at you and bark like a dog" we have the assertion of Mr. Briggs himself and his little boy Walter; therefore we may rely upon that as a fact not to be disputed.

I have had hold of big pike—how big I cannot say for certain. The biggest I ever landed, however, was only 22½lb., which is a baby compared with the exploits of some of our London anglers, who are the keenest pike fishers in the world; and so closely do they work it, that anywhere within sixty miles or more of London really good pike fishing is the most difficult to get leave for of any. Salmon and trout fishing I can get any quantity of, but pike fishing which is really good is well taken care of. What spoils half of our best pike waters is the want of a suitable size below which fish should not be allowed to be taken. On a good pike water, where the fish will run to 10lb., 15lb., and 20lb., no fish ought to be carried away under 5lb. weight. If this is strictly adhered to you may keep your stock up; but, if it is not, and the water is at all well fished, you cannot. On all such waters the practice of fishing with gorge tackle, too, should be prohibited, as it kills the fish. Pike fishing, too, should not be commenced before September; and had I a water of my own I should close it on the

14th of February. After that time the pike get heavy in spawn, and feed voraciously. According to my experience of the present pike fishing fence months, June and February, are the two most deadly months in the year. In both are the pike very hungry, and in the first they are kelts, and quite unfit to take, while in the latter they are gravid. Five months is long enough to war against *Esox lucius*, if you want always to keep up a good stock.

Though I never got a severe big one, I have had a good share of pretty good days. I once made a fine average at Lord Craven's. I got ten fish, which averaged 13½lb. each. I, no doubt, might have caught more, but I went on to perch fishing, which was of an attractive and superior kind, fish of 1½lb. and 2lb. coming ashore at every cast of the paternoster. Another day with a friend, at the Duke of Wellington's, at Strathfieldsaye, I got a big take. The biggest fish was 22lb. and the next 21lb. We landed these two almost at the same minute, and we got many fish of 15lb., 14lb., and 12lb., taking nothing under 7lb., for we threw in the little ones. How many there were and what they weighed I do not remember, but I know that we nearly covered the parlour floor of the little public-house at Winchfield with them. But the biggest day I ever had was with a friend at Luton. We took between us three-hundredweight, half of which we returned to the water as under-sized, throwing in about forty fish of under 5lb. weight; and, knowing something of London anglers, I doubt very much if any other couple would have done that, as there was no restriction as to weight. We got nothing over 17lb., but there was a grand show of ten, eleven, and twelve pounders.

Perhaps about the most comprehensive places in England for pike fishing, if they were pretty well protected, would be the Norfolk broads. They have, however, for the most part, been poached to death. Let us hope the new laws lately passed will change all this, and that London pike fishers will know where to go for good sport without asking leave of any one in the future.

Very erroneous notions have prevailed as to the rate at which a pike grows. This differs so much, owing to the difference of circumstances

in respect to water and food, that no general rule can be laid down for it. In some places pike will hardly grow a pound a year; in others, they have been known to grow eight or nine pounds. In this latter case, the consumption of food was necessarily very large. I am satisfied that big pike do not naturally feed every day; perhaps not more than twice, or at most three times a week. The pike is like the boa constrictor; he has a great gorge, and then lies torpid and dormant while digestion proceeds—indeed, he will often eat one fish which will take him twenty-four hours or more to swallow—the head part of the fish being completely digested while the tail sticks out of his mouth, still hard and firm.

Dear J.,—I've got a day on Lord Tompson's water for self and friend. I mean to go the first open day in February, so rig out some big live snaps and watch the weather. I'll take the lunch, and I will leave the drinks and baits to you.

Thine Piscatorially.

Thus I wrote, some years ago, to my friend J., a slayer of mighty pike, indeed, his friends call him "Jack-the-Giant killer." Now, I am not going to tell you where Lord Tompson's water is—old pike fishers keep these things to themselves; and you need not look for Lord Tompson's name in the peerage, and so on to his country seat, because it isn't in it, and I shan't give what old Nicholas used to call "my sportive readers" a chance to mob Lord T. with letters for asking permission. The cheek and perseverance of the London pike fisher in pursuit of permissions for his recreation is unbounded; and the ingenious multiplicity of pleas which he will put in to a perfect stranger, of whom he knows nothing save that he has some pike fishing, is wonderful.

Old D., the well-known cricketer, was a desperate hand at ferreting out permissions; but he got a rebuff once, which made him look all round the compass, and wonder whether he was D. or some one else who had been "stumped" for a "duck's egg." There was a grand match on at Lord's, and old Squire L. of L. always attended all the matches at Lord's. D. happened to hear that he had about the best pike fishing in the Kingdom, but was rather "sticky" in giving orders; but thinking that when he got him well on in a chat over his favourite pastime he

might slip in a request for a day, he laid his plans accordingly. The stumps were set; the match about to begin; old D. on the look out. When he saw the Squire drive up four-in-hand and enter the ground, D. carefully meandered round till he came upon him.

"Ah, D.! What sort of a match shall we have to-day?" and the conversation began; and D., who as a rule was a most disputatious cantankerous man, was highly deferential. The Squire was jolly and chatty, and D. saw that day's fishing coming nearer and nearer. At length he made a dash for it.

"I hear, Squire, that you have some good pike fishing at L. I should like to try my luck there very much if you would allow me."

I have said the squire was "sticky" in giving permission, but "sticky" is not the word. He never gave permission at all save under very unusual circumstances. He hated to give leave; he didn't fish himself, but he couldn't abide to see any one else fishing. His countenance changed, and the *suaviter in modo* gave place to the *fortiter in re*, or perhaps *in modo* too, would be more correct.

"I keep my fishing for my friends, Mr. D.," said the squire, frigidly, and with emphasis on the "friends" and the "mister,"—"and you're not one of them—good morning," and off went the squire to back old D.'s tip, while D. said something naughty under his breath, and wished he had the squire before the wicket and without pads on.

Time went over; February set in mild but not too warm and sunny. The day was fixed; the morning came. An early repast of sausages, ham, toast, coffee, eggs, and marmalade, put me in fettle; a large luncheon basket, duly stuffed with varieties, another basket with sundries, a large double hand rush basket and a pair of rods made my outfit when I met J. at the Knockemdown station on the Pick-me-up-in-pieces line. J. was tremendously picturesque, and what with kettles, &c., &c., we looked like Robinson Crusoe and his man Friday going in pursuit of the savages. J. was a prodigious smoker, and he had a bowsprit in the shape of a Regalia Elephanta about a foot or so long.

"Standard! Telegraph!" "Here, boy, give us both," and in five minutes J. was deep in the markets, and I was in the telegrams, as we sped

on to our destination. At Bunkemout junction we found a trap waiting. A drive of three miles brought us to the keeper's cottage, a paradise of woodbine, china, roses, &c., in the summer, and pretty enough even now. Alfred was waiting for us, and getting the cans and baskets led the way down through a sunken lane with high sandy banks, across a field to a line of pollards, and there we were. It was a lovely backwater with a stage of bucks in the middle of it, and looked, as J. said, "doosedly like pike." There were holes and long eddies and shallows, with rushes and reeds here and there, and a proper complement of stubs and piles, of course put there on purpose to lose fish.

"Well, Alfred, got any fish for us to-day?"

"There be plenty there if you can catch 'em, sir. There's one as I do wish you may; he's the biggest I've sin here this many a day; he've yeat a hull brood o' ducks wi' the down for stuffin, drat 'im."

"What'll he weigh, Alfred?"

"He'll goo ower thirty pound, sir. He mostly lies in that long deep eddy by the pollards, just above the bucks, which is the wust thing in the way as can be; but there's plenty good ones aside he; we allus has 'em in here when there's a flood, and the big flood last month have stocked us finely. I think we'll put all the things we don't want to use under the wall by the bucks yanner," and he did so.

"I shall spin this lower reach below the bucks down, I think, J., unless you prefer to."

"No, I'll put on a live snap, and try the pool above the bucks," said J., and the rods being soon together, the tackle fixed, and the baits on, I turned down stream and began.

It was rather more streamy below the bucks, and that was why I chose spinning. I had, too, a recollection of a good fish I had lost formerly near a willow stump half way down, and good fish have a knack of always occupying a good lair. I had a Chapman spinner—one of Woods' pattern. It saves a lot of trouble—preserves the bait, and always spins fairly—and, as your tail triangle flies loose, it does not miss many fish. I now generally carry three or four of different sizes to suit the baits and the fish, and in five minutes thirty yards of line were flying across the water.

I don't mean to brag, but I learnt of the best masters on the Thames, have practised a great deal, and think I do it pretty well. Across the stream with a slight splash, just to attract the fish's notice, and the bait comes spinning and whirling round in a seductive curve, as if it were going round a ball room in the Walpurgis Waltz. Once more the line is gathered in; a slight heave and a swing, and away flies the bait again, and along it comes like a streak of silver. The third time, as I was watching it, I saw a slight ridge in the water, and the bait seemed to disappear. There was a check, followed by "a chuck" from me, and I let him have it smartly. "Whizz!" and out went a dozen yards of line. One doesn't part with much, as a rule, to a pike; but this fellow, being in a stream, was a lively chap, and made a strong fight of it before I could get him near Alfred's landing net; but at length he got near enough, the net slipped under him, and out he came, a handsome six-pound fish, like a green tiger, and kicking like old Joe.

"Hi, hi, hi!" from J. broke in here.

"Run to Mr. J. with the net; he's in a tidy fish by the bend of his rod," and Alfred sped away, while I straightened the dace on my Chapman, it being little damaged.

There seemed to be a little more difficulty with J.'s fish than mine, which was accounted for when Alfred came back with the intelligence that J. had broken his ice with a good ten-pounder.

Away flew my bait again clean across the water, dropping with a light splash just clear of the opposite bushes. Half a dozen casts, and I saw a bulge in the water of a good fish following, but he shied off and didn't take. Another cast, but he didn't take, so I left him.

"That's a tidy fish there, sir. I see him t'other day just under that bush. He'll go a dozen pounds when you get him out." But as he didn't take I marked him down, and went on a few yards lower down, where I turned over a fair fish, but he was away directly. I cast again instantly to the spot without a second's delay, and he came like a lion at it, and I had him, but only for a moment or two, for once more he got off, and this time he had had enough of me. He seemed to be a nice fish of 7lb., or thereabouts. My bait being rather

done up now, I put on a new one, and while I was doing so, "Hi, hi, hi!" came down the bank, and away went Alfred to assist J. in landing a five-pounder, while I spun on for twenty or thirty yards without a touch.

Alfred had returned, and was relating to me the incidents of the last course, when in mid-stream I got a heavy pull, and, giving the fish a severe "rugg," I was soon at the old game again. Up stream he went, down stream he went, and then up again, and then, like a salmon, he made two leaps into the air, falling back with a bang, and showing inches which seemed about the counterpart of the last fish, and brought my heart into my mouth.

Fortunately, the hooks held, and after ten or twelve minutes' tender handling, for, having just lost a good one twice, he rather alarmed me into the prevalent notion that he was lightly hooked in consequence of his jumping; but it was not so, he was well hooked, only the flying tail hooks had caught him outside near the eye, poor beast! After ten or twelve minutes, I repeat, Alfred managed to spoon him out, and, having earned it, I lighted a weed, and thought the day was hopeful. After this I got a nice little fish of 4lb., which was the lowest size allowed, but, resolved to do the liberal thing, I turned him in again, as I did a three-pounder just after. Then there was another "Hi, hi, hi!" from J., and once more Alfred made tracks, and assisted in the landing of an eight-pounder.

I still worked on down towards the willow tree I mentioned. The stump projected out over the water, and there was a deep hole and eddy under it, any fisherman would spot it for a good fish; halfway across the stream the hole shallowed up to about three or four feet deep. "Now, carefully, carefully," and seeing that my bait spun well, and that all was clear, I sent it careering across the shallow and brought it whirling round into the hole, "heave and pull, heave and pull." It works into a straight line just below the willow stump, and comes darting past the stump. "Now or never."

"Confound the fish, he's either not at home or not hungry."

"I see him feeding on the shaller and makin' the baits fly, rarely," said Alfred, "and I judge he's a 17lb. or 18lb. fish; I've seed him many times."

Round came the bait again, but no result followed.

"Not to-day, Alfred," I said, as I turned round to get below the tree.

At that moment there was a loud splash—a deuce of a tug at my rod point, and as the rod was firmly over my shoulder, he got it pretty hot; nevertheless, to make sure I gave him another rugg. The bait was just hanging on the water, turning lazily round on the surface, as the stream caught the fans, and the temptation was too much for him, so he rose like a salmon at a fly, and took it, and I held him. Down he dashed to the very end of the hole, then out of it, on to the shallow, where he made fine play among the small fry, then back and into the hole again.

"He'll be making for his holt presently, sir," said Alfred, "can't you lean down and pass the rod under the tree to me, so as to get below it, and keep him away. If he works up and bolts in under your feet you can't help it; and what old roots and snags there is there Lord only knows."

At the risk of a ducking, and hanging on to the tree by one arm and my eyelids, I passed the rod under, so that Alfred got hold of it by the middle joint. The reel went two feet under water when I let go; but Alfred soon got a tight line on the fish again, which was grubbing along under the bank, and having recovered the rod I hurried down below, and putting a good strain on, brought him away from danger down stream again; and after a little more than a quarter of an hour's tussle, I worked him in on the shallow below where Alfred stood knee deep with the net, and in another minute we had him out, a fine male fish of 16½ lb. We regarded him with satisfaction, and drank his health, and so forth.

While we had been busy with him, sundry "hi, hi, hi's" came down the bank, but, as they could not be attended to, J. was left to his own devices, as he had a pocket gaff. Alfred now went to him. He had hooked a good fish of a dozen pounds or so, played him home, and scratched him severely with the gaff, without hooking him, so the fish got off. Just as Alfred came up he hooked and landed a five-pounder, which he returned, and then another, which was equally lucky.

I went on, and spun the rest of the water down to the bottom for a good

hundred yards, but only got hold of one or two small fish. I then went up and tried the fish I had marked down. He came and pulled at me, but very cautiously, so I missed him. As we had breakfasted early, it was pretty well luncheon time, so I shouldered my rod and walked up to the bucks, where Alfred was engaged in lighting a fire. My sundry basket produced a fire pot, kettle, saucepan, &c. The luncheon basket turned out a big basin full of jelly, which being turned into the saucepan soon resolved itself into about three pints of fine mock-turtle soup. A shout brought J. upon the scene, who flavoured the soup with a bottle of old East India sherry, and a bottle of very choice Irroy. How we did enjoy that soup. The day was not by any means warm, and we sat in a triangle round the fire, and swallowed a couple of platefuls each. A cold duck was then reduced to bones, and then, in fear the sherry and fizz should not mix properly, I produced a bottle labelled "cognac" and "1834," and the kettle being now in full sing, we had just one glass of steaming hot grog.

"What's that you say? It was a shame to mix it"—well, perhaps—but after all *que voulez vous?* The best brandy makes the best grog, and if any one manes to deny that proposition let him just put the print of his big ugly fut on the tail of me coat; whooroo! A comforting pipe, and then we fell to it again.

I won't describe the capture of each fish *seriatim*. I got four more, 6lb., 7lb., 10lb., and 11lb. J. got two of 8lb. and 9lb., and lost the sock-dolager, and we threw in some seven or eight small ones. About one hundred yards above the bucks the cut narrowed and grew deep—twenty yards above was an old pile or two, part of some broken down framework. J. was about to pitch his bait out into the middle of this cut, which he had not yet fished, when Alfred brought him in the landing net a small Jack about ten or eleven inches long which he had just spooned out of a ditch close by.

"Put him on, sir, put him on," said Alfred. "If there's ever a whopper handy he's bound to fetch him."

"But he's too large for my hooks, Alfred. What shall I do?"

"Never mind, sir. If a fish takes it give him plenty o' time and let him gorge. I'll forgive ye if ye kills a little 'un; but ye wun't."

"Thus assured, J. put the fish on somehow, and, pitching it out with a tremendous splash into the very middle of the cut, waited the event. Of course the float went down at once.

"Ain't the bait strong? That's 'ow I likes to see 'em; and don't he keep the float down? Just tighten the line or he'll be getting foul o' weeds." J. did so, and there was a fierce jag at the rod point.

"Why, that ain't the bait; something's took the bait already," said J., quite excited, as the line began to cut the water slowly, the fish moving up towards a big bank of weeds and rushes about twenty yards above.

"That's the big 'un, for a million. I see him lay there at the tail o' them weeds once or twice last week; he must 'a took it as soon as ever it fell in the water. Give him plenty o' time sir, plenty. Don't worry him whatever you doo's. Let 'n get the 'ooks well in his gullet. Eat my ducks will 'e, ye ould varmint? Jest you swaller that nice little great-great-grandson o' yourn, that's all;" and the fish evidently meant to, for he laid up at the tail of the weeds quietly pouching for nearly a quarter of an hour, while J. stood watching, all of a twitter.

Presently the fish showed an inclination to move, and as he was coming out from his lair into the cut J. let him have it. The stroke was a shrewd one and hurt, for the pike made one dart clean through the reed and rush bed, mowing them down as if with a scythe. Fortunately, J.'s line was stout and new, and the tackle stood it. When he came out into the stream, he made tracks rather, and took out forty or fifty yards of line at a dash; but the stream was pretty clear, the tackle sound, and the hold certain—at least, as Alfred said, "he'll turn hissself inside out afore he gets rid of them hooks." Then he began dropping down the cut with a short dash and a heavy drag, every now and then towards the bucks, which were seventy or eighty yards below.

"Drat 'im; take care ye doesn't lev'n get near the bucks, or he'll break ye on them piles as sure as fate, for they're full o' rusty old nails."

J. did his best, and fought a good fight, but five and thirty pounds *is* five and thirty pounds, and you can't do as you like with it. The fish was obstinate, and meant going for the bucks; and, in spite of

every dodge—in spite of dashing, splashing, stoning to frighten him up again—he merely sheered over to the other side and kept on.

J.'s eyes were half out of his head with indignation at the pike's base behaviour. He'd "pay him; hang him!"

"Yes, I'm afraid you will; and you won't get through after all. I never saw such a dour headed beast; he's as obstinate as a mule. But he's an awful big 'un," I said, as J. laid the rod well on, and actually checked the fish for a moment, till the big brute fairly lashed the water into foam as he tumbled and walloped on the surface. The next moment, however, he was away again forty miles an hour down to the bucks.

"I'll pay him. D—n his picture," said J., panting after. "By Gad! he'll beat me after all; he's got into the stream that sets for these piles, and I can no more stop him than fly. I'll smash the rod. I'll——"

But the next minute the line grated across the outer pile. There was a plunge and a dash; the rod straightened; the line floated like a pennant in the wind; and J. collapsed.

"Never mind, old man. Take a drop of '34, and never say die. You fought him splendidly, and had the water been clear you must have killed him.

"Forty pound if he was an ounce," said J. in a hoarse whisper, as he accepted the flask.

"Getting that way, at any rate, though hardly in the fours."

Still J. lamented and wouldn't be comforted. "*If* he'd only killed that fish."

"What odds will you lay, old man, you haven't killed him?"

"Bet you a new hat."

"Done with you. You'll have that fish within a week. Remember there's a float to him with a double hitch, and unless he can jam that very hard somewhere he can't break it, but it will hang up every where and wring his soul out. You'll have him in less than a week." And so he had, for three days after a parcel about four or five feet long, done up in straw, reached his office directed to him, and when he opened it it

was the pike, with his own gimp and float, and about four or five yards of line hanging from his mouth. Alfred found the float in the water near the bucks; he got hold of it, and found the fish utterly done, and with little trouble got him ashore, rather wasted, poor beast! He was hooked in the gullet; and even then he weighed $35\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Our great taxidermist Cooper set him up gorgeously, and he is the pride of J.'s ancestral halls.

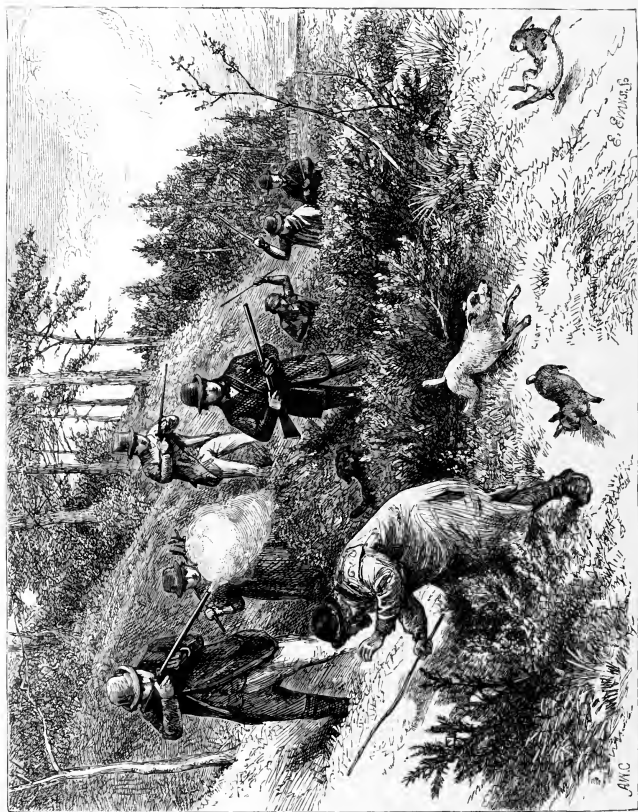
This fight about finished the day. It was then about half-past four, and we didn't care to fish after. So we collected the spoil, we re-kindled the fire, and sat round it for half an hour or so and punished the '34, till the fly was due.

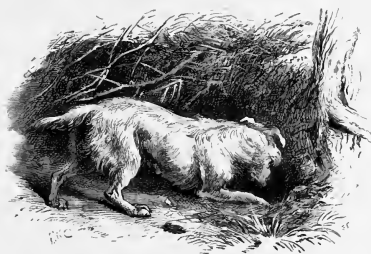
The fish made a brave show. There was exactly a dozen of them: a 5, two 6's, two 7's, two 8's, one 9, two 10's, one 11, and my $16\frac{1}{2}$, or over 100lb. weight. Besides this we had thrown back over a dozen more of three or four pounders; and that shan't be a bad day.



"A NICE KETTLE OF FISH."

THOMAS COLLINGWOOD CHOWN,
GLENMORE, SILVER HILL,
ST. LEONARDS-ON-SEA.





RABBIT SHOOTING.



H O FOUR-LEGGED creature has ever perhaps been such a bone of contention as our familiar friend the coney. Condemnation dire and strong has been hurled at his head on all sides. Farmers have got red in the face thousands and thousands of times; newspapers have condemned the coney in good printer's ink, and not unfrequently indifferent composition and worse sense, hundreds upon hundreds of times. Popularity-hunting toad-eating Members of Parliament have made forcibly feeble speeches about him, till it is a wonder he dares to show his face in the light of day at all; but somehow he contrives to live and thrive through it all, and his body year by year increases in demand, so that he will soon, at the rate the price thereof rises, cease to be the food of the poor; while his skin is held in such estimation by the furriers, that it has of late years doubled and trebled its value. What the furriers do with it, and what they do or do not make of it, is only known to themselves. He's a merry little chap too, and capital fun at times; for, though I hate shooting a great lumbering stupid hare, that screeches like an infant when you draw on him, I must say I like a clever little coney who dodges well and dies game,

and will even in his last kick roll over into a hole if he can, and sell you at last.

No doubt our young friend is an affliction to the farmer when he does not belong to him, and when he has not the right of trapping. Somehow, when these things are otherwise he is found to be very much more endurable. There is no doubt that a lot of rabbits (still more a lot of hares, because they not only eat more but travel further) will polish off a good deal of sustenance, and do a good deal of damage. Still, it must always be remembered that they are not wholly valueless, as seems to be assumed, in themselves; but this is not the place to decide the great and burning "bunny question," though he is a useful beast to both landlords and tenants at times. When I took a shooting in early life my landlord farmed his own land. I went to look at the house, and shortly walked over the fields, beat up a few hedgerows, saw some birds, found plenty of rabbits in the hedges close home, and concluded to take. Soon after I was landed my landlord began grumbling about the rabbits and the mischief they were doing the young wheat. I had only come in at the fag-end of the season, therefore I hadn't increased the stock. Nevertheless, I found that he commenced treating the nearer holes to a dressing of coal tar and oakum, which I did not like, and some time after I found out that this nice old party, in view of my coming to "view," had turned most of these very rabbits down in the hedges to induce me to take, and when I was safe he wanted to be rid of them again.

It has been the fashion to look down on the astuteness of the British farmer on the part of those who never had any dealings with him, and have no practical knowledge of him. I have an idea that he knows his way about, and is no more of a fool than, if so much as, the rest of the population.

Rabbit shooting is good fun, though perhaps the least lively method is ferreting. For this a fine day, with not too much wind, is indispensable. For in wet and windy weather the rabbits bolt badly, and rabbits are sometimes very obstinate in this respect, and will allow the ferret to scratch and tear them severely before they will move. A couple or

three guns at the outside is quite enough for the sport, and as many ferrets, for one will often lay up with the rabbit if he refuses to bolt for hours. Then, proceeding to the bank or copse where the rabbits are, the keeper selects a hole which has been used lately, and puts in a ferret. The guns keep watch over the adjacent holes, from any of which a rabbit or two, or even more, may bolt at any moment. Entire silence is requisite; any loud talking, stumping about, or other disturbance, will keep the rabbits at home. Presently, deep in the bowels of the earth, you hear a rumble, rumble, as the quarry stampedes before the dreaded intruder. "Now, look out. Ah! there he is"—bang!—"Missed him, by Jupiter! and he's into another hole, whence wild horses wouldn't dislodge him"—bang!—"Ah! there was another. Your friend has turned him over, and, lo! there is Master Ferret looking out of the hole the rabbit has vacated. Pick him up, boy, and come along." And you move on to another hole. Here, haply, you hear rumble, rumble, many times; but bunny won't bolt, so you have to leave the boy to watch for the ferret, and go on to another.

Thus you continue picking up one or two every here and there, and if the rabbits bolt well it is just a chalk or two better than doing nothing. Where there is a copse, however, the best fun is to ferret the holes and then stop them, and, having got the rabbits out, to run a few terriers through the underwood, and stand at the holes to pot the rabbits as they come down; and it is a very amusing sight if the rabbit charges straight at you, dodges between or round your legs, and pops into a hole just behind you which happens to be open. I saw one play a relative of mine that trick once, and I never saw a man look so foolish.

Hedgerow shooting at rabbits is very good fun, too, with a sharp little terrier to rattle them out. "There he is!" "No! here he is!" "Gone back!" Rush, rattle, and out he pops. Bang! "Missed, by Jove!" In the hedge again, out the other side for half a second. Bang! "Missed again, by the piper! Here he is! Here, Grip! Grip! Grip! Here, good lad! This is where I saw him last. What is the dog doing?" "Scratching at a hole. Gone to ground, by jingo!" "Come away, dog! soon find another," and so on.

The hardest shooting I ever had was at a place among some sandhills and broken ground on the Welsh coast, not far from Borth. The proprietor of this rabbitinal Eden let fellows shoot there for a shilling per diem—so my informant told me.

“But you give up your rabbits, of course?” I said.

“No; that’s the best of it. You have all you kill.”

“Then there ain’t any rabbits there.”

“Heaps, so they say; I don’t understand it.”

“Nor do I. I suppose the fellows who come are just duffers mostly, and if one does come now and then who can shoot a bit, he just sets the duffers to balance him. I’ll have my bob’s worth anyhow; I’ll show ’em how to do it!” I mentally resolved, for I fancied myself muchly at rabbit shooting, having had a lot of all sorts, and frequently in cover bagging ten or a dozen without a miss.

But “vaulting ambition doth o’erleap itself;” and so did mine. I paid my shilling and sought the warren with a bag to carry the rabbits. Ha! ha! It was a rough bit of ground, on old sand heaps, all hummocks and tussocks, covered with coarse, long, wiry grass. There were lots of rabbits, but you never saw more than a white tail vanishing into a run between the tumps or tussocks; and when you got your gun up you were always too late, and there was an eighteen-inch tussock between you and that tail which kindly received your charge of No. 7’s. I used to be a pretty quick snap shot, but I was no use at all—I wasn’t in it. Not one single solitary rabbit did I bag.

The only other thing I ever saw at all approaching it was a match at sparrows that once came off near the old Copenhagen, when we used to cricket there. They were shooting at green birds—linnets and a mixture of all sorts—one day, when a sharp chap bet one of our members—I think it was Tony Gypsum—that he couldn’t kill six birds such as these out of a dozen at eighteen yards, if he’d let him pitch the trap where he pleased. Tony stipulated that he should have a clear view of the trap and accepted the bet. On the day Mr. Wideawake led the way to a cabbage garden with high broccoli stumps, and in the middle of these was a small space cleared, so that at eighteen yards you could

just see the trap clearly all round, and that was all. Tony did not look quite so confident then, but still backed himself. The first linnet, a green bird, was put in the trap. "Are you ready? Pull!" Over went the trap, and—"whip!"—the finch darted in amongst the cabbage stumps. Tony fired, of course, and cut up a cabbage or two, but no feathers. The next was the same, and the next and next. He only killed three out of his dozen, and one of those was disputed as not on the wing. It was an awful sell, and a good many dropped their money to Mr. Wideawake and his friends. *I didn't*—I collared.

"What are you going to do on Friday?" asked my old friend Julius Tite, one day.

"Was thinking of trying the marshes for a snipe or two. I have heard that there are some about."

"Why not drive with me over to Trotstead? They are going to shoot rabbits—capital fun. We'll get a hundred or two, and a score or so of hares. Pheasants now are tabooed, but we may get pigeons and a cock or two."

I was very keen then, as it is a good many years ago, and I agreed at once to join my friend, who was a jolly sawbones in the place, very good company, and "amoosin'" in various ways. A good doctor, good sportsmen, good musician, and a famous good hand with the longbow. On this latter instrument he was unequalled in his day.

I knew we should have a good bit of fun. It was what was called the keeper's day, when he asked eight or ten of the tenants and friends to shoot and to a bit of roast beef after. It was a big shoot with three or four hundred acres or more of coverts, and Mr. Topsawyer, the keeper, was a very big man in his way. Our medico attended Mrs. Top. when she increased the population, and so was always asked to everything that Mr. T. could put in his way.

A friend of mine lately was bargaining about a shooting. The rabbits were the difficulty. The tenants made so much fuss about them that the restrictions were unusually strong; and how to manage the tenants if they turned nasty he didn't know. "Ask them to shoot with you every now and then," said I; "and as for the rabbits, let them have a couple of

regular field days at 'em at the end of the season, and ask a friend or so. Let them shoot all the bunnies they can and keep all they shoot. Give 'em a bit of roast beef and a goose after, and when they are in high good humour make them a speech, and say you never will consent to injure them by excess of game; that what game there is you wish them to have some sport out of as well as yourself; that if ever anyone has cause—or thinks he has cause—of complaint, only let him come to you, and you will talk it over with him, and settle it on a fair basis then and there. Wind up with a jolly song or two to promote harmony, and you won't hear much about damage. If you do you may depend upon it it will not be quite without reason; and if you are wise you will do your best to settle it. That was my advice in respect to rabbits; and depend upon it, if you don't do something of that kind, you will have to put up with worse.

In some counties, now, farmers won't take farms unless they have the right of game too; and, in many, they insist on the right to trap, and trapping, if carried out at all closely, will soon make a clearance of your rabbits and hares.

On the estate in question a very good feeling had always prevailed, and the keepers' days were an institution. On that Friday, Tite and self were threading our way through the maize of carts which always blocked the road at the Green Man—(*L'homme vert et tranquille*, as our lively neighbours render that remarkable sign; why "a green man," or why "a still," I can't imagine)—on to Squasham, where we pull up for our "morning," and a greeting to the pretty Miss Thickets, who dispense the liquids to thirsty souls, and don't, as they would have done in Goldsmith's time, "Kiss the cup and pass it to the rest," but smile their sweetest instead. Now we skirt the downs; a few miles further and we plunge into a fine avenue, turn down a side lane, and pull up at the keeper's house, where a shout of welcome meets us, and every hand is stretched out to welcome the Medico, who is popular. Then I come in for "Mr. F., Mr. White; Mr. Brown, Mr. F.; Mr. F., Mr. Green; Mr. Black, Mr. F.," and so on, and in five minutes we are all as jolly as sand-boys, each one had his gun over his shoulder. We were the only visitors, most of the others were tenants.

To us came Topsawyer, and three assistants; a hearty red-faced, white-haired giant of sixty was he, in regulation velveteens. He shook hands all round, dispensed a glass of sparkling ale, and led the way to the coverts. These were very convenient ones, broken up with good wide rides into about four or five acre strips, with plenty of brambles here and there, and plenty of bracken here and there, and the trees not too thick, so that we could scramble through without great difficulty; two or three guns were posted so as to head the game in places where there was a chance of its breaking away. Then Mr. Topsawyer produced from one of his capacious pockets one of the prettiest little beagles I ever saw, about fifteen inches long, and seven or eight inches high, and out of his other pocket another, as did his three aids, and four couple of the nicest, smartest little hounds I ever saw frisked round Topsawyer's gaiters. He was very proud of these little beauties, and after we had petted them, and admired them a bit, we made into covert, and T. S. dismissed his little pack with a wave. "Hi! in, then, my beauties! Hi! find him my pretties!" and the little pack dashed in with a verve and style that did one good to see, feathering and questing about to and fro, here, there, everywhere.

"Yow, yow."

"Hark to Countess—good bitch—hark, Countess!"

"Yow-ow-yow-ow-ow-ow," and away the little creatures paddled their fastest after the first bunny, with the most musical bell-like peal I ever heard. "Bang!" and bunny's career was cut short by one of the party; but in less than a minute they were on another, which hadn't run fifty yards, when he, too, was bowled over. Then they started a hare, "Kill him alive, my beauties, kill him alive!" shouted Topsawyer, when the hare suddenly turned and came across me, and I had an opportunity of distinguishing myself, which I did accordingly. Then the fun grew fast and furious.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow."

"Hold him and hunt him, my pretties; kill him alive then—kill him alive"—bang! bang! bang!

Every now and then a pheasant or two, or three, went rushing up among the trees. It was counted a high crime and misdemeanour to point at one,

“Please don’t point at the pheasants, sir; please do not. Next you’ll be a pullin’ of the trigger,” Topsawyer would cry. “Awoid temptation, sir, as the parson says, and don’t do it, please;” and if this hint wasn’t enough, the offender never had another chance.

Woodcocks were scarce, and if we got two or three in the day we did pretty well. I saw one whip out from behind a holly bush, along a sunk fence, and into a turnip field on the other side. No one else saw it, as I thought, so calling Julius to me, I whispered what I’d seen, and we made a little detour on our own hook, and no sooner had I set foot into the turnip field, and while Julius was still on the fence, than up got the cock, and fairly hovered in the air before me right in the open. If I’d winked at him he must have come down, and I bagged him, of course. When I came back and handed the cock to Topsawyer with conscious pride, he nodded approvingly.

“Werry well, sir, werry well. I likes to see young gents ’ave their heyes about ’em. I see him slip away down the fence, and if you had a-gone by yourself I should ’a stopped you; but you worn’t a-goin’ to lose a cock for want of a second gun—werry right, sir, werry right and proper!” and “the young gent as spotted that there cock” was often included in Julius’s invitation thereafter.

Being keen and active I kept up with the dogs pretty well, and got a goodish lot of shooting.

It was capital fun, the musical tongues of the little beagles, the cheery cry of Old Topsawyer, the crash of branches and brambles, the constant discharge of the guns, the mishaps, the laughter, reckless joviality and high spirits of the party, made a very jolly time of it. The watchers were already laden with rabbits, for there were plenty, and scores had already turned up their little toes, and when we finished the cover a very pretty pile of them was collected; most of the guns had one or two odd ones in their jacket pockets. We *had* pockets and used them in those days, and as rabbit after rabbit was dragged out from these recesses and pitched on the heap the laughter and chaff was multiplied. Then a glass of amber ale was passed round, and on we went again.

The next covert was thicker, and there we had to stand in the rides while

the dogs beat towards us, and this was pretty safe, provided you took care not to shoot the dogs, which of course every one took especial care not to. This covert took us some time, for a lot of the rabbits doubled back, and we had to take the dogs round and beat it again, and we got more the second beat than we did the first. "Bang! bang! bang!" what a fusillade there was as the rabbits, finding the covert rather hot, sought to break out in various directions. At length we had done it pretty thoroughly, and coming out of one of the rides we found a couple of hayricks, with dry convenient litter, a mighty home-baked loaf, a noble lump of cheddar, and a couple of jars of fine ale.

"Here's rabbitin'," said a hearty red faced farmer of fifty, a capital shot and fond of the fun.

"Ah! How about that one yaw missed in the ditch, Barber?" said another, with a guffaw. "Lord 'a never see such a game as yon. There was Barber a spinnin' round and round loike a peg top, an' the rabbit dodged un into the ditch. Bang, goes Barber. 'Blamed if I ain't missed 'n,' 'a says. 'Never see such a dodger as yon,' 'a says. 'Blowed if he maunt a sarved his time to a laayer,' 'a says. Haw, haw, haw!"

"Ah! how 'bout that un yaw *didn't* miss, Giles? Hold un up, booy; Taake two hands to un or a'll never hang together. Haw, haw, haw!" And the boy held up a rabbit cut nearly in two, and hanging together only by a bit of skin. "Haw, haw, haw! If yon un sarved his apprentice to a laayer, thick un sarved his'n to a laayer's client I reckon. Haw, haw, haw!" and there was a great shout as Giles buried his blushing face in a quart pot.

"Never mind, Giles," said Topsawyer, "better bag 'em than miss 'em. Must have some for the stock pot, and there's one less for them sweedlings o' yourn. Ha, ha!" At this there was another laugh. Mr. Topsawyer's jokes were privileged.

"Ah, they won't do me much 'arm, Mister Topsawyer. I be goin' to veed they off next week—we shan't fall out over that I reckon," said Giles, and so the fun and chaff went on till lunch was over, and the bread and cheese had vanished.

After lunch we once more shouldered our guns, and, having exchanged

our little pack of beagles for a scratch team of spaniels and terriers, belonging to the farmers themselves, we moved away to some twenty or thirty acres of rough ground, covered with patches of rank heather, rough grass, thorn bushes, and a big patch or two of gorse at the far end, and putting in the dogs we had a rare bit of fun. It was not at all easy shooting, as in places the stuff was thick; but it was patchy, and every now and then the firing became lively.

"There he goes! there he goes. Look out, Mr. F.! he's comin' to you, sir. Rabbit your way, Mr. Tite." Bang, bang!

"Yap, yap," a spaniel would go now and then. Then there was a rush, and more banging.

"Well killed, Mr Tite! Bravo Giles, that's another for the sweedes. Well done, Barber; hit 'em up. That's the style! Get ahead there Mr. F., get ahead, pray; there's a ride fifty yards up," and in my endeavour to hasten I go a cropper over a tump. Fortunately I keep my gun up out of mischief, and gathering myself up I hasten on to the ride, just in time to see six or seven rabbits bolt across, and to nail the last of them shooting well ahead into the bush he vanished into. It is a blind shot, as lots of these shots always are, but it fetches my lively friend, whom I find kicking. Another and another comes across, and I score a kill and a miss carefully, and so the sport progresses. Towards the lower end a perfect bouquet of pheasants gets up, and out of an old ivy-covered stump flits a brown owl, which one of the farmers named Johnnes shot. There was a good joke about this: Johnnes, being a round-eyed, moon-faced man, was rather like an owl, and he got much chaffed after dinner.

By the time we had finished the furze the afternoon was wending, so having put all our things into a small cart which was waiting at the outside, we walked off to the Plough, a very snug country inn, and here we found a plain but plentiful dinner of roast and boiled, with plenty of sound ale and grog after provided by the proprietor of the property. The power of stowage these sons of toil evinced was a fine thing to witness, and before satiety cried "Hold, enough!" the joints displayed fearful ravages. After dinner each member of the company

mounted a long churchwarden clay, and songs and speeches followed each other rapidly.

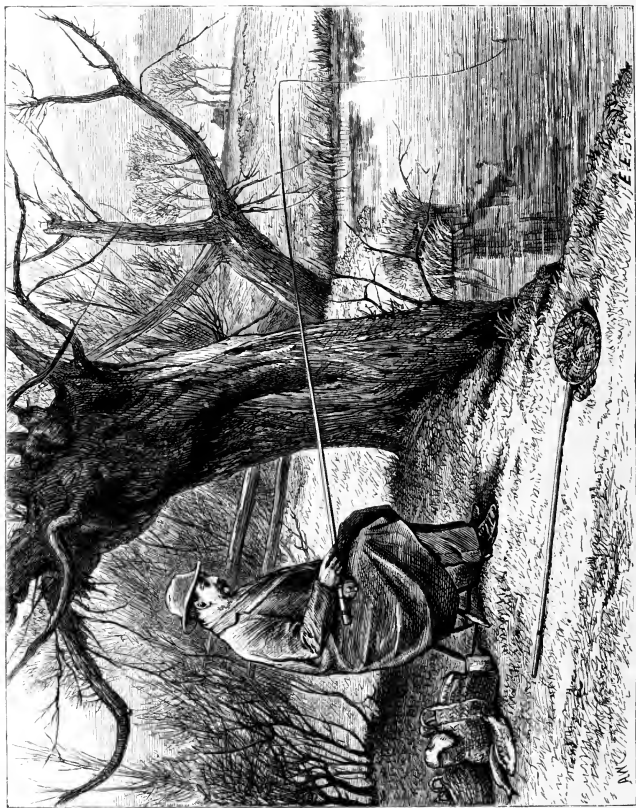
Giles got great fun out of Johnnes and the owl—said that he'd committed suicide and shot hisself, and said that "he ought to be buried at the four cross roads wi' a stake in his belly. In regard o' the stake, there wa'n't much difficulty as he see, 'cos he gen'ly had one there 'bout tew o'clock, or thereaways, four days out of seven"—an insinuation at which even the victim grinned,—“and in regard o' the cross roads, why, if the widder had no objections, no doubt Johnnes wouldn't object to bury hisself there.” At this there was much laughter, for the cross roads were just outside the inn door, and the landlady of the Plough was known to be a weakness to friend Johnnes.” Then Barber had a turn at Giles, and Topsawyer took a little go all round; and then his health was proposed with vociferous cheers, and he made a hearty characteristic reply, and announced that the bag of the day consisted of 170 rabbits, forty hares, a leash of cocks, and various small fry, as pigeons, &c.; and there was a hare apiece for each, and as many rabbits as each liked to take. And when we closed a very jolly day we packed ourselves up in our cart among a perfect heap of rabbits and hares, lighted our pipes and our lamps, and amidst a fire of good wishes and “good nights” set our faces homewards.

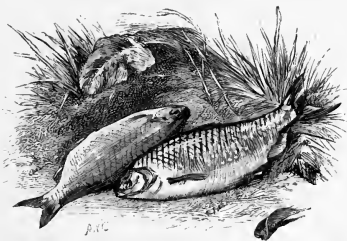


“I'LL FER HIM, AND FIERK HIM, AND FERRET HIM.”

BY VIMU
MUSCHLAC

THOMAS COLLINGWOOD CLOWN,
GLENMORLIM VERMIL, L,
ST. LEONARDS-ON-SEA.





ROACHING.



Y LORD the Earl has his salmon river, and when he sets out with his body guard of gillies, fly tyers, &c., &c., he is a considerable party. Whether he really appreciates the joys of angling when he hands his rod to his valet to "finish him off," after having had the salmon's first rush, may be open to question. In some sort I suppose he does, or he would not follow it. That there is a quickening of the pulses and excitement in the pursuit which is both healthy and invigorating there is no question, but that he realises anything of the softer influences of "the contemplative man's recreation," as exemplified by the patient roach fisher sitting by his silent pool, poring over his quill, I do not believe. It is quite a different feeling—*un autre affaire*. The trout fisher has his joys, but they are of an active, stirring, and perhaps more intellectual kind, and the study of various sciences is often brought into play; but "the banker" bathes himself simply and solely in nature, and has in his day by the river a thousand calm enjoyments which the others do not experience.

Who cannot or does not sympathise with and almost envy the

enjoyments which the poorer class of Londoner gets once in two months or so in a day by the river, on some favourite swim, even with moderate sport. Say that he gets a half or three-quarter pound chub or perch, and a dozen or so of roach and bleak of modest dimensions. He has got a fry for to-morrow, and he goes home as proud of it and as much, and more, exultant over his catch than my lord is over his 40lb. salmon.

Coming out of the fœtid atmosphere of some narrow little back street or obscure court with his bundle of rods, baskets, &c., at his back, with a choice companion, reliant on his own resources, he trudges through the night to some far-off spot, and at early dawn may be found commencing operations under some old pollard, with his *impedimenta* within hand's reach, and his stool snugly and safely posed, and his companion ditto, ditto, within conversing distance of him, and it may be said of him more truly than it can be said of other anglers "Atte the leest he hath his holsom walke and mery at his case, a sweete ayre of the sweete sauoure of the meede floures, that makyth hym hungry. He hereth the melodyous armony of fowles; he seeth the yonge swannes, herons, duckes, cotes, and many other foules wyth theyr brodes; whyche me semyth better than alle the noyse of houndys, the blastes of horneys and the scrye of foulis that hunters, fawkeners, and foulers can make. And yf the angler take fysshe, surely thenne is there noo man merier than he is in his spyryte. Also who soo woll vse the game of anglynge; he must ryse erly, whiche thyng is prouffyttable to man in this wyse, that is to wyte, moost to the heele of his soule, for it shall cause hym to be holy; and to the heele of his body, for it shall cause hym to be hole. Also to the increase of his goodys, for it shall make hym ryche, as the olde englysshe prouerbe sayeth in this wyse: who soo woll ryse erly shall be holy, helthÿ, and zely"—all of which sayeth the good old Dame Juliana Berners, who assuredly had no lordly salmon fisher in her mind when she wrote these words; and if he take fish there *is* no man merrier than is our friend the banker in his spirit, and if anything can break through the horrible crust engendered by the foul city life it is the contemplation and enjoyment of days like these. The

sport of the poor bankers is so healthful, and contains so much moral welfare in it, that it is worthy of all encouragement and consideration by the Legislature; for if it is worth the while of that paternal body to put down bull-baiting, cock-fighting, dog-fighting, pugilism, ratting, dancing, and even cards and skittles, it is surely worth its while to provide in their place something besides drunkenness and debauchery.

It used to be asked, "Pray what is a gentleman without his recreation?" I think it much more to the purpose to ask, Pray what is a poor man without his recreation? And, if you do not know, I think I can tell you, for it is summed up in two words—a "drunkard" and a "revolutionist." If you can't trust your people to play, you can't trust them to work. You destroy the balance, and they will restore it after their own fashion. We are trying to make the working man "genteel;" that is the only word for it, and we are making a monster as did Frankenstein. "You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear." No, you can't. Parks and gardens are all very well, but they are not enough, they don't at all fill up the need.

A hundred years or so hence, if England should have the great good fortune to exist so long, what idiots our great great grandsons will consider their great great grandfathers to have been! and with what amazement they will regard that wonderful anomaly of muddle, worry, and mismanagement which we generalise under the name of the Legislature, and which we continue to put up with year after year like the very patientest of "patient Grisels!" and how very much justified they will be in so regarding and considering! In the name of goodness and common sense, if a Government does not exist for the happiness, welfare, and comfort of the nation it dominates, what does it exist for? and why is it permitted to exist? and how long will it be before the people begin to ask themselves that question? But alas! how infirm is human nature! I was but now a-saying that anglers be quiet contemplative folk; and here I am bursting out with principles which fine high flavoured old Tory and solemn pragmatic old Whig would probably pronounce alike to be bordering on communistic. Though it is laid down somewhere that, though we should render to the Creator that which is his, we

should likewise render to Cæsar that which is his also, I would only observe in this last obligation that the *per contra* has to be considered and obeyed likewise, viz., that Cæsar should render to me that which is mine, which, in this case, I don't think he does; and the result is, that England is only "merry" now when it is drunken.

But eschewing politics, and returning to the roach, I have to say that the roach is to the Londoner what the trout is to the North-countryman. It is the backbone of his sport. It inhabits a great variety of waters. It grows pretty quickly, affords good sport, and is by no means a despicable dish when properly treated and cooked. Thousands of anglers in London are roach fishers and nothing else, and if you want to see the skilful East Ender at his work, walk up the banks of the Lea any Saturday afternoon in the season, and count the number of twenty-foot rods you will see projecting over every mile of the water, and you will be inclined to wonder where all these rods can find sport enough to satisfy them, or perhaps to calculate how little sport each rod will be content to be satisfied with.

The roach has been called the river sheep, because it is supposed to be so easily taken. This may be true of the younglings, more particularly in a stream or pond little fished; but go into a well-fished stream among a shoal of "pounders," and see what you can do there, even with the finest hair tackle, unless you can get a coloured water to assist you. In my stream I never think of going out unless the water is coloured. It is true that by dodging behind trees or lying on one's stomach an odd fish or two can sometimes be taken in clear water, but their name is anything but legion, nor do the big fish as a rule bite well before the winter, when all the weeds are gone. Summer long they remain in the weed feeding on weed and minute insects—and not till they are obliged, do they take to more sporting practices. Formerly I did my winter roaching in the Thames; but the Thames is not only often severely disappointing, it is expensive, and 10s. or 15s. for a dozen or two of wee-bit roaches or so is more than I can stand. But I have metal more attractive now close home. I have as fine roaching, &c., as there is in the county of Middlesex, when the fish are in the humour, not two hundred yards from my back door,

and I proceed to give you some idea of it. Jorkins is coming to day to have a turn with me. It has been raining lately, and the water is in prime order as regards colour; and if the mills don't play any tricks with it, as they are apt to do, we should have what the Yankees call "a good time."

Yesterday I took eight or ten good fish, and I could almost swear I lost a bream; and if there are bream there, they run big. I have caught five or six in one afternoon, and not one of them under 4lb.; and the roach run from $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. to $1\frac{1}{4}$ lb.—a few perhaps touching $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb.—on a good day. I pitched in a flower-pot full of worms when I finished last night; so, if there be a bream or two about the swim, they will haply come on. Jorkins is coming, and Jork is a companion after my own heart at this work. He can put up with a bad day if it comes without grumbling, but he dearly likes a good one. As the clock strikes ten I shall see a fair little man looming up the drive, with an enormous cigar in his mouth. Why do little men always smoke such big cigars? Jorks looked as if it wanted a sling from the brim of his hat to secure it—a knowing little billycock surmounts his Norfolk jacket, and he is of course laden with baskets and rods *de rigueur*. He will come in beaming, and quite ready to begin; so, as I have the ground bait to make, I have no time to lose. "Cook, did you soak that bread, and boil the rice?" Cook, "Have a-soaked the bread, and have a-b'iled the rice!" Delightful old party; she has taken some trouble with it too, and it is done to a turn. I myself have the pearl barley on, and under my own eye, simmering away on the hob—for that is an operation that is too nice even for cooks. And now, having had all the things conveyed to my den, and having set the gardener to pick up about two dozen and a half of stones somewhat larger than big gooseberries, I retire for the momentous work.

Now I dare say you think any fool can make ground bait, and so he can; but good ground bait—ground bait, as Captain Cuttle said of his watch, "as 'll do you credit"—requires practice and care. Of course any fool can squeeze up a smash of clay and bran, &c., with great lumps of bread in it, any one of which would fill a roach's whame for the day and put him off the feed; but judiciously to mix ground bait is not so easy. First I get all the stale crusts (I don't like cutting up loaves somehow),

and I half-fill a good big basin, such as they wash glasses in—one that will hold two or three quarts—pour boiling water on the bread, and let it soak thoroughly for an hour, putting a plate on top of it to keep the steam in, so that every bit of crust is thoroughly soft and disintegrated. I then put it in a strainer and squeeze most of the water out of it, or the bait will be too wet—and bait that is too wet breaks up too quickly; you are apt to see a ball or two come up from the bottom to the surface and float away out of your swim, and that is not the object; then I have nearly two breakfast cups full of the commonest rice boiled, and I put the whole into my large mixing pan, and crush, squash, and break them up thoroughly, so that there be no big lumps of either. Then I take about two-thirds or a little more of a peck of fine fresh bran—and mind it is fresh, for my noodle of a man once left a bag of bran under a drip of wet, and the consequence was it got wetted and turned musty, and, as I hadn't time to mix the bait, I let him do it. I fished, and at first got a few bites; but as the day went on I got less and less, until, to my surprise, I couldn't get a fish. I couldn't make it out. I thought a jack had gone through the swim—we have a few of these nuisances, and now and then they will spoil the best day's roaching. At last somehow I got one of the bait balls near my nose, and then I smelt the musty bran, and the murder was out; I had driven every fish out of the swim. I guess the gardener remembered that mixing; for I am free to admit that when anything of that sort happens I am a little what we used to call in Cornwall "thurtover." Then I scatter in the bran and mix gradually, stirring and mixing, and every now and then adding a sprinkle of flour to help to bind—about a breakfast cup and a half is enough for this—and so I keep on until the bran is all in, and I think the mass is about the right consistence. Then I take one of the stones and weld a double handful of the bait on to it, squeezing it up firmly, and working it into a ball as big as an orange; and so I keep on until I have made up about twenty-five or thirty balls, which exhausts the mass, and makes one pretty warm and ready for a pipe.

Then I made up the paste—nothing but flour and water, which I much prefer to bread. It sticks on better, but it requires to be mixed

exactly to the right consistence, and you are more apt to make it too soft than too stiff. And now for the pearl barley; that also is just right, each corn swelled out to the largest size it can attain, and not boiled a bit beyond that, or it gets too soft; an hour and a half is about the time. Put that into a jam pot and pour some warm water in to keep it moist; and now "er-r-r-r—cuckoo one, cuckoo two," and so on to ten goes that ridiculous clock.

"Well, Jork, and how's Congo?" This is a *lapsus linguae*, and should have been Congou, for Jork is a Mincing-laner, and has dealings with the Celestial Empire, out of which he contrives a comfortable competence.

"Right, my boy; first chop. I left young Hyson (his partner Hewitson, Hyson for short) in charge; there's nothing doing, so I stole a day. How's the river?"

"All right an hour ago—just the right height and colour, and no wind;" we don't like wind, it spoils sport. So we shoulder our two rods, which I have had all ready and waiting. The gardener carries the ground bait, beer, and heavy luggage, and we process through the garden and field down to the well-known corner under the big pollard. The grass is emerald-green, the birds are singing, the sun shines, and you'd think it was May—that is, the May of the poets, the May of reality having of late years been rather a chalk worse than the Novembers of Tom Hood.

"Fine, oh, fine!" says Jork, catching a glimpse of the river. "Couldn't be better." I say nothing, but I look proud and pleased with my little stream, which eddies so prettily and softly along under the grey old tree stumps which hang over and watch themselves in the long pool. The pool is about fifty or sixty yards long, and for a considerable part of its course runs between six and seven feet in depth; beside and above us is a fine old upright pollard, which in the summer makes grateful shade over the stream. Opposite to us is another pollard stump, that overhangs the stream, under which the greatest depth is. It is my bathing hole in the summer, and I share my cooler with the water rats and moorhens. The opposite bank for several yards being hollow, and running into

caverns six or eight feet in depth, is a splendid and safe harbour for the fish, which poachers cannot negotiate. I take the upper swim, Jork the lower; he fishes into the middle of my swim, I fish down into the middle of his. The depth is plumbed; in go three or four balls of bait. The floats are porcupine, with a little bit of cork, and carry seven or eight No. 5 shot—that is enough, and just enough—the lines fine gut, the hooks the best muddy-coloured hair. Jork puts on two corns of pearl barley; I put on paste—and mem. here: when using paste, if you are smoking a cigar, don't work up your paste with the same finger and thumb as you manipulate your weed with; fish don't like 'baccy.

The floats swim gently down—nothing! Again—my float dips a little; I strike; no go! Fresh paste. The next moment I see Jork's rod describing a parabola, and a very lively fish makes for the opposite pollard. "A lively customer, Jork?" "Yes, but I don't think he's a roach," and he isn't; for when in the fulness of time I pass a net under him, a dozen yards below the swim, he proves to be a chub of $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Then I get another bite, but that is all; paste *will* slip out of their mouths constantly without hooking. That is why I prefer the barley. Then Jork gets another chub. "Well, there's an end of them; they always come first, but we never get more than two; they are rare boys to take a hint." Then I scratch and lose a good fish. "That was a roach at any rate." Next Jork gets hold of another, and a nice roach comes to net, $\frac{3}{4}$ lb., a regular little pig, so round and hog-backed is he. Then I eschew the paste, and go in for barley too, and I have my reward; for just as my float is passing the pollard stump it checks slightly, bows gracefully, and dips under the surface. "Twick!" and my rod describes a parabola too, with a lusty fish of a pound, who makes a most lively fight on the single hair, again and again rushing over to the pollard; but I work him steadily down below the swim, and Jork dips him out handsome as a picture. Then on baits, and in again, and in two swims I'm in another, and before I am well fast Jork "twicks" too, and he has hold of a ditto, which happens four or five times in the course of the day, and two very handsome fish a little over and under the pound are added to the store. Then I get another, the best yet, $1\frac{1}{4}$ lb.

Then a faint bite or two, and an interregnum; the shoal has, as it often does, taken a little cruise up or down or under the banks. So we pitch in two or three balls of bait, and wait to give them time to recover. "It's right, old man." "Right it is," I reply; "we are in for a biggish day—two and a half or three dozen, I expect. They'll be on again in a quarter of an hour or so, *Bibimus*." "*Bibimus*;" and we do. We look over the lines and hooks to see all sound. A big fish or two primes a few yards down. "The shoal has dropped, you see;" and I pitch in a little loose bait, and then we load up pipes; take note of our marks on the opposite bank to see if the water is rising or falling, as it is apt to sometimes, four or five inches or more in the day; and then we begin again, and in five minutes are landing fish as fast as ever—nothing under half a pound, and very few at that.

"Hullo!" said Jork, as we landed a handsome roach. "You've got some precious great pike here; only look at this fish," holding up one that had been sorely wounded.

"We have pike here, and a great nuisance they are at times, driving all the fish out of the swim at a moment's notice in the very middle of your sport; but that was not a pike that did that."

"No! What then?"

"Why, a heron. There are one or two of the beasts that haunt this river, and I have seen many of the larger roach wounded like that. At one time I thought, like you, that it was the work of pike, but one morning I found a good roach, of full a pound weight, lying on the bank with a hole right through him where the heron had spiked him; he had not been dead ten minutes, and was not even stiff. I saw the scoundrel standing on the bank in the early morning onè or twice after that, and tried to get a shot at him, but he was too wary. My son cut the dirt up right under his nose with a rifle bullet one morning, and that startled him a bit, for since then he has gone further afield. Until this I had no idea that herons would tackle so large a fish, and that being so, the mischief which a pair or two of those birds must do to any river is considerable. Down on our river at Andover there is always a pair of these brutes; we constantly see them in the meadows. Now suppose they take a couple of trout each *per*

diem for their own maintenance, putting out of the question five times as much which they take at breeding time. That would give a little total of fourteen or fifteen hundred trout a year. Rather a heavy toll that! Ah! got him again.”

Eight or ten more fish come to grass, and the green sward begins to look lively. Then, after an hour's sport, they go off again, and I take the opportunity to go down to the other hole at the other end of the field, and put in a few balls of bait in case we should want it. It is quite as good as this one; but, unfortunately, there is only standing room and fishing for one, as the fence comes down there, and we can't go beyond it; but the hole runs down some sixty yards or so, and is very capacious, holding plenty of large fish.

I mind me once a misfortune of a peculiarly exasperating kind happening when I went down to that swim. The upper swim here is at one end of the field and the lower at the other end, about three hundred yards or so apart, and as the river bends and there are trees between, you cannot see one swim from the other. One day I had just begun to fish the upper swim when I bethought me I would just run down and pop two or three balls of bait into the lower one, so as to lose no time in getting the fish on, when I felt inclined to shift. I made up the balls and walked down to the lower swim, leaving my baskets on the ground behind me. When I got down there there was some regulating of the stream required, which is effected by putting rubbish into it between an old fallen pollard which has fallen in some fifteen or twenty yards above, and it took me a quarter of an hour or more to collect the rubbish. When I had fitted it all to my satisfaction I turned around to go back.

There were some cows in the field. Now I don't know whether any one else has observed it, but the female nature of the cow is strongly evidenced by her curiosity. I don't think in nature there is a beast more saturated with curiosity than a cow. Leave any unusual object in a field within sight, and I will warrant that in ten minutes every cow will come and have a stare at it. Leave a rod standing upright, and if one catches a gleam of the varnish you shall likely enough find damage to your tackle when you return. When I got about midway back to my swim I came in sight of it.

“Hallo! a cow! What! at my baskets! The deuce! The dev— why she’s eating my ground bait!” and off I set full split; but I was too late, and I only got there just as she was licking up the last crumbs of a (to her) most delicious bran mash.

I guess I sat down on a stump and sang a verse of something sacerdotal; and perhaps that cow didn’t have brickbats and other light trifles after her. It would have taken me an hour and a half to go back and make up more bait, so I gave it up for that day.

But, talking of animals and curiosity, and that sort of thing, I never shall forget a scene that I once saw at Penn Pond, in Richmond Park. I was there fishing for pike, with two friends. We had had some capital sport at the upper or larger pond, one pike of 12lb., one of 9lb., and seven or eight of 4lb., 5lb., and 6lb. We put them all together in a heap, and covered them with fern to hide them from people passing, and went on down to the far end of the lower or smaller pond. We were engaged in landing a small fish when suddenly our attendant, Old Jemmy Hall, of “Field-crew” memory, called out, “Hullo! what’s them sanguineous pigs a-doin’ with our jack? I’m something somethinged if they ain’t a eatin’ of ’em.” Off he set in a tremendous hurry to chivey the pigs from our pike, but he put his foot into a boggy hole, and over he went, ploughing the mud with his nose, and his huge bucket fisherman’s boots in the air. Up he got—away we all raced—“Shoo-shoo-hoo! Yah-yah! How-how-how! drop them jack! shoo-hoo! whoo-hoop.”

As soon as we get near them, every pig collared his pike, and went off all over the place—here, there, and everywhere. We chiveyed and chased, laughing, hooting, and exasperating. It would have been to an on-looker, not interested in the fish, as side-splitting a spectacle as he would see in a day’s walk.

At length we drove them off and collected the fragments, every fish was chewed and spoilt, some half eaten, some bitten all over—our take was done for.

But, *revenons a nos roachums*. When I get back I find Jork in despair; he has lost something “tremenjous”—a 3lb. roach at least.

“There are no 3lb. roach in the stream, Jork; now and then a two-

pounder puts in, but they are not numerous, though pound-and-a-halfers are common."

He had had a bite, and struck a fish; at first he thought he had got hold of a stump it lay so still; then it began going slowly, but steadily and irresistibly, up the stream; then quickened its pace a bit, and took out two or three yards off the reel with a rush; and then—then—the hook came away, and that was all.

"Ah! hooked him foul for a dollar. I lost one just like that yesterday and I think I can show you what it was." I pop a lively red worm on my hook into the swim, and after three or four swims the float gives warning, and I strike. There is a short struggle, and then *something* goes with a steady irresistible rush up stream a dozen yards or more, and we hear the delicious music of the reel.

"My eye!" says Jork, "what can it be?"

"Bream," quo' I, "and a big 'un—four or five pounds at least!" Perhaps that pair of bellows didn't visit every hole and corner under the bank and all round about for some twenty or thirty yards or so; for, having only single hair, I couldn't bully him. After a strong and longish fight, however, I worked him down, and we got a sight of him.

"My eye!" quo' Jork again; "how shall we get him into the net?"

"It won't be easy; but when he is quite beat we'll do our best."

It was not by any means easy; but at length, and with great care, we did manage to hokk him out somehow; he weighed over 5lb.; and a beautiful fish he was—as all the fish in my stream are—shaped just like a big pair of bellows, all olive and silver, and no slime. Then Jorkins got hold of one that gave him even more sport; but at last, after a desperate fight and many mulls and much excitement, I spooned him out too, and he weighed half a pound more than mine. Then I hooked another that I thought was bigger than either, but he broke me in his rush under the opposite bank. By the time I had repaired damage everything was off; and, putting in a few balls of bait, we rested the swim, and went down to the other. Here Jorkins got three or four nice fish; but the shoal was away at the other end, and the

fish not well on, and we sat down and munched sandwiches under our hawthorn hedge, and tried to feel like Piscator and Venator under the honeysuckle, and to fancy our sandwich "powdered beef and radish" as provided at that immortal breakfast, and our "bottle of drink" was hidden away under a pollard instead of a sycamore; but still we were as happy as they, and quite as satisfied as they were to be "civil, well-governed, well-grounded, temperate, poor anglers," instead of "drunken lords." Then we changed the venue once more, and we went back to the original pitch, and soon found the roach in a recovered humour, and for an hour or two they bit splendidly, we often having on two at a time. Two or three topped $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb., and several $1\frac{1}{4}$ lb.; and so they went on, until all our bait was used up, and about five o'clock, as usual, they began to knock off. As we had had a right good turn, and did not want to persecute them, we knocked off too; and then what a sight was there!—thirty-eight roach that would weigh at least 30lb., two good chub, and two tea-tray bream. "We don't get such a day as that every day, old man?" said I, rather proud of my little brook. "No, indeed!" said Jork; "any fellow walking through the East-end of London with that lot would have the whole of the population after him to get the tip."

No, we don't often get such a day—about once a year perhaps. My best day this year was forty-two, and my next twenty-six. I have taken six bream in an afternoon, and two of them would go 6lb., and none under 4lb. From a dozen to a score is a fairly good take; but I seldom work them harder than there is any need—I prefer to leave some for another day; and, having such roaching at home, why, I don't see the need to spend a sovereign in seeking it on the bosom of Father Thames.

I used to get roach fishing nearly or quite as good as this, formerly, in a little river at Titchfield in Hampshire: a river formerly beloved by Father Izaak. At the mouth of that stream there is a wide extension called "The Haven," much grown over with reeds, and which can only be got at from a boat. Amongst these reeds—with ducks, coots, and all sorts of wildfowl—there were vast shoals of roach which used to tenant

that spot, only going up the river now and then, when they headed up in one vast shoal. I have seen that shoal swim past me so that I could not see the bottom for the fish, and they would take eight or ten minutes to go by. The difficulty was to get them quiet that they might feed, for they were always swimming to and fro. One afternoon I did get them in a long deep pool, and baited them with a little bran and clay. Fishing with caddis, my tackle was by no means fine. The water was quite clear, and I could see every fish that came to bite, though, strangely enough, it did not disturb the others, nor did my presence on the bank scare them. I got out four dozen, none under three-quarters of a pound, and I hooked the leader of the shoal—a big 2lb. chap—twice; but the second time he left his upper lip on the hook, so he did not come again. A friend, running suddenly down to the bank on the other side, disturbed them, and I couldn't get them on again; and, though I often caught them before and after, I never got so many. Some years after the sea broke into the haven, and killed them all, and I don't think they have ever recovered that disaster.



"A PRECIOUS RING THAT LIGHTENS ALL THE HOLE."

"Titus Andronicus."

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GROUSE SHOOTING.



IT WAS lucky for Charley Clare that he had an uncle. I don't mean a relative of the type distinguished by that prince of humorists, George Augustus Sala, who, when introduced to a prominent member of the class of "uncles" by his friend Barkis, scanned the stranger's legs curiously, remarking, by way of apology, that he had never seen him below the waistcoat before. No; Charley's uncle was a real, and not a putative relative, and it was fortunate, indeed, that he took on himself to "go where the good (or bad) niggers go," just after that Doncaster when Charley came to such grief; for had the old gentleman only hung on for another day or two news of that grief would have reached him from a sanctimonious cousin of Charley's, who was running for the "succession stakes," and Charley would have been cut out of the avuncular will to a dead certainty; but the letter came twelve hours too late, and uncle Timothy died with it in his hand, without being able to amend his testament, and Charley came into 70,000*l.* in hard cash and some houses in the city, which of themselves were a snug income, with other etceteras not necessary to mention, while to "my nephew Samuel" the sum of 99*l.* 19*s.* were allotted as a *small*

mark of esteem, to which benefaction Charley added the aforesaid letter as a still smaller mark of *his* esteem.

Having satisfied his turf creditors, and intimated that it was the last of his money which they would be likely to see, he cut the turf, and commenced to enjoy himself in a very comfortable rational way, and primarily he consulted me about getting a moor, and asked me to look one out for him that very next Christmas, and to shoot it thereafter, and I wrote to my old gossips Snowie of Inverness and Paton of Perth to keep anything good that came along for my consideration up to certain limits, and in about three weeks or so I had letters from them with inclosures giving accounts of two moors, either of which was well worth notice. Glen-Ladich, 20,000 acres, large lodge, suitable for a large family; gardens, hothouses, &c., fifteen miles from post town, and a like distance from supplies. We might kill 600 or 700 brace or so, and ten or a dozen stags, the woods being full of roe; some small trout lochs, but nothing else in the way of fishing. Rent, 700*l.*

Craigdarroch, 15,000 acres, small lodge, kitchen garden, situated on Loch Darroch, with five miles of the Darroch, a middling salmon river late in the season, with ptarmigan on Ben Darroch, and an occasional stag, six miles from post town and supplies. Rent, 550*l.*

If I felt inclined to come down in March I could run over the moors and see what the prospects were, so as not to purchase a pig in a poke. For general sport, Paton, one of the best judges going, seemed to fancy Craigdarroch, and, unless we wanted more accommodation, the lodge, though small, was snug and quite capacious enough for bachelors; so I determined to take a look at Craigdarroch first, and, if that suited, not to trouble about Glen Ladich, and early in March, taking my setter Old Bang with me, I made tracks for the "land of cakes" by the "limited," and in about sixteen hours was landed at Craigdarroch.

The lodge, I saw at once, was all that would be needed: two sitting rooms, a gun room, four best bed rooms, and the usual offices, stables, and kennels, moderate but sufficient, airy and well-drained; kitchen garden well stocked and well sheltered, large enough for our wants; no hothouses to speak of, and nothing expensive to keep up. I liked the look of the

loch, too; it had a good reputation as a trout loch, and held *ferox* which ran well; and in the end of August and early in September, if the water suited, salmon got that far in the river, and some few into the loch.

The moor was a capital admixture of mountain and flat, with fine sheltered ravines running up Ben Darroch, which, as old Donald the keeper said, "were joost crawling wi' grouse at times," and in the moister hollows there was a good sprinkling of black game. I took a couple of days over the moor and found an ample promise of paired birds if the breeding season turned out well, as seemed likely, for the year was forward and the lower snows away, and there seemed plenty of shelter on the moor, the heather having been burnt on system, and not on "happy go lucky." Altogether I was so favourably taken with the place that I resolved to advise Charley to "declare on" without delay, and the more so as I learnt that a friend of a neighbouring proprietor had been over it only a few days before, and now was standing off in a haggle about terms.

On inquiring who the laird was, I thought he was an old schoolfellow, and on inquiring further of old Donald I found that I was not mistaken. Jock Grant and I had been at the Rev. Spanker Bottles' academy some fifteen or sixteen years previously. He was my junior, and I licked fellows for him, and all that sort of thing; so I resolved to look him up, as I went back, for I passed his place on my journey, and I knew that from him I should get the straight tip if I needed it, for a more free and open lad than Jock wasn't extant, and proprietorship couldn't have changed him so very much.

Never was a fellow so glad to see me as Jock; I must stop a week, or a month, or six months, or as long as I liked, and, lastly, as long as I could, which was only one night—and a glorious one we had of it. As for the moor, I must not look at any other moor; he'd throw in this, that, and t'other rather than miss our coming his way, which he certainly did, adding considerably to our sport in the result, though the moor, as moors went, was quite worth the money already.

I need not say that we had the refusal to the exclusion of anyone else, and within a week Charley was Jock's tenant; and satisfactory relations

being entered upon with the shepherds—who looked on us, by the way, with very different eyes, as “the laird’s friends ye ken,” from what they would if we had only been Egyptians from the South for the Highland tribes to make spuilzie on. Though each man had his two pounds of choice negrohead, a pair of stout shoes, and a gallon of whisky *down*—which vastly assisted the obstetrics of the grouse, and prevented colleys from indulging too freely in an omelette diet—Jock not only made his will known on this head, which was omnipotent, but he took on himself to see everything comfortable for us in and about the lodge besides, which saved us a lot of trouble; and on the 9th of August next Charley, Chiffens, Ned Soper, and myself found ourselves in a compartment of the night mail, performing a sociable rubber round a board of green cloth, whereby, as I remember, I was some five or six yellow rascal counters the richer. At Keepsoken Station Jock’s waggonette and pair, with a cart for the luggage, awaited us, and in an hour and a bittock the gleaming loch burst on our view, though old Ben still had his nightcap on. A tub and a hearty breakfast refreshed us. The others loafed about on sofas, and took various forty winks. As for me, I got Donald to row me over the loch with a couple of trolling rods over the stern, and there, upon comfortable cushions, I snoozed away the summer noon, while Donald slowly progressed along some seventy or eighty yards from the shore, giving me his estimate of the chances of sport which we had.

“There was a gran’ show in the wee glens o’ Ben Darroch, and he never kent siccan a congregation o’m on the Hill o’ Darroch, and the grooses were gey and strang, for the season was just a graund ane—he never remembered a graunder—and wi’ luck mayhap we’d get a staig or twa.”

We got only one run, but, happening to be asleep, I did not wake up soon enough to turn it to account, “and so,” as Pepys says, “home.”

By dinner time we were all pretty fresh again, and had a very jolly evening and another rubber, though we got to bed early. The next day, after due inspection of the kennels and the usual critical discussion of Don, Bell, Dash, Romp, and Co., we took a good long stretch, just

to exercise our legs to the top of Ben Darroch, Donald bringing a pony along with him with a suitable luncheon, which was duly enjoyed with a magnificent view of mountains and lakes innumerable.

In the evening we all went to dine with Jock, who had two other friends, Major Starkey and Bob Macintosh, Sheriff of Dumbnotabbittie; and a capital evening we had, for Jock was proud of his taps, and the samples were very reliable. As for the Shirra, he was a finished and a veteran *raconteur*, and his stories were perfectly killing. I don't know when I have laughed so much.

At eight o'clock the next morning I sauntered out to take a look round. There was a slight haze on the lowlands; the mountains still were clouded on the top; but everything promised a fine day, not to say a hot one. Bostock, Charley's servant, a regular cockney, was busy filling flasks and preparing luncheons, &c., &c., while Donald, with two or three lathy young Highlanders, who were his aids, was busy preparing ponies, slinging baskets, and selecting dogs. We were to divide into two parties, and to shoot round the Hill of Darroch at the easiest walking for a first day, one party taking round one side along the upper range of ground and the other round the other, and meeting on a certain mound, on which stood a small clump of trees, on the other side for lunch, and returning along the lower ground to the lodge, Chiffens and I going together, and Charley and Soper.

Chiffens was a young lawyer, just taken into a junior partnership in the great firm of Smith, Green, and Tomkinson in Lincoln's-inn-fields. He was a smart fellow, capital company, and a neat shot. Soper was a man about town, with a moderate competence, who lived on the surface, and enjoyed life according to his lights; never had any debts, or did shabby things, but knew how to get his money's worth as well as most men. He was a very good-natured fellow if you knew how to get at him, and did many a good turn to many a man that needed it unknown. He was a good all-round sportsman; could ride some, shoot a good deal, and was allowed to throw a respectable fly even for Hampshire, where the critics are very capable. Though he didn't bet deeply—never doing more than put a fiver on his fancy—he was an authority on weights,

and many a man backed Soper's pick for a trifle at times with advantage. Old Donald, of course, went with his master and Soper. His son Archy "tutoyé'd" us, and a smart fellow was Archy.

"Mr. Harchy," said Bostock, as we were starting, "remember the selzer his hin the right 'amper, the whiskey and claret hin the left; and, wotever you do, don't put none of them nasty grouse birds anigh the sangwiges."

Archy grinned an equivocal grin at Bostock, as who should say, What sort of new animal is this? Is it game, or is it economic, or is it vermin? Evidently the species was new to Archy.

Bostock was to walk behind us until we came to a place called the "Glitter Stanes," when he was to mount the pony and make over the brae across the moor, get lunch ready under the tree clump, and await our coming.

Bostock was great fun. He was a thorough Cockney, and believed tremendously in metropolitan capacity in every line. He had never been in the Highlands before, and the hills staggered him at first; but in a very short time he recovered himself, and I heard him admitting to Donald—whom he persisted in calling "Mister," much to his disgust—that "the 'ills was suttingly bigger-like than 'Ighgate and 'Ampstead, but there warn't no willars, and no 'igh road, no homnibusses, no nothink! It was a 'owling wilderness!"

I thought Donald would have stabbed him, he glowered so; but he consoled himself with a strong reflection on "southern ignorance," at which I thought Bostock would almost have punched Donald's head, he got so red; but I called him away just in time, and took occasion to explain to him the danger of strong comparisons, and a word or two apart to Donald soothed his ruffled crest.

Out through the thick belt of fir trees which sheltered the lodge on to an expanse of short heather, over a turf fence or two, till we reach a road which sweeps off to the left of the Hill of Darroch. It was a lovely morning, and many an old cock grouse was strutting crowing on the knolls who never crowed again. On leaving the road we parted, Donald leading his forces to the right, and Archy drawing us off to the left. We had with

us Bostock—who very soon began to discover that heather on the hillside was very different walking from London flagstones—Archy and a couple of smart lads, and my old setter Bang, with a young one who was in his first season, but was a very promising pup. Bang was one of the best dogs I ever had. He was a red Irish setter, and had lost the first joint of his tail, on which account, and because moreover he was getting old, and couldn't see a red dog in heather so well as he used to, his master parted with him for a mere song. I am ashamed to say what I gave for him, but this I will say, that I never shot behind a better. He was a little headstrong at times; but then nine times in ten it was when he was right and you were wrong. With a dog nearly as good as himself he would be a little jealous, but with this young one—which, by the way, was of the feminine gender—he was exceedingly tolerant, and really, if one could fancy it, seemed to take pains to teach her her business; and she was quick enough to learn.

As the heather got better we spread out, with Archy between us, and one of the laddies on either flank. Our comrades were fast sinking from sight on the other side of the brae as we got the first point, and that, as luck would have it, fell to the bitch. She was cantering along nicely, when she suddenly stopped midway, with her head half round. At first she seemed a little undecided, but, looking back over her shoulder, she saw old Bang about fifty or sixty yards off backing her like a crutch; and this steadied her. I walked up, and up got a single old cock with a prodigious flutter, and I dropped him not twenty yards in front of her. Holding up my hand to warn her, she fell at once into the heather, and, whipping in another cartridge, I walked slowly on to the bird, picked it up, whistled her up, and let her nuzzle it, which she did delighted.

“She'll make a topper,” said Chiffens.

“She's a gude wee bitchie,” said Archy, caressing her.

Again we set off, and this time Bang got the point, standing nobly on a bank over a little loch. The bitch at first showed a disposition to run in, but a word steadied her, and as Archy raised his arm she stood firm, staring at Bang with all her eyes. Chiffens was nearest, but I had plenty of time to get up before seven birds sprang up and went skimming away

down to the lower ground. Three birds fell to our four barrels; one we had some trouble in finding, but Bang, who retrieved nearly as well as he did everything else, made him out at last under a big stone where the bird had crept for shelter. We did not follow the birds, because, as we had to come back over the flats below in the afternoon, we should most likely come across them there, and we were now well up on the shoulder of the hill. Five minutes later, both the dogs found almost at the same moment, and ten birds got up. Here we scored our first bumper, four birds being gathered to the bag, while the rest went over a spur of the hill straight ahead.

"They're joost gane to The Lairder," said Archy; "it'll be a weel stockit ane by the time we reach it, I doubt."

Another lot went away from my right untouched; and a third, which Bang drew upon for some distance, sadly discomposing the pup, got away with only a brace of their number left behind, both coveys pitching in over the spur like the last. When we reached the brow of this spur we stood on the edge of a lovely little hollow in the hill, with high sheltering heather all round a small tarn of half a dozen acres, with a small well-heathered island in the middle.

"Ay, ay," said Archy, "now we'll hae the cream o't;" and we had not walked fifty paces over the brow, when both dogs were standing right and left at separate coveys. I got a brace out of mine; Chiffens got one and hit a second hard, which skewed away up the hill; and, as I do not like leaving wounded birds behind, and one of the laddies had marked the bird, Chiffens took old Bang and the lad and went after it, and retrieved it, while I squatted down in the heather and waited his return. While I was sitting there, half a dozen golden plover, disturbed by the shots from the island, came over my head, and I reached a couple of them, which Miss Jessie, the wee bitch, sniffed at with a disdainful curl of the nose.

"That's a graun rafuge for a' sairts o' twa-leggit bein's," said Archy, looking across to the island.

"One might get a shot or two there, I should think, if there was any boat."

"I'd no like it," he replied, "it's a verra uncanny spot; there's ghaists an' fairys, an' a' sairts o' bogles an' worricows, an' it's no lucky to disturb; so we just let the birds breed there in peace."

I found out afterwards that an astute old fellow who was keeper to the last laird, Jock's father, had set this report afoot, and swore to all manner of strange and heathenish sights, probably because the islet was a snug breeding place, and an attraction to the glen, and he did not want it disturbed. Many a tremendous legend has some such an origin. I've known dreadful spirits to haunt such spots; but a close inquisition often raised the suspicion that, if they had horns like a barley braid, they had tails like a worm and smelt strongly of whiskey.

Having unearthed some of these legends in my time, I asked no questions, but quietly waited Chiffens's return; and then we had indeed a busy half-hour. The little glen was full of grouse; covey after covey went away, some ahead, some up, some down, and most of them minus a member or two or more of the family. We got fourteen brace out of that hollow, and were very jubilant over our success as we mounted the brae and left it behind. Here we stopped to liquor, scanning the country before us curiously with a view to our proceedings. On the right the hill grew more precipitous, and a little way up there was a sort of stone quarry, where thousands of tons of stones had heaped themselves up.

"What a heap of stones!" I remarked.

"Ay, a big cairn yon, and an awfu' place for foxes." I looked curious. "It's no sae bad the noo, for the fox hunter shot saven o'm last Aprile, and then row'd some muckle stanes to the mouth o't; and we're no that troublit wi'm now.

On the left the ground trended away down to a level flat, where it was broken up with mosses and ditches. Before us was a gridiron of heather, broken with big rocks and stones here and there, with strips of sweet grass between, beloved by the sheep; and about a mile and a half on ahead we could see the clump of trees we were to lunch under. On the next brow were some big lumps of shining quartz—the "Glitter Stanes"—and from this we despatched Bostock, with his hamper of lunch on one side of the pony, and a hamper of grouse on the other. Bostock felt rejoiced at being

allowed to mount the pony, having had pretty nigh enough of walking; but one or two stumbles into blind ditches, &c., put a different complexion on his equestrian performance, and before he had gone half the distance he was mightily glad to trust to his own shanks again, and to lead the pony. We soon lost sight of him, however, and shot our way steadily towards the clump. We were shooting pretty well, and gave a fair account of the coveys, though they thinned off considerably as we left the Larder behind. Still, we couldn't complain, and I thought that we should head the other party, though Archy thought we should do "no that bad," if we tied them; for they could shoot quite as well as we could, had equally good dogs, a shade best of the ground, and a wary old campaigner in Donald. And he was not far wrong, for when we reached the clump half an hour later we had twenty-eight brace, while our opponents scored thirty.

But what had happened to Bostock? He was a sight to be seen. Having made his dispositions and tethered the pony, he sat himself down behind a stone just over the brow near a spring to wait for us, and went to sleep, and the midges, having undisputed possession, went in at Bostock and lunched on him, scoring him dreadfully. His face looked like what they call in Cornwall a "figgy pudding," he was so charmingly variegated; and our laughter did not improve Bostock's sense of injury at the situation, and I have no doubt he swore consumedly to himself. "These 'ere Ighlands," as he said to me some days after, "is 'orrid places for hanyone as 'as been brought hup civilised as it may be, and if master comes hup ere again next year, I think as I'll ast him for leave of habsence while 'e's away. Flesh and blood, Mr. F., is more than I can bear," and he walked off with a razor in one hand, hot water in the other, trousers over his arm, and a very lugubrious, much-spotted countenance.

Poor Bostock! It really was too much for him. "Not a decent public-house parlour, neither, within a 'undred miles, and the mornin' peppers two days hold. Hawful! hawful!" as he said to a mate subsequently, when relating what he called "the 'orrors of the 'Ighlands." However Bostock's private sensibilities might have been disturbed, he did not allow it to interfere with business. There, in the cool shade of a big fir tree or two, with a mass of primæval rock to lean against, the cloth

was laid, while a cool claret cup was reposing to the brim in the ice-cold spring that welled from the bowels of the hill at the back of the rock; and, as the huge two-handed vase passed from hand to hand, a sigh of pleasure followed each deep drink, for the day was hot enough by this time to satisfy even a glutton in Turkish baths. But exercise had given us all an appetite; and, while Bostock attended on us, Donald, Archy, and company, twenty paces off, played a very fine knife and fork upon a cold leg of mutton specially prepared for their refection — and it is wonderful what a lot of cold meat half a dozen Highlanders can stow away. The leg, by no means a small one, hadn't a shred left on it, while we did not do that badly, between sandwiches, cold tongue, and a raised pie. Then we betook ourselves to a fragrant weed and a chat over the sport. Our friends had had a good time, and, thanks to a huge golden eagle which sailed slowly over the moor while they were shooting, the birds lay like stones; and, though it came out that they did not shoot quite so well as we did, they were able to head us. And then Donald told us a story about "the eagles," and how he had lain out three nights in succession to try and get a shot at them, their eyries being in an inaccessible precipice high up on Ben Darroch, and on the third night how he woke up suddenly, hearing the sound of pipes, and by the moonlight he saw a dim shadowy funeral procession come up Loch Darroch, and land at the little burial ground on the north end of the loch; and how the old laird, who had been ailing, died on the twelfth month on the very day that he had seen the procession, &c., &c. But as I found out that he had taken a muckle flask of one kind of dew with him to keep off the effects of another, and he was rather hazy in his dates, and the laird was at that time of the ripe age of eighty-three, I discounted the legend, though I wouldn't have said as much to Donald for a little, for his belief in it was perfect, and his reputation as a taistchar among the neighbours was profound on the strength of it.

By this time our dogs had had a pretty good dose for a first day, so we turned them over to one of the laddies, and each loosed a fresh couple; and, having smoked our weeds out and finished the cup, we

took a nip of "undiluted" just to square the bill of lading, and started as fresh as ever, or nearly so, to take the lower ground back, the pony being laden with the grouse and the *débris* of the much-reduced luncheon, and Bostock and one of the laddies to show him the way, being detached to take a short cut over the shoulder of the hill to the lodge, to prepare baths, dinner, &c., &c., against our return.

The flat ground was not so dry as the hill, being composed of big slabs of heather, with great hags between, and here and there we came to tumpy, tussocky, squashy bits, where we found an odd snipe or two, with plovers and such small deer, while out of one little pool we flushed a mallard, which I pulled over in proper style. There were a lot of birds on the flats, however, and though they were wilder than they were in the morning, and the dogs were a shade less perfect than our last brace, we managed to get on pretty good terms with them, sending covey after covey, a little shorn of its fair proportions, back to the hill. The walking here required more attention to the feet than it did on the hill, for you might go squash into some mud-hole or blind ditch or drain if you did not have an eye alow as well as aloft, and this, too, rather disturbed our accuracy of shooting. Nevertheless, we managed on our way home to pick up nineteen brace of grouse, five snipe, seven plovers, and the mallard, making our bag up to forty-eight brace, nine plovers, seven snipe, and the mallard.

Our friends did not do so well on their return. Perhaps the eagle was absent. They only scored eleven brace, three snipe, and four plovers. Thus the united bag was eighty-nine brace, thirteen plovers, ten snipe, and a duck; and Charley professed himself very well satisfied with Craigdarroch. On our arrival a tepid tub was lovely; then a cigarette and a sherry and bitter in fleecy hosiery; and finally dinner. Ah! Bostock was a treasure in this particular! As Charley often said, "Blow his H's! The beggar knows what's good, and manages to get it!" And on this occasion he out-did himself, and the dinner was far beyond our expectations; while the wines, despite the journey up, were, thanks to exercise and a happy frame of mind, perfect; at any rate, we partook of them heartily.

I am afraid we had a little mild gambling that evening; but, as we

none of us lost more than we could afford, it didn't matter; and, though we often had a little shake up afterwards, I don't think by the time we parted there was a ten-pound note to the bad or good any way.

If the sleep of the righteous is sound and peaceful, I for one must have been awfully good that night; for when Bostock announced eight o'clock next morning I was quite surprised to hear it.

The next day we shot the ravines of Ben Darroch—two guns on each side. It was pretty shooting enough, but a deal harder work than yesterday, necessitating a good deal of climbing as we got towards the upper end, and had to work across into and down the next one; for on one side Ben Darroch was carved into great ridges like the furbelows on a woman's dress. A little stream (torrent in the winter) ran down the bottom of each, and, then uniting in the plain below, made the head waters which flowed into Loch Darroch. These ravines were well clothed with heather along the sides, and in the bottoms we found blackcock in plenty. As I said, it was pretty but not easy shooting, and our total only numbered forty-five brace, with eteteras. The next day Soper and I tried the river, while Charley and Chiffens tried the loch for a ferox, and got one about 6lb., and lost another—a big one, owing, as I told them, to the hooks being too small—a fatal fault in loch trolling. They also got a dozen pounds or so of nice half-pound green-backed trout, which ate a deal better than they looked. I hooked a good fish in a rattling stream, which gave me a lot of fun, but which slipped off just as Archy's gaff was over him, and I got a nice bright grilse of 7lb. Soper got hung in a big kipper, which bored all over the stream, and took him steadily and stately down stream about three-quarters of a mile, and when he finally consented to come ashore was an ugly red fish, as lanky as you like, and weighed 22lb. I reprobated the beast, but Archy said that "he would make a graun' kipper, and was no that despisable;" so he stoned him on the head, and head and tailed him while Soper in vain sought another.

We had a big day a few days later, thanks to a day and night's rain. We got out nine between us, and they weighed 132lb., and there were some nice bright fish amongst them. Of course these piscatorial treasures were very grateful at the lodge.

One day Jock invited us to shoot with him. It was early in September. Soper and Chiffens had left, and the best of the sport was over, though we still made out enough between grouse and blackgame, with outside things, to show very decent bags of one kind and another.

"Ranald, take Bran with you, and put my rifle over your shoulder. We may see a stag in the pass or in Glen Buchie. I heard one had been seen there."

Ranald obeyed, and Bran was led out: a magnificent specimen of the genus *Canis*, as fleet as a deer, and strong enough to pull a bull down; of a deep, slaty brindle—a magnificent beast.

On the grouseing I will not again dilate. It was good enough for the time of year, but the birds, of course, were now much wilder, and wanted straight and quick shooting. We shot up a long glen, three abreast, and were making a fairish bag, when we saw a gillie, who had been despatched on a special mission to the height on the left, waving his cap and gesticulating.

"She'll have seen a deer, I'm thinkin'," said Ranald, as the man, seeing he had attracted our notice, sunk down in the heather.

"It looks likely. Give Mr F. the rifle, Ranald, and do you lead him on, I'll follow," and we strode away in single file up the ascent. Twenty-five minutes' climbing brought us near the top.

"Now, be carefu' not to show the tip of yere nose even," said Ranald; "do as I do. What is't, Sandy?"

"He's coomin' doon the pass. I saw him awa yonder till I lost sight o'm behint yon big rock. Something's moved him, though he's not mickle frightened; but he's ganging steadily towards the pass, an' gif ye hurry doon ye'll surely be in time."

"Coom awa', sir!" said Ranald, seizing my arm. "Coom awa'!" and he hurried me down the hill in a slanting direction; Bran following, with ears erect and bristles up, as if he knew full well all about it.

A slantingdicular downhill trot of about a mile brought us to a narrow neck, where the other glen debouched into this. For about half a mile the hills on each side were precipitous, and along this we expected the stag to come if he really meant leaving the glen. There was a rock,

with a tuft of heather on it, in the very middle of the pass, and this we proceeded to make tracks for on our hands and knees, and where the ground was bare, flat on our stomachs wriggling

Latet anguis in herbis.

It was not an agreeable mode of progression; but fortunately it was successful, and we gained the shelter unperceived.

"The wind blows down the pass," said Jock, "but he will be pretty sure to be cautious in passing this shelter. Keep close, and don't show so much as the tip of a whisker;" and, lying flat on his stomach, Jock peered up the pass through the heather twigs. Five minutes—ten minutes! It seemed a terribly long time.

"There he comes at last," whispered Jock, "evidently cautious, but not flurried. Rest the rifle on this stone, and as he comes across into view let him have it in the shoulder. He can't be more than a hundred yards from you, but if he is do your best. Be cool and steady, and take your time." It was all very well to say "be cool." I was in a most ferocious funk of excitement. Fortunately, I had a rest for the rifle, or my nerves were so shaky, the shot wouldn't have been worth a rush. How dreadfully long it seemed. No one dared to move. The stag loitered and evidently took stock of the rock as if he feared danger. At length his head and horns projected into view from behind the stone, and then his neck and shoulders. He was looking towards the rock, and, as I judged, on the point of darting away in alarm, when I touched the trigger, and heard the dull thud of the ball as the stag leaped a yard into the air and set off at a tremendous rate. I took a flying shot at him with the second barrel, and, to my delight, over he came with a crash; but the next minute he struggled up again, and went away on three legs, one of the hinder ones being broken by good luck by the last shot. Still he went away at a good pace, but the next moment I saw Bran shoot out from the other side of the pass. In less than two minutes he was up with the fast-failing stag and had him by the ear, and down they came in a heap, and Ranald, following just in their track, came up upon them and whipped his knife into the stag's throat. My first shot had

been a little too high and too forward, though it made all the difference when seconded by a smashed leg. How I admired him, my first stag! He had a fair head of eight points, and was in good condition, and after seeing him duly gralloched and slung on the pony, we subsided into whisky and sandwiches, smoked a weed, and then finished our day's grousing, though the sport seemed tame after shooting that deer. Jock presented me with the head, which I left at Paton's a day or two after to be set up for me as I went south.

Later on Charley got two or three stags to his own gun, and wound up his first season at Craig Darroch with a capital total of 700 brace of grouse, besides blackgame, stags, ptarmigan, snipe, woodcock, and wildfowl, amongst which he got a pair of wild swans and a great northern diver on the loch. I shot with him at Craig Darroch for two more seasons, and then he got married and gave it up to a friend of Jock's, who paid a round figure for it.



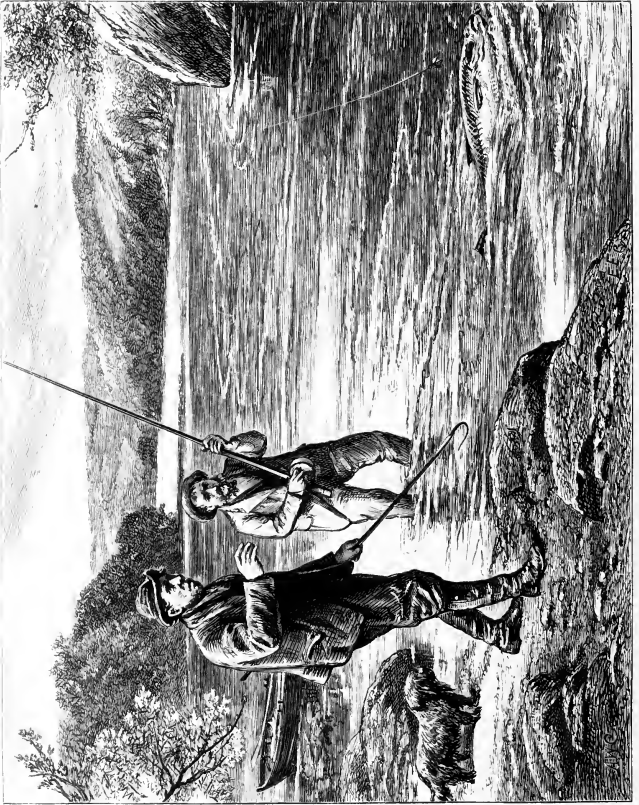
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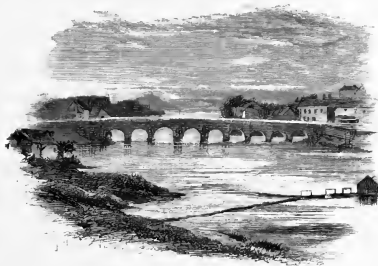
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SALMON FISHING.



IT IS a strange thing how the very mention of salmon fishing makes one prick up one's ears, and how the thought of it sends a sort of thrill through pulses grown old and torpid, and how even when one is declining into the vale of years the prospect of a week's good flailing in a well-stocked, kindly dispositioned river sets one's spirits bounding and sparkling with delightful anticipation. We get into the train with a choice companion for the long journey North or West. We chirrup and we sing; very little makes us laugh, and jokes which would have been regarded at any other time as very small beer are now most excellent fooling. "Ha, ha! Ho, ho! Cackle, cackle!" We're the boys that fear no noise while the thundering cannons roar. "Dash it all! I feel twenty years younger." "By Jingo! I feel thirty years younger. I feel—I feel—jolly thirsty, old fellow—don't you? Liquor, and pass the lotion. Here's health to man and death to fish! Ha! real Jamieson that. The dose to be repeated at intervals;" and so by degrees we sober down into the usual fisherman's talk.

Now, I have fished the majestic Tay and the rushing Spey, the noble

Ness and the prolific Thurso, the beautiful Beauuly and the tender Tweed, the royal wandering Dee and the tumultuous Tummel, with many another salmon water in Scotland, England, Wales, and Ireland; but of all the rivers I know give me the Erne when she is in a sporting humour. It is not that you catch so many fish, for big scores, 8's, 10's, and 12's, are not known on the Erne. The lowest of these figures is perhaps the highest that ever was made on the river, and that was by the Doctor,* who, I think, once killed eight, or it might have been nine, I won't be sure; but he had his car in attendance, and drove from throw to throw to waste no time; and perhaps no two men ever knew the river better than the Doctor and his attendant, Johnny Lightly.

Dear old Johnny! What a capital attendant he was. Look at him as he stands in mute dismay at the loss of the fifth fish hand running. That day almost crushed Johnny, and that last fish was the cruellest cut of all. I once had the river entirely to myself for a fortnight at the opening of the season, with Johnny to tutor me, and I never could get home beyond two or three fish a day; but the quality of the sport they show is what I hanker after always. On many rivers a really good, desperate run with a fish is rather exceptional, and the majority of the fish show moderate sport only—a twenty or thirty yards run when first hooked. Then round, head to stream, boring against it hither and thither; a swim round more like a big barbel than a salmon; then another short run; then round head to stream again, and ditto repeated all over again, till, getting tired of the rather sluggish business, you put on a long, strong pull, and your man, knee-deep in the water, just manages to clip the fish as he wallops past, good for another ten minutes' boring perhaps. This is seldom the prescription on the Erne however. All my fish gave grand play, and when you hook a fish on the Erne it is quite an even chance that you don't land him. Then the character of the casts varies so much. On some rivers pool after pool will, with slight variation, resemble each other—a narrowish neck, rough water for twenty or thirty yards, gradually toning down into a broad, strong stream.

* Dr. Shiel, formerly lessee of the river—the kindest and most liberal lessee that ever held a river.—F. F.

There is little to learn about them, and the fish nearly all play pretty much alike, and if the hook be well in it is just a question of time and skill. But on the Erne, where you must wade—and often deeply—in places and streams where a false step or a stumble might cost you your life, where every cast is widely different in character, where on some casts hidden dangers of every kind abound, and where the most ordinary stream is deep, strong, rapid, and rocky; where several of the pools are just above falls or most wild and dangerous rapids, down which your fish is just as likely to plunge as not, you never can count on killing your fish until you have him on the bank.

“Yes, sirree, the Erne is a great cigar among salmon rivers. And then the fish run so good, the bulk of them scaling from 14lb. to 20lb—just the best size for sport, not that I take any special objection to a thirty-pounder; but, as a rule, he is not quite so light, active, and lively as a fish of half his size. Now, there is one thing in salmon fishing that always riles me. Fellows will always so mix up bounce with fact. “*They* never lose a fish,” bless you; “*They* can do their five-and-thirty yards from the reel;” and all that sort of stuff. Now, I don’t care to read accounts where the author is always having such exceptional good sport, and always making big bags and big brags, and never having any bad luck at all. It is not new, and it is not true. As a salmon fisher, I am, as a rule, as successful as most people; but I can’t get on without a plentiful share of bad as well as good luck, and that would be the general experience if anglers would only tell the truth.

I have had some very fine fights with salmon on the Erne, some that had unusual incidents attached to them. One of the most striking contests I ever had was in a throw called the “Doctor’s Throw.” This cast is situated at the very mouth of the river. The Erne falls over a ledge of rocks into the sea, making a magnificent spectacle. When the tide is quite low this fall is something like fifteen or sixteen feet or more in height, but when the tide is high this is reduced to some six or seven. At this time the leaping of the salmon at the fall is incessant, and salmon from 10lb. to 20lb. each may be seen hurling themselves out of the water by the score. Fish after fish will haply miss his leap, and be dashed back again by the falling torrent; but every now and then one strikes fairly on the bend where the

water rounds over the rock, and, with a strong sweep of the tail, he dashes over the crest into the pool above. On one side of this fall are three or four boxes, cribs, or traps. Here the fall is broken and is rather a succession of sharp rapids, and up these the salmon mostly run and are caught. The rod fishing therefore is provided by those fish which can jump clear over the fall, or which run through the traps on a Sunday.

Just above this fall is the cast called the Doctor's Throw. It is a turbulent stream about sixty or seventy yards long, and at the head of it another fall five or six feet high falls into the cast, but not quite perpendicular, coming over broken rocks in a mass of heavy water slightly sloping. The whole of the cast is fishable, but the most taking place is near the end, where three great undulating waves rise in succession before the river pitches headlong into the sea below. In the very middle of the second of these waves, not a dozen feet from the edge of the fall, is about the best taking spot in the whole cast, as I knew well, having hooked and seen hooked many a good salmon there previously. On the occasion in question I fished the stream down carefully with a yellow silk-bodied fly with a mixed wing, but did not get a touch, though I thought I saw a curl on the second wave above noted. I then changed to a light purple, or lake-coloured body, which I have always found, even at intervals of several years, most deadly on that particular cast; and on the very spot where I thought I saw a curl a spanking rise and fasten rewarded me. The fish played splendidly for a few minutes, and at one time I feared that he meant going back to the salt water again; but, suddenly changing his mind, he wheeled round and went straight up stream. When he got to the fall I thought he would have turned, but not a bit of it; with the most splendid resistless sweep he breasted the heavy fall and went clean up it, with the finest dash I ever saw. It was a glorious sight to see this fish flash like a huge silver bar through the clear falling water, and one could hardly believe that my fly was still in him; but the next moment he was away, making the reel sing "Merrily goes the Mill, oh," on the flat above.

"Come along up, y'r hanner," cried Johnny Lightly. "Come along y'r hanner," cried Pat the boatman, scrambling through a bit of falling water to the flat above, "ye'll murther him here sure."

But I was deaf to the voices of the charmers. "Not a bit of it, I'll kill him where I stand. He's gone up the fall for his amusement, and he shall come down it again for mine;" and I got upon a lump of rock about eighteen inches high, which enabled me to see well over the top of the fall, and then I played my fish, which ran a perfect mucker amongst rocks and stones, which plentifully bestrewed the flat. How it was he missed cutting me half a dozen times I don't know; at length, after he had explored all the further recesses of the pool, getting tired, he came sweeping round down stream towards me, and as he came past the head of the fall I put the pot on, lugged him into it, and over he came, rolling head over heels, to my very feet, when Johnny gaffed him—a splendid fish just from the sea of 16½lb.

"Sure I seen many a fish go up that fall," said Johnny, "but I never seen wan come down without breaking."

"That's thrue for ye, I seen the same many a time, but the never a wan kem down without smashin' the line."

"That was because the angler always followed his fish up on to the flat, and when he went down again, being above the fall, of course the line was drowned in it, and hitched on the broken rocks. Now, I, being below, kept the line straight out away from the rocks, and he couldn't drown it."

"Faix, that's mortal true, now," said Johnny, "and yere hanner's a grand fesh;" and I believe that feat and getting another fish out of difficulties on the Angler's Stone, "on top" of which, as Johnny described it to the Doctor, "the fish was dancing three times for a quather of an houre," raised Johnny's opinion of my skill to an exceedingly tall height.

I never met a set of men who identified themselves so thoroughly with their employers and their sport as the Erne gaffsmen. The success or non-success of their masters was a matter that touched their pride closely. I remember an instance. My man Terry came to me one morning with a black eye.

"Hallo, Terry," said I, "you've been in the wars. Too much of the crathure last night?"

"Ah, no, y'r hanner, not at all. I hadn't the drop beyond what y'r hanner gave me."

"That wouldn't hurt you, I'm sure ; but how did you get fighting, then ?"

"Ah, sure, y'r hanner, it was nothing, nothing at all," and he fended off very strongly from entering on the cause of the dispute ; I, however, pressed him, being curious, and at last he said :

"Ah, thin, faith, it was Mike said that the captain was a better fisher than y'r hanner, an' I hot him in the eye, for it's a lie ; there's not a better fisherman in the place than y'r hanner."

My companion, who happened to be with me at this time, was not only an indifferent fisherman but a most obstinate man. He has long been dead, so I may say thus much. He did not know how to handle a fish himself, and would not let anyone advise him, and if his attendant ventured to tell him to do one thing, he would do the reverse. If told to hold hard he'd let go, and if to let go, he would hold hard ; and, though he had the luck to hook many more fish than I did, who brought home one or two every day, he never contrived to land one, but got broke, and let fish go in all manner of ways, until at last his gaffsman got so disgusted that he threw up his gaff and refused to go out with him any more. He couldn't stand it, and no wages would induce him to.

These men were not only keen and independent, but they were full of quaint humour ; many of their jokes were very sharp. There was a person fishing there who, though a wealthy man, was exceedingly mean in all matters. Now, these men are not, or were not, when I knew them, at all greedy or imposing, but, like most Irishmen, they desperately hated a mean man. This gentleman would take the ferryman to row him all over one of the biggest throws, and give him twopence for his trouble, where everyone else would give perhaps a shilling. He was fishing with a local cobbler for an attendant one day, for none of the regular gaffers would go with him. He was fishing the "Point of the Mullens," a very fine cast, and just behind him were a lot of young larches, on the top branches of which he kept hitching up his fly, which the cobbler had to speel up for and unloose about every ten minutes. He had just given the ferryman *2d.* for rowing him over the throw ; and the following dialogue with another party who came up on the other side took place, right under the gentleman's nose :

Ferryman: "Aye! Pat."

Pat: "What is it?"

F.: "D'ye see that?" (holding up the coppers).

P.: "And what is it at all?"

F.: "Sure its twopence the gentleman gave me for rowin' him over the throw."

P.: "Aye! It's yer fortune ye're makin'. And what's he got there?" nodding towards the unlucky cobbler who was once more climbing the larches.

F.: "Faix, it's a cobbler he's got, and sure it ought to be a chimney-sweep for the dale o' climbin' he's giving him."

Roars of laughter followed this sally, to the great delight of the parsimonious angler, who had the fullest benefit of it.

I remember another good story. One of the men—I won't give his real name, as I believe he still flourishes—was supposed to tempt the salmon, when the fly was slack, by illicit means, and "shrimp" and "worm" were whispered sometimes when he brought in a good fish in bad weather. One day Mike Fogarthy, as we will call him, had gone up to the Mullens, and crossed over at the ferry. We will say that it was Regan and his master who came along after them; and as they came up to the boat, there, on the rock, lay a cabbage leaf.

"Ah-h-h!" said Regan. "That thief of the world, Mike, 's been up to his tricks again."

"What makes you think so?" asked his master.

"Faix, it's aisy. How kem a cabbage leaf there? Sure it's what they do always be carrying the worms in to kape 'em cool and frish, and there's the slyme of the baste on the leaf now. Ye can see that for yerself," and he pocketed the leaf. They crossed over, and were walking down to Moss Row, when, just as they came to the Black Rock, in a hollow they found Mike and his master having their lunch. Stepping up to them with a flourish of his caubeen, and handing out the cabbage leaf, Regan said: "Mister Michael Fogarthy, will ye allow me the pleasure to resthore to ye yere *fly-book*, which ye left behind ye at the ferry?"

Shall I ever forget my first fish on the Erne? Never! I was in

the land of dreams when a handful of gravel propelled from below against my bedroom window one June morning woke me with a start. It could hardly be called morning, for the day had hardly broken, and it was about half-past four. Looking out of window, there stood my faithful attendant Terry.

"Hurry, sir, hurry! If we're not on the river soon, the gentleman from Belleek will be there before us. Sure, he's mighty keen."

The gentleman from Belleek—my old friend H. A. S.—was there, notwithstanding all our haste; for, as we came over the brow on to the Angler's Throw, the morning now being light, we saw a long rod waving scientifically to and fro. We stopped awhile to watch the performance. He was just finishing the tail of the throw, when, instead of going on to Cos Na Wonna, which joins it, he went up again to the head of the pool, and began it over again. This was enough for Terry.

"He's moved a fish, and 'll not lave it till he sees him again. The Ledges is too thin this mornin', so we'll go on to the Grass-yard," or Grass Guard, as some call it, a lovely throw, but best from the north bank where we were. It is the commencement of a rapid with high rocky banks on either side. On the south side if you hook a fish, and the water is not too high, you can follow him down, though it is desperately bad wading—very broken, rocky, and uncertain—and should never be attempted without an attendant close by who knows the country. On the north side, if you were to venture into the water, you would probably not venture out again, as the stream is very deep, and, though it goes very quietly, it goes very strongly. It is a nasty place at any time to fish, for you have to walk out on a series of rough rocks just awash, which makes very bad footing.

Selecting as my fly a plain "parson" with few toppings and a saddle feather in the under wing, I walked out on this uncertain causeway till I reached the outer rock, and looking well to my footing, Terry holding fast by my coat tail in case of a slip, I began to cast a short line at first, and which I lengthened gradually. There was a beautiful light breeze, which just ruffled the smooth surface of the stream before it fell away into a broken torrent, and it was just there—about twenty-five yards out—that

the fish mostly came. I fished it all over according to my lights, and couldn't manage a rise.

"D'ye see that dent in the wather, sir, just before it breaks aff? Throw well up sthrame, sir, wid yere left hand foremost. Let the fly swing round, and hang it over that dent for half a second, and—sure that's below him, shorten in a yard and pitch well up. Begorra! there he was, and a good wan. Whooroosh, now ye'll see the fun!" as a heavy boil and a sharp tug, followed by a well-arched rod, rewarded the slight dragging pause the fly made just over the said dent. Scree-e-e-ch went the reel, with a scream of prolonged applause, as our friend plunged madly up on to the flat above at racing speed, where he performed a grand break-down all to himself, coming up with a half leap and a desperate plunge on the surface, and then, turning, he made hither and thither in all directions. Then he set his face for home, and down he went to the very edge of the stream.

"If he goes over, be the powers, a clothes line wouldn't hold 'm," murmured Terry at my elbow, steadying me as I got nervous and weak kneed at the danger.

I laid on all I could spare, and, whether he found it too much, or didn't want to battle with the torrent below or no, I can't say, but he turned at the critical moment as he was on the very verge of the precipice, and came rushing up stream into the flat water again, when he once more gavotted all over the floor. Three times did he repeat this manœuvre, and three times was my heart in my mouth, as it seemed that he must go down the rapids. The last time, however, he didn't rush up quite so speedily, but went bobbing up and down in a dogged, dazed sort of way.

"Ye nigh done him," said Terry; "if ye could sling him round into the slack wather below here, maybe I'd get a chance at him. Kape a good foothold now and change places wid me, for here he comes rowlin' over." I got a better footing on the second stone, and Terry, stooping down as the fish came rolling past the outer stone into the quieter water below, extended the gaff. There was a bright flash in the water and the fish came struggling out and was whipped under Terry's arm tightly and held there as we walked ashore, a triumphant procession of two and the fish.

He was a lovely fish 18½lb., and one of the thickest and broadest fish I ever saw. We laid him on his bier of ferns after a crack on the poll, and celebrated his obsequies with a libation of Jamieson, while I lighted my matutinal weed. We then mounted the high bank *en route* back to breakfast. As we came past the ledges we saw the gentleman from Belleek making for the road similarly bent.

"Why wouldn't ye just take a cast over 'The Angler?' Now the gentleman's left it, a fresh fly and a rest may fetch him up," said Terry.

No sooner said than done; we turned off leftwards, and soon stood on the bank of the stream, and a lovely stream to the eye of the salmon fisher it is. On the opposite side the cast is called the Sod ditch, and both united a little below become Cos na Wonna. The Angler's Throw is a fine rippling streamy cast; a cast that will fish whether there is wind or none; and is not hopeless even in a bright sun. Near the lower end are three big stones; and very nasty rocks they are, as you will find to your cost, if your fish goes between them; behind the first, which is easy to cover, is a favourite rise for a good fish. I began at the top by Terry's advice and fished according to directions given, from time to time, down the whole pool without seeing a sign.

"Aisy over that curl there. There's a big shtone under it, and it's the best pitch in the shtrame. Drag the fly a bit; don't hurry, ye're hanner. Houly Moses, ye're in him!" and a good fish made a grand dash at the fly, which there could be no mistake about, and carried the fly into the crystal depths. A long rush up and across to the Sod ditch was the opening performance; and it seemed at first as if he was bent on going up to the Ledges, for he made a succession of dashes, with a slight pause after each, till he got me some seventy yards up stream.

"Shorten in and folly him, yer hanner, or sure as death he'll turn round on ye, and wid all that line out ye'll be drowned and cut."

The advice was good, and not given a bit too soon, for I had just reeled up and got up with him when round he turned and went down stream like a steamboat.

"Kape foreninst him, kape foreninst him, round the stone!" and Terry, taking hold of me tightly above the elbows, steered me past

stumbling-blocks as we hurried down stream back to the very stone we started from.

"Ah, the devil! he's goin' to rub round them stones. Kape up the point now, and don't let him have any slack. Soul to glory! that's grand! I thought ye was gone, but yere hanner knows how to tayckle 'em," as the fish made a great shoot towards the stones and tried to go between them, but with a strong sidewise application of the butt, and a timely dexterous slide, I brought him clear of it on the inside.

"Hurry down wid him out of that; I'll make a hole in the wall for ye," and Terry sent half a dozen big stones rolling from a big stone dyke about four and a half feet high which barred the way here.

It was not easy to get the fish away from the stones; he made several dashes for them, but as I was now below him the weight of the stream helped me; and finding it too warm for him he turned down. I handed the rod over to Terry, who stood on the other side, scaled the dyke, and having now pretty clear water beyond, played my fish at my leisure, till shortened runs bade Terry take the cork off the gaff. There was a little sandy cove up which rippled the moving water. Twice I brought the fish's nose into it, and twice when I thought his "rede was read" he squattled off into deep water again, and had to be brought in again. The third time as he came in he rolled over on his side, the fatal gaff pierced him just above the vent.

"Whoop! whoo-roo! that's noble, that won't be bate this sayson, two fish before breakfast," and a lovely sixteen-pounder was stretched beside his comrade; we hadn't much time to spare, but doing the honours to the fish, we corded them both, and Terry fisting one in each hand, we proceeded in very great state and triumph to our inn, amid the flattering comments of the on-lookers. "Sure it's Terry has the luck of it!" "It's him knows the ways of 'em!" "Faix, the fish do be follying him everywhere mostly!" all of which Terry took as a matter of course, calmly laying the fish down on the doorstep, that other gaffsmen who had come home "clean," or without any fish, might feast their eyes on them awhile, previous to his taking them to the fish house.

Terry was in very great feather. Superhuman efforts were made to

get a sight of the fly I used. Had anyone asked to see it I would have been pleased to shew it, but I wouldn't be tricked; and as I tied my own flies, and made both High and Low Church "Parsons"* indifferently well, they couldn't well get at it.

As it happened, there was not another fish that morning; and as it further happened, for the next three or four days, while I brought in one, two, and three fish a day, only an odd fish now and again was got by the other three or four anglers then in the town. Several fish, however, were hooked and lost, among them a big fish, said to be a thirty-pounder, hooked by Sir T. G., at the Grass-yard on the south side. The fish went down, and Sir T. had to follow him up to his waist in places. I saw him stumbling along, and his gaffsman behind him, his rod bent double by the heavy fish. He was making pretty good floundering of it, however, and might have got down the rapid with only half a ducking and saved his fish; but half or two-thirds down his toe struck a rock, and over he went headforemost, his heels upwards, and his rod anywhere. His attendant made a dash at him. There was a tremendous splashing, as it is said in "Mr. Bubb at Brighton"—

They flounced about,
Like porpoises and whales at play,

and he was once more on his feet, his hat was recovered below, his rod was fished out, but the big fish couldn't wait for him, having an engagement elsewhere, perhaps, and Sir T. walked home moist and disconsolate.

The Erne, as I have said, is an awful river for fish to get away in. You never can calculate on landing your fish until you have got him high and dry on the bank. How many fish I have lost just as I thought victory assured, and when the very gaff was extended for a chance, I can't tell. I remember one particular day, however, which figures among my very, very unlucky days, and yet after all we made a good one of it; but what it *might* have been if we only had luck. Oh, what a day! I began up at the Mullens, and I rose a sulky fish at the stone. Finding

* The Parson is the crack fly on the Erne. There is a picture of one in the tail piece.

that he wouldn't come, I got into the boat and determined to fish him from the other side. This did not pay either; but as I was casting from close under the bank on the south shore I got a noble rise from a 16lb. or 18lb. fish. The fish made one dash right across the river to the bank on the far side. There he stopped and sulked. A sulking salmon, with fifty or sixty yards of line out right across stream, is not pleasant. So I hustled Johnny a bit, who was disposed to take things quietly. "Sure there's nothing there, yer hanner, but small stones; he can't harm ye." Nevertheless, when I got over the fish, with the rod bent in him, he moved about a yard or so, and then the fly came away. Loss No. 1.

I then went across and fished the Bank of Ireland blank, and on to the Black Rock. This is a great cast for a big one, and I had not made three casts when a huge carcass like a pig rolled up, with the most lovely head and tail rise, and carried my fly down to the bottom, as I gave him "one for himself." The beast lay at the bottom with my fly in his mouth, perfectly still, for half a minute, while I took in the situation. If he went up, I could follow him some distance; if he went down, I couldn't follow him a yard.

"What'll I do, Johnny, if he goes down?" I asked.

"Sure ye'll have to swim for it, for its deep wather all round the rock."

This was cheering, but at this moment I was relieved from any further uneasiness, for the beautiful bow described by the rod suddenly relaxed, and the fly flew up in the air.

Johnny and I collapsed; we looked at each other for two minutes in silent dismay.

"Sorra a bigger baste I ever seen hooked on the Erne," said Johnny at last. I have landed salmon of more than 30lb. weight, and if I had been asked if this was as big I would have said "bigger and a good deal bigger."

We tackled up, walked back to the boat, crossed, and walked down the north shore. Moss Row or Mois Rhua (the Red Bank) and the Earl's Throw had rather too much water to-day to make wading very

agreeable, not to say safe, for there had been a good deal of rain, and the river was certainly on the mend, which might perhaps account for the gingerly way the fish were taking, in spite of their activity in coming. We therefore walked on under the plantations down to the Captain's Throw. This never was a very favourite throw of mine. It is rather a sulky bit, and wants wind; and if you fish it from the north, then you have to cast a long line some thirty yards or so right over to the opposite rock, under which the fish lay, and having high bushes behind you close along the bank, which is steep, one often finds them in the way. Then, if you fish it from the south side, you are perched upon a high rock, and see the salmon coming at you, mouth open, right under your feet; and this is so startling an apparition, as it always somehow happens when you least expect it, that the odds are five to one you pull the fly away. To-day, however, the rising water seemed to have waked the fish up, and there was a good stream on.

I had not taken half a dozen steps before a lively twelve-pounder came at me slap dash apparently; but he had only made one turn round and taken out half a dozen yards of line when he was away; and so I took leave of number three. It was cheerful. Ten yards lower I got hold of number four, a good fish of 16lb. or 17lb., as I judged. He took to the same tactics as my fish at the Mullens. As soon as he was quite sure he was hooked he drove right across to the high rock opposite, and there he lay. I pulled! I rugged! I went up stream and down stream. I couldn't move him. Once or twice he gave a short, impatient shake of the head, and then he lay still, with the tight line stretched right across the water, and the thirty or forty yards of stream playing tunes on it. There was no means of moving him. I pulled and pulled. I might as well have been fast in a rock! At last, as we were losing valuable time, I handed the rod to Johnny and laid hold of the line. "Here goes for a mover or breaker!" I said, and I put a steady and increasing strain on the line. There was no shaking or jerking now, and no yielding. My mind mis-gave me, when suddenly away came the hold, and, hauling on the line, I brought to land the fly and a big lump of thick, tough rock moss on it, and into which the cunning rascal had managed to rub and

fix the hook, and so we parted with number four probably fifteen or twenty minutes ago.

Johnny looked unutterable things, and began to cast up in his own mind what unlucky object he had met in the morning; and, failing to fix it upon any special ould witch, devoted his attentions to number five, whom I had just slipped into under the far rock. He was a rattling good fish of 20lb. and over. He played to admiration, going to the other side again and again, and making the reel sing as he made a thirty or forty yards rush, now up and now down stream. At length, after some ten minutes of this he began to run short, and, putting on a good slant round towards the shore, I began to tow him slowly nearer, nearer, round to where Johnny stood on the bank, gaff in hand, ready to do the deed. Checking or giving to each little bolt which he made, I still persuaded him, and he had come walloping unwillingly in to within eight or ten yards or so of the shore, where the water began to shallow; when, whether he caught sight of Johnny, and thought him exceptionally ugly and objectionable, or whether his tail touched something, or what it was, I don't know; but he seemed suddenly endowed with an entire new stock of vitality, and, making a dash and a dart, he gave a heavy lunge along the surface, as you may see in Mr. Cooper's capital sketch of it; and by the living immortal Jingo, off went number five! The hold gave at the last moment; and Johnny, who was just stooping to creep on to him with the gaff, straightened himself and looked on like a statue, and said something which I fear was naughty; and, as he wasn't given to that, it was the more effective. As for me, I am free to confess that if the Captain's had been the next throw below,* it would have earned its name. You don't hook five fish in the Erne every day; and to lose them all one after the other, and two of them unusually big and one a monster, was uncommon hard cheese, and so I have always thought.

Well, I emptied my flask, for grief is dry work, and, leaving the Captain, I descended to the Ledges. There is one spot there, a sort of quay or

* The next throw to the Captain's is called "the cursed throw," because no one now catches fish in it, though formerly it was good. The fall of a big rock at the tail of the Captain has injured both casts. Half a pound of dynamite would be of no little use here.

causeway, which is good close to the shore where the stream runs round the projection. I carelessly pitched my fly into it, and Johnny was standing in front of me, when up came a good fish with his mouth open right under Johnny's nose; whether he saw Johnny or no, I don't know, but he refused and went down again. I rested him for five minutes, and then, keeping well back, covered him again, and he came sweetly. He did not make a grand fight; he got into the round still eddy above the point, and there kept hovering round and round, now and then going out into the stream, but always coming back to the eddy, and once as he came sliding past the point I lifted him a bit, and Johnny put the clip into him, and hauled him out, a middling fish of 11½ lb.

At last we had broken the ice, but we had nothing to wet him in. That was bad. It was getting towards dusk, and I hardly hoped to see any more fish; but, in spite of that, having fished the Angler's down to the first stone, and in obedience to Johnny's advice, changed the fly for one a size larger and a shade lighter, and having "hung it," according to directions from my mentor "over that stone," I got a lug which sent the blood once more spinning through my frame, and I got a capital fight out of a 16½ lb. fish, which we landed just as day declined, and packing up our traps we made our tracks to town, much congratulated on our take when we got there; but, oh! if we'd only—but there, it is no use grieving over spilt milk.

Of all the fish I had a chance at on the Erne, first and last, I most regretted one in particular. After the big wide pool above the bridge, the first cast you come to is called the Fall Hole, the stream from it Kathleen's Fall, from a certain Kathleen who was said to have leaped it on horseback. It is a raging torrent about forty feet wide, a gully down a steep pitch, and through which for perhaps two or three hundred yards (I speak from memory) the whole body of the Erne rushes. On the south side there is a high level grass bank along the whole length of this torrent, which is very easy travelling. On the north, however, it is very bad ground, with broken rocks, steep banks, and every sort of obstruction—an infernal place to get along in the gloaming. The hole above this rapid, out of which it runs, is a small round swirly hole, and rarely holds a fish,

but when it does he is a good one. Fish when hooked in it don't often go down either, knowing the trouble they had to get up, but they do sometimes; and then Jerusalem! don't they go! Now if this happened on the south side, it would be simply "goloptious," because you could follow your fish at a good hand gallop, and be well above him; but it never hardly does happen on that side, because the rising spot is in a whirl on the other side; and, though you may pitch across to it, it is all the wrong way, for you not only draw with the stream, but your fly is whisked away by the whirl before the fish has time to "vizzy" it. The Doctor told me that he never knew a fish killed that went down that stream, and he had hardly ever known one hooked on the south side. Curiously enough my friend G., the very first time he fished that hole, hooked a rare fish on that side. The fish made for the rapid, and, unfortunately, the gaffsman seeing the rod bucketing heavily, cried out, "Let him go, sir, and folly him;" and, as G. never did anything he was told, but always the reverse, he stood fast, hung on to the fish, and held him hard for a moment on the brink of the fall, when the stout salmon hook smashed, and the fish was away. It was after this that his gaffsman chucked him up, and wouldn't go with him again. When I told the Doctor of it his face was a study.

"The biggest muffs have the best luck. I'd have given fifty pounds to have had that chance. Such a lovely run along the bank, too. I don't think it was ever done but once; and I never hooked but one fish myself on the other side that went down, and I shall never forget him. He did give me a twister. It was a big fish, 30lb. and over. As soon as I hooked him over he went. Pat Mackay was with me, and we followed at the most breakneck pace, floundering over more rocks, now up, now down, Pat clearing away whatever he could, and making a hole in the wall. The fish went skimming down as fast as a swallow, and would have cleaned my reel out, in spite of all I could do, if I hadn't got a little pull on him midway, where there is a little bit of a lay by, a mere teapot. Well, sir, he run us down to the big pool below, and, when we got there, both Pat and I were so pumped neither of us could have blown a candle out; but we had gloriously threaded the passage, and the fish was still on. I played him for another ten minutes

or more, and brought him in to the side. Pat had the gaff ready. In a moment more he would have been on the bank, when the fly flew up in the air, and the fish drifted down and away, scarce able to wag his tail. They say ye're a fisherman, come to me unbroken out of the Fall Hole, and I'll talk to ye."

I need not say after this challenge that I never passed the hole without having a cast over it. It was a sort of piscatorial ass's bridge which I determined to solve. I had never hitherto risen or seen a fish in it; but one evening, quite late, I was coming home down the south bank, and I took a flying cast over it. I couldn't swear to it, as it was quite in the dusk, and I was well above the pool; but I was almost sure that I saw the head and shoulders of a big fish shove up out of the water as the fly was whisked away. I kept my own counsel, however. The next day I was up at the top of the river and couldn't try it, but the day after I was in the neighbourhood and resolved to. I had had bad luck; one or two fish had beaten me, and got away, and only one came 'o hand, and that was only about 11lb., a mere schoolboy; when, as I came along, I hooked a rattling good fish off the quay on the Ledges. He was a fish of about 17lb. or 18lb., and made a desperate fight, running up right into the thin rapid water, and ploughing it up again and again. I had no end of a tussle with him, and I played him heavily, wishing to get him-out quickly. At length, getting rather tired of it, and being anxious to get to the Fall Hole, I put the pot on and hauled him slithering in on his side done. I was just going to give the "whoohoop," when the beast of a fly came away, and the fish, with a last faint wag of his tail, contrived to scuttle out of reach. It was then getting towards evening, and throwing a hasty blessing after the fish, I shouldered my rod without looking at or testing the line, and, followed by Johnny Lightly, who was then with me, I set off for the Fall Hole. I could just see to fish it, as the last rays of light were fading, and, with a preliminary switch, I sent the fly out into the hurly-burly. Round it came into the curve, rising and falling—rising and falling—against the eddying stream. Now then! Ha! "Tug-whack-smack." Oh, Jemima Jane Anna! Oh, Beelzebub, Belphegor, and all the race of Lucifer! The fly is gone,

gone, gone for a million! and he's smashed me in spite of all. What will the Doctor say? and it's all my own fault, too. The line, sorely strained in that desperate fight at the Ledges, went at a knot, and had I tried it, as I ought to have done, I must have detected it, when I should now perhaps have been breaking my shins over those dark rocks that look so formidable in the gloaming. By jingo! if he had gone down, though, in the dark! that is another side of the picture certainly. As for the Doctor, all the consolation I got out of him was that he rather rejoiced than otherwise; "for," said he, "you'll remember that fish now for ever, whereas, had you bagged him, you'd have forgotten all about it in a year or two."

I didn't quite agree with him, though I still think what an awful journey it would have been down that rock-strewn path.



"A POWERFUL PREACHER."

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SNIPE SHOOTING.



THIS nearly forty years since I shot my first snipe, and I shot him sitting. I had flushed snipes scores of times when pottering about down on the western moors with a noble converted percussion single barrel, of which I was proprietor, but their meteor-like flight put them quite out of my reach, and waiting "till he stop" was out of the question. Therefore did I wait till I saw one drop, and, marking the spot carefully, I crept up within distance, and blazed at the spot.

Nothing got up, so I walked up, and there was my snipe. Ha! ha! How proud was I of that exploit! I carried the bird through the town by his extremest toe-nail all the way home. But a day or two after I shot one flying. The bird got up, and, pointing somewhere in the direction he had gone, I let fly on the chance. The old gun scattered fine, and would have covered a barn-door comfortably, and it wasn't above five to one against some of the shots going within a yard or two of the object. The bird continued its flight towards a thin belt of short fir trees, but I did not see him go beyond the firs, so I walked to the spot, looked carefully up, and there, amongst the topmost branches, I saw my snipe

hanging dead. A vigorous shake brought him down, and from that time I began to shoot at them flying; and ere that season was out I got pretty well on with them, and in the next two years I became a really decent snipe shot, often getting my four or five couple with hardly a miss. I also, too, became an experienced bog-trotter, a very necessary qualification for a successful snipe shooter, and I could trot over a grass-green shaky bog with the lightest grass crust above and liquid mud beneath, of any depth you like, with a hop-and-a-skip, and never break the surface, and where, had my foot but dwelt for half a second, I should have gone in up to my waist, and perhaps my neck.

This capability once stood me in good stead. I was chased by two watchers. A moor, hitherto open to the public, had been taken in and shut up by the proprietor. I knew nothing of this, and went to shoot as usual. Half-way down I saw a fellow watching me from the road, and the next moment he came halloaing after me. Not knowing what this might mean, I took to my heels, and, being pretty light, I made a good run of it; but just as I was making for a point on the other side I saw another fellow waiting for me, so I had to double, and both came after me. The double brought me nearer to the first man, who could run a bit too, nearly as well as I could, and I felt that unless I had a slice of luck I should be captured. Personally I did not care about it, because I should only have gone before one of my father's own friends, and perhaps one of my own, for we knew everybody round about; but I didn't choose to be taken if I could help it. Suddenly a bright idea flashed on my mind. I was now running down the moor, through which a little trout stream meandered, and about half-way down I knew there was a nice bit of shaky, so I made towards it. As I approached it I slackened a trifle, to let the foe come nearer, which he did, still shouting and swearing a trifle. With three or four light skips, scarcely touching the surface, I was across. Of course, where I could go my pursuer thought he could. I turned my head over my shoulder, and "Splash! squash!" he was into it up to his waist. How he did yell blue murder! He made sure he was a gone coon. I, however, merely trotted across to the road, leaving his friend to help him out,

and surveying their proceedings from my *coign d'avantage* with great satisfaction until I saw them both out of the bog, when, with a derisive guffaw, I made over the bank and away.

The chief game which I had to shoot being snipe, I got pretty skilful at last, and have often shot them before I got the gun up to my shoulder. Since those days I have shot snipe in all sorts of places and all over the kingdom, from Cape Wrath pretty nearly to the Lizard. For I had several warm days among the snipes and plovers when I was in Caithness years ago, and I commenced my career not half a dozen miles from the Lizard, on the tops of Welsh mountains, and in the bottoms of those valleys, on English marshes, Irish bogs, and along the banks of many a river, even to Battersea fields, where formerly I have killed snipe. I killed a couple once in the Bishop of London's garden at Fulham, to the intense disgust and loudly-expressed objurgation of a stray gardener, as I was sloping off over the fence; said gardener clearly considering them his own privilege. That was thirty years ago.

I killed many a couple, too, on the marsh near Southsea Common, most of which is now built over, and I remember that some years ago I was dining with a friend who lived in one of those very houses, and, conversation turning on the former state of the place, I rather astonished him by saying, "Ah, yes, I remember that the very last snipe I ever shot on the marsh was as near as possible on the spot where you are sitting."

Of course one hears and reads of those tremendous bags made by parties in Eastern paddy fields and Western swamps; we have nothing of that kind in this country, though in my youth I have seen the air pretty lively with snipe on the wing. Indeed, I think I may say that I have seen a couple of hundred or so on the wing at once. But somehow when they were so very numerous I never could make as big a bag as I could when I picked up an odd one here and an odd one there, and the wisps were scattered over the country, so that you had to find every bird singly.

I thoroughly well knew the country, too, and the habits and flights of the snipe, and where they would be under certain circumstances. Wind and weather make all the difference, too, in the lay of snipe. In good moderate open weather you would find the snipe in the moors and bogs.

In hard frosts you wouldn't find one there unless there happened to be an iron spring or some warm exudation which never froze. In such places I have often found five or six snipe in a place not twenty feet square; and at such times the little trickling streams would hold them. Again, in very wet weather the water in the moors would be too deep, and the streams would be so flooded that the mud puddles were submerged, and when this was the case they would often take to turnip fields and all sorts of out-of-the-way corners. In knowing the ground and wind when snipes get up you would always know, too, where they were gone to, and where to look for them; and this knowledge served me well.

“What sort of dog is the best for snipe shooting?” I have found a quiet old pottering setter as good as any, particularly if he has the knack of retrieving. I had, however, a pointer once that proved himself a wonder with the long-bills. His name was Duke, for the reason that he came from the Duke of Wellington's kennel at Strathfieldsaye. He wasn't what you would call a very handsome dog, being coarse in the stern and with a middling tail, though his fore quarters were very good. He was slow but he was sure. He never made a mistake. Larks and such small deer he took no notice of. If birds only “had been” he would acknowledge the fact, but that was all; but if he drew up stiff and meant pointing you might bet your bottom dollar that the old dog had game before him. As to chasing fur, or anything of that sort, he didn't know what chasing meant, and was too staid and circumspect to chase anything.

I had bad luck with the old dog. I bought him of Billy Missing, formerly of coursing notoriety, but long since defunct. Billy had him from his brother, the Councillor Missing, who haunted the Andover district, and of whom many good tales are told. Among others this: He practised in that circuit, and one 'sized there was a case of a stolen moke in which he had to defend the putative thief. He made a strong case out that the donkey never was stolen at all, and was as usual a little down on anyone who could suppose otherwise. Q. C. Quasher replied, with slow deliberate diction and an imperturbable gravity, “My Lord, there is one point no living being can dispute, and that is, that the ass is *missing*.”

Brother Missing scratched his head as if he even felt his ears growing, and then joined in the laughter against himself. But he died at last, and Sweet William came in for his leavings, which were not extensive, but among them was Duke. I bought Duke for seven sovereigns; he was so uncommonly ugly behind. I fetched him and put him up on my dog cart, and just as I was driving off he jumped out, and before I could stop the wheel of the cart went right over his loins and stomach. I picked the dog up and put him back, but he did not seem a bit the worse, though in a few months after he begun to show symptoms of something that appeared to be dropsy, and of which he very gradually got worse and worse, till he died much distended about a twelvemonth after.

I don't think the old dog knew much about snipe when I first showed them to him, and that was at Plaitford in the New Forest, where I went to shoot black game, among other things. There was a bog about three-quarters of a mile long and eighty yards wide, which was full of snipe when I commenced. There were swarms of snipe, mostly jacks, though there was a fair lot of full birds, too, here and there. At first the puzzlement of Old Duke was very amusing, as he stood often with his nose right over a jack, and the little rascal wouldn't flush. There stood the old dog looking down at the small sinner below, as if he was saying, "You precious young ass, if you don't get up this moment I'll chop you for certain;" and his disgust of them when he saw their insignificant proportions was quite funny; if ever a dog turned his nose up at anything, he did at first, though after a time he got quite keen at them, and perfectly unerring. I remember, too, I shot infamously badly that day, and, though the birds often seemed to hang in the air, I missed shot upon shot, and Old Duke kept looking at me as if wondering what was up. The old dog seemed quite puzzled at so much shooting (for they were very thick indeed), and at so little result. Luckily for me, it was not my brother-in-law's setter Old Rock, for Rock would have howled at me, and perhaps have assaulted me, and certainly have trotted off home.

Now, this a fact I am going to relate. My brother-in-law had an old black setter named Rock. The old dog was pretty good but very

headstrong. Snipe was his best point, and at this he enjoyed himself; but if the shooting was bad he would get very sulky, and sometimes even come in to heel. A young friend staying in the house one day borrowed the old dog, and went off to shoot the common, where were some marshes. They came to the first marsh; Rock stood, and up got a snipe. Bang, bang! Off went the bird. Rock looked round, but travelled on in search of another. It was soon found. Bang, bang! Off went the bird again. Rock looked at the gunner with a suspicious glance and a deprecatory wave of the tail, but once more made tracks, and the third time he stood a bird, and a third time the gunner missed. Rock squatted down in the middle of the bog, put up his head and howled dolefully. At length, with a whimper as if he had been hurt, and a growl at the young gunner when he attempted to express solicitude, the old dog consented once more to trot on, but he did so sulkily and without any verve. At length he pulled up again, and up got a couple of snipe. Bang, bang! went the gunner, and the fourth time without result. Rock yelped, got up, shook himself, put his tail firmly down, and trotted out of the bog, and when called by the gunner only changed his trot to a canter. An hour later our young friend came home in great perturbation, and sought my brother-in-law with a disturbed countenance.

“I'm afraid I've lost Rock.”

“Lost old Rock! Not you. You couldn't do it; he knows every inch of country for fifteen miles round, and I'd like to see the stranger who would venture to handle him.”

“Well, it was the most singular thing; he had a sort of fit or something, for all of a sudden in the middle of the bog he sat down and howled awfully, and seemed in great pain, though he wouldn't let me see where he was hurt, and just after that he bolted right straight away over the common out of sight.”

“Hah! how were you shooting? Did you miss many?”

“Well, yes, I missed the first four or five shots running.”

“Ay, ay! that accounts for it, he'd never stand that. I'll warrant we find him at home,” and going out there was the old dog snug in his kennel;

but when he saw our friend he gave vent to a low growl, and turned his back on him deliberately.

A good Irish water spaniel is as good a dog as any when well under command, as they take water well; and their hair, being short, does not hold so much wet, nor get frozen, but they are often high couraged and wild; a good one, however, is beyond price. My friend Rag has a snug thing on the Avon, combining jack fishing with wild fowl and snipe. He has a capital Irish spaniel, and many a good day I have had with him. As is the case elsewhere, a good deal here depends on wind and weather. There are days which are first-rate, but you must not miss them, for it is not unfrequently with the snipe, "here to-day and gone to-morrow," if any sudden change takes place in the wind or weather. So that when I get a telegram from him that "to-morrow will do," my traps are collected without delay, and I up anchor and start.

Rag owns, or rather rents, a small bachelor box. It is a nice cottage with a sitting room, and gun and tackle room, and two decent bed rooms over, with kitchen, &c., beyond. He has an old fellow who acts as his keeper, to whom, in consideration, he loans some watercress beds and a withy bed, and who catches lots of coarse fish, roach and tench, &c., and acts besides as waterman, looking after the hatches, &c., on the water meadows; while his wife, a notable woman in her way, cooks and does for Rag when he is there. It is the snuggest little crib, with a warm shed for a pony and cart, made of thick walls of furze and clay. The cottage in the summer is well nigh smothered in clematis, honeysuckle, and china roses. The garden, winter or summer, is rarely without some old-fashioned flower or other; and herein, too, Old Mike picks up crumbs in the shape of cabbages and other vegetables. I know no place where I enjoy two or three days so much. But snipes are to the fore, and I am *en route* to see if my old skill has deserted me or no.

Rag comes to the door as I stalk up from the small country station, with the porter behind me fisting my etceteras. My welcome is warm, and my traps are speedily stowed away, and in half an hour a fine brown steak and a dish of fried "violets," with baked potatoes, make their entry, and having settled them we talk over the morrow.

I think the joys of anticipation, and the talk over coming sport, make up a large part of the pleasure of sport. Who does not remember that capital picture of Seymour's, where the old angler and the young one are talking over their promised to-morrow, with the window wide open, and the moonlight streaming down on the river. "You see that white cottage in the moonlight," says the sage; "just there I've hooked many a trout of 2lb.; down by those poplars are some capital chub holes, and in the middle deeps of a morning the great barbel lay rolling in the sunshine like so many beer barrels." It is wonderfully true to nature, and so we talked it all over, and Rag propounded all about cottages, poplars, and middle deep, to admiration, till a late hour.

Breakfast was over, and Old Mike was waiting with Dirke, the dog.

Mike was a sort of *lusus naturæ* in point of ugliness and general dislocatedness. He was all knobs apparently in the wrong place, and his limbs hung about him in a loose disjointed sort of way as if they didn't belong to him. He had three likes—tobacco, beer, and whisky—but I never saw him drunk. He mumbled to himself and grunted as he walked, and it was the oddest thing to pick up scraps of one of his moaning murmurings. "Ducks in the reeds!—ducks, ducks, in reeds—how the d—l can there be ducks in the reeds? Hoof, hoof. When that 'ere Tom Tidy went a sloppin' all down t'other side this morning at four—ducks in the reeds! Hoof, not a moorhen, not a coot, lay my life—hoof." He was generally right in his views of sport, however.

Sandwiches and a most portentous flask, which held about three pints of Glenlivet, were provided; and, shouldering our doubles, while Mike handled a long single ducker, with a muzzle you might shove an egg down—that is, a small one!—we proceeded down the road, and across a field into another field, over a plank bridge, and into the water meadows. There had been light snow, which still laid here and there, and a smart white frost had covered the twigs and brambles with rime, but the river had been out over the banks, and there was plenty of squash along the edges of the carriers and drawns* in the water meadows. We each walked down one of these towards the river, with

* The larger and smaller water courses used in irrigating water meadows.

old Mike between. We hadn't gone far when the dog Dirke began to quest about, and I noted snipe trail on the muddy banks.

"Scape! scape!" and away went away a couple of wary old London tradesmen, as I once heard them called by a friend, for obvious reasons in the bill way, and "Bang! bang!" went two guns. One bird drooped gradually down to earth; the other (and, alack! it was mine) continued on his journey until I lost him in ether. The shots started another couple on our left, but until we got near the river bank we saw no more there. Out of some rushes on the bank a leash sprung, "scaping" aloft, and as before Rag nailed one, and I made an ignominious miss.

"Can't make it out," I grumbled. "Seem to have forgotten all about it. What's the meaning of it?" At that moment Dirke nozzled a jack out of a ditch nearly under my feet. I did manage to gather him, and after that I got on a little better.

From this we went up and down the drains, crunching the frosty grass, while our breath, warmed by exercise, looked like steam from an engine on the frosty air. The day was fairly bright and clear, and the sun now and then tried to peep out. It was a glorious walk, full of health and vigour. We squashed and plashed away in the heartiest enjoyment, gathering in the long-bills one by one. At length we came to a bit where rushes and reeds showed a patchy tract, partially submerged where the river overflowed the bank in places for two or three hundred yards or so long, and from about thirty to fifty yards in width.

"Now F., do you get into the boat with Mike, and I will walk the edge behind this bank with Dirke, and between us we should do something here. It is a rare find usually for a duck or two, and I advise you to collar the big gun and to leave the small game to me. The snipes won't go far, and we shall find them again. The ducks we shan't, so please hold straight, and let 'em have it."

I got into the boat and they kept down under the bank, which stopped the water from flooding the meadows further, nearly out of sight but about opposite to us. We dropped quickly and noiselessly down, letting two or three moorhens and snipe go, when about sixty or seventy yards

down a flock of eight duck went quacking up, in a great haste to be gone; and big Boreas, as we called the large gun, disgorged at the leader and floored him, and, as luck would have it, winged the next one. I then snatched up the double and gave them a parting shot, raking one as they went off over the bank, an easy shot for Rag, who bobbed down at the first sound, and who got one to his first, while he finished off my wounded bird with his second. The winged bird gave us great excitement, and exercised Dirke somewhat, till I gave him another dose and finished him.

At the shot five or six more ducks went off at the lower end, and as there were now no more duck to be had here, we performed on the snipe and moorhens, five or six of which latter we dropped and collected before we finished off the rushes. When we got to the end I was just getting out of the boat when something got up out of the ditch behind me. I wheeled round, glimpsed something—I couldn't see what—going across the river, and I let go on the chance, and the bird towered and fell dead on the other side of the river amongst a lot of reeds. Dirke, who saw it all distinctly, sprang into the river and swam across.

“By Jove!” said Rag, “that's old Sir Carraway Seed's reed bed. He never shoots himself and won't let anyone else. It's a hundred to one if it isn't crammed with stuff!”

And sure enough it was, for ducks, teal, and snipe seemed to know they were safe there, and it was a big patch of covert; and when Dirke went crashing about in search of my quarry the birds got up by scores, but only one duck and three teal came over; and just then Dirke swam across with my bird, which proved to be a male teal in lovely plumage. We had dispersed a lot of things, however, and the chance was that we should find some lower down; and we did, gathering a duck or two and several couple of snipe in unexpected places. It was capital fun.

Splash! squash! scape! quack! bang! bang! and bang again!

“Take care where you go there!” called out Rag to me, hastily, as I stepped rather incautiously on to a quag, going in beautifully; and but for my friends I should not have found it easy to get out.

“Fortunate I sent the boy on to the hut with a complete change,” said Rag. “I always do, for one never knows when this kind of thing

may happen. Fortunate, too, that it is not more than half a mile on—just behind those reeds there, where you killed the 20lb. pike in October. You remember it?”

“Ay, ay! we lunched there and exhibited that fish; but now I am wet, it isn’t so cold, and if I keep on walking I shan’t mind it,” and on we tramped, picking up odd articles for the bag here and there. At length we arrived at the locality we were bound for. It was a rough kind of bield, made of reeds and rushes in which Rag was wont to shelter when he came flight shooting.

“Here, boy, hurry now; run over and pull as much dry rotten stuff out of yon hedge as will make a fire; and Mike do you go and help him while I set out the lunch and get Mr. F. a dry change.” A heavy drink of whisky, dry things, and a roaring fire soon set me all to rights again.

From under a heap of reeds they fished out an iron pot which Mike filled with water and set on the embers so that we might brew some hot toddy, in which Mike’s soul delighted. Strong hot toddy was to him the nectar of the gods. Strength, however, was a material element in it, and I am not sure that like Mr. Quilp he would not, if it depended on him, boil his spirit and drink it out of the saucepan unadulterated for choice.

“Ah,” said Rag, as he pitched another armful of fodder on the blaze, “what would that poor devil Slathers have given for a blink of this, Mike?”

“Ay, an’ a sup o’ this, too,” said Mike, pouring a strong dram from the bottle into a horn, and swallowing it with a loud “pech.” I looked inquisitive.

“A poor devil of a poacher named Slathers came here one night to do a bit of poaching, and whether he had some beer in him or no, I don’t know, but he fell asleep; it was a most bitter frost that night, and poor Slathers didn’t wake up in the morning. He wasn’t found for three days, no one chancing to come here.”

It was an eerie desolate kind of spot, and the story somehow made it look more gloomy still. We were not much disposed to move, as the afternoon was getting on, so we sat where we were and chatted, and kept the boy and Mike moving to find fuel, while we smoked and brewed hot

groggies from time to time, and spread out the bag—eighteen couple of snipe, ten moorhens, a leash of teal, and nine ducks.

“Not a bad day by any manner of means. Here’s better luck still,” and so we sat and yarned of old friends, and past times, and days of sport we remembered, and the big flask grew sensibly lighter. The day was fading fast when we at length rose to go; we had just dispersed the embers and taken up our guns when some huge grey thing with a mournful screech swept right over us, not twenty yards up.

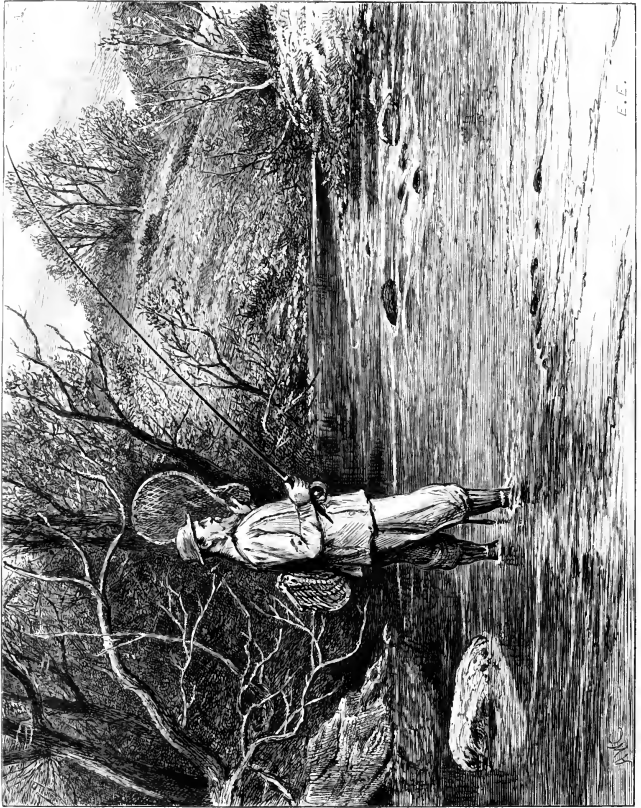
“What’s that?” I cried, considerably flurried, as the bang of Rag’s gun followed instantaneously.

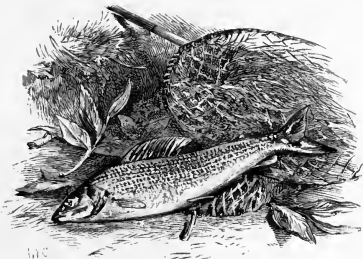
“The ghost of the old poacher—and a rare old poacher he is. Hold hard, Dirke; you’ll have your eyes picked out if he isn’t dead.” But he was, for the whole charge nearly had gone into him like a bullet, and Dirke came struggling up the bank in the dim light with an enormous heron in his grip. “That’s the old rip we’ve been trying for all the summer, Mike. Many a trout and grayling he’s put out of sight. He’s worth a many couples of snipe;” and so, gathering up our impedimenta and walking along a narrow path, we hit the high road across, and walked home in the dusk to a bath, a good dinner, a pipe and many toddies.



“RISING TO THE OCCASION.”

THOMAS COLLINGWOOD CHOWN,
GLENMORE, SILVERHILL,
ST. LEONARD.





GRAYLING FISHING.



FINE old grayling fisher stood for his portrait in the illustration to this sketch. The author of the "Quaint Treatise"* is well beknown on most of the Derbyshire streams and valleys, having done good service in getting protection placed upon many a splendid stretch of water, long time left to poachers and other vermin.

I remember my first introduction to this fish in Izaak Walton. It was in that "quaint" but insufferable "treatise" of Moses Brown's—and a more conceited, twaddlesome old duffer than the author of "Piscatory Eclogues" never edited dear old Izaak; and, bad as his original notes are, the engravings are worse; indeed, they are so bad as to be extremely funny. The costumes of the subjects, being a century too late, are perfectly absurd. Hawkins restored them to the clothes of the period not long after; but Hawkins did not restore them to the fishing and shooting toggery of the period. Imagine a modern picture of hunting, let us say, with a gentleman going at a bullfinch in patent leather shoes, straight black bags, a swallow tail, and a best cream-

* W. H. Aldam, Esq.

laid choke. It couldn't be, except in the *so-called* humorous papers, and people no more went a-fishing in tight stockings, pumps, and rosettes than they do now. Would you be surprised to hear that gaiters were extant and long leg-boots; and that the coats, though cut straight in front, were very like the sacks of the present, and the hats were like our broad-brimmed felts, only a little higher in the crown, and more ventilative and cooler therefore. True, braces weren't invented then, and one tied one's knickers or bags up by strings called "points" on to the skirts of one's coat, the ends being left in ornamental bows at the waist. Trust me, Walton has never yet been appropriately illustrated in this respect. The cuts were taken from likenesses of various persons handed down; and when people had their portraits taken in those days they did as they do now—put their best clothes on.

But of all the pictures in Moses Brown, I think the one of "the contemplative man" is the funniest. Seated at the mouth of a cave in the rocks, in the sort of pose which very conceited people do take when their likenesses are taken, even to an affected point of the toe which might be possible by dint of great exertion, but that is all. He sits with an inane grin, contemplating nothing in particular in the distance. His rod, reclining on the ground, should, if perspective is aught but a name, be from fifty to eighty yards in length. The rocky mountain at his back, on which goats quite as big as tomcats are grazing, is confronted by the height of "the contemplative," full ten feet high, while the river in front cannot be less than four feet broad, and through some rushes not six feet from "the contemplative" creeps, quite unseen, a beaver; it might be meant for an otter, but it is a beaver, and a very big one too, rather longer, indeed, from head to tail than the river is wide. I never look at that picture but I think that no one but Mr. B. himself sat for the portrait, and I would like to wager a little that I am not far wrong; that self-satisfied smirk must be his.

However, we are getting away from grayling, and meandering somewhat; but what I meant to say was that my first acquaintance with the grayling was in Moses's edition of Walton, and even Moses couldn't spoil the freshness of those scenes in Derbyshire. Walton, *per se*, is very

delightful, but I must say that I think the addition of Cotton is to the full as enjoyable. I am fond of all kinds of fishing, and to me all that gossip about the dressing of the flies and the landing of graylings "of sixteen inches" is quite as amusing as that about Maudlyn and the red cow's milk, and the historical chub with the spot on his tail—which was caught in the month of May, by the way*—and I think that that day's fishing by The Peak "took me" more (when I read it) than any other part of the entire book. It is a delightful bit of description. How one seems to see that fly dressed too! How one selects that dubbing which you can only appreciate by holding up to the light; and how "thus I put on my wings, and thus twine and nip my dubbing," &c., &c., and then they walk out and try it; and one seems to be looking on while they converse, and to see the fish rising! Listen to this:

"How, now! what is all gone?"

"No, I but touched him; but that was a fish worth taking."

And then the discussion about striking, all as natural and apt as possible, and then—

"I have him, now; but he is gone down towards the bottom."

Whereupon the boy with the landing net naturally intrudes, and the grayling of sixteen inches (a pound and three-quarter fish that should be about) is landed, and they discuss him (every one who illustrates Walton makes a picture of that scene), and next the chat in the fish house. It is all admirably told, and thoroughly natural.

I have seen plenty of fish houses like it, and chatted like chats; and how delightful they were, and how one looks back reflectively while they start up like jewels in a dingy setting of everyday affairs, which seem to me to get more and more dingy year by year as I and the world get older.

* It will be remembered that Piscator, when he overtakes Venator and Anceps, fixes it as a "fresh May morning." He fishes next day with Venator, and they catch that chub, May being the month when chub spawn; and yet Piscator exalts his horn against this sort of thing in that very chapter thus: "But above all, the taking of fish in spawning time may be said to be against nature. It is like the taking the dam on the nest when she hatches her young; a sin so against nature, that Almighty God hath in the Leviticus law made a law against it," &c. This is rather unaccountable, unless Walton in writing his book by oversight forgot that he had fixed his first chapter in May: and yet if this were so he should have noted and corrected it in subsequent editions.

Walton and Cotton lived in troublous times, but if I have any gift of forecast, there be more troublous times before us than England ever knew yet, and the happy peaceful valleys through which our favourite streams meander will not be happy and peaceful many years longer.* What has thus shadowed my happy thoughts of fish and fishing amidst the loveliest scenes in England? I hardly know, save that pleasure and pain, L'Allegro and Il Penseroso, are always close together in this mortal strife. But

Hence loathed Melancholy,
Of Cerberus and blackest Midnight born,
In Stygian cave forlorn,
* * * * *
There, under ebon shades of low-browed rocks
As ragged as thy locks,
In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell.
But come thou goddess, fair and free,
In heaven yelep'd Euphrosyne. . . .

Let us go forth and "wander"

Not unseen
By hedgerow elms, on hillocks green,
* * * * *
While the ploughman, near at hand,
Whistles o'er the furrowed land;
And the milkmaid [Maudlyn, of course] singeth blythe,
And the mower whets his scythe,
And every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale.
Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,
While the landscape round it measures
Russet lawns and fallows grey
Where the nibbling flocks do stray,
Mountains on whose barren breast
The labouring clouds do often rest,
Meadows trim and daisies pied,
Shallow brooks and rivers wide.

"Exactly so," as the beefeater says in "The Critic." That is what it all comes to at last, "shallow brooks and rivers wide." Man made the pond, but God made the river. There are few things in nature so lovely as a river, and nothing perhaps so charming as a grayling river in fine order Octoberwards, either in Shrops or Derbyshire. As that irresistible joker,

* Writ on the first of the new year, 1878.—F. F.

my old chum Chalkley, would ask, "Is the Teme called the Teme because it teems with grayling, or the Lug the Lug because you can lug 'em out of it till you are tired." "*Proh pudor!*" what vile habit is this? My old friend there in the knickers and landing net would tell you that, however much they may teem, you cannot lug them out till you have hooked them; and therein lies the gist of the matter. Mark you how skilfully *he* casts his willow fly and red tag across the head of that lovely Derbyshire rapid while we sit down on the shore and watch him. See how he searches every inch of the water across close under the opposite bank, and now rolling down stream. Ha! what a lovely rise! And see his arching rod proclaims a victim to his bow and steel. Head over heels the prey tumbles down the stream, as is the wont of grayling. Now he makes a slight rush as he sees the extended net, but he will never rush again; round, round he swings towards the bank, on to which our friend steps gingerly. Slowly now—no hurry—for all his weight is on the line, and he is not like your logger-headed chub, a leathern-mouthed fish, but, like Tom Pinch's steak, he "must be humoured, not drove," and our friend is an adept in the art, for somehow his prey rolls round, and the net is unobtrusively under him at the first good chance, and a bonny twelve-inch grayling flutters on the green sward.

The trout is king of the stream, but the grayling is queen. How lovely he is! What brilliant silver sides, bedropped with black diamonds! How gorgeous that great purple and tortoiseshell dorsal fin! What a graceful form! What oriental eyes, and how he justifies his name, "*Thymallus*," and what a juicy cut that will be along the lateral line to-morrow at breakfast. A tap on the head, and he is consigned to his wicker prison, while our friend, carefully scanning his fly to see that hook and gut are as they should be, blows out the feathers, steps softly into the stream again, and, with a lightsome hoist, sends his brace of persuaders forty feet across the stream, on which they settle like a snowflake. "There he rose," but no bending rod replies. It was a false move. Again the tempting fare is spread before him, and again he flashes to the surface vainly, and the flies float on intact. Something withhold's him, and he seems to scent danger, but cannot forbear to gaze upon it,

Our old friend, however, once wrote in his copybook "Familiarity breeds contempt," so he tries yet another line of invitation to the hesitating fish, and if a woman who hesitates is lost, so is a grayling. Familiarised with danger, he is no longer deterred. He opens his mouth and "snaps"—*Habet!*

Now, mark our old friend's skill. To every movement of the fish he gives gracefully; for a big grayling is like a woman, you must not check her till she is landed. Give her her head, let her run riot even, so that you simply keep the hook in her cheek, and, flounce she never so much, a time will come when she'll get tired of saying "I won't," and you may begin to shorten in line and persuade her to come "a little this way." "This way, gently; don't tire yourself, my angel, pray don't!" "What is that nasty thing, a net?" "Oh no, fie for shame!" "A net, no! only a ring! Come, let me slip it over the loveliest—hah, safe at last! Now, young woman, none of that flouncing! Just you behave well, or—" 'Pon my word, courtship is very like fly fishing, and they run in a parallel, now don't they? Odd one never noticed that before. Fishermen should be skilful flirts; and, by the way, you remember that the "scholar" began to practise upon Maudlyn at once; for that wary old Piscator, who probably did not approve of his young friend's poaching upon his preserves, observeth, "Come, Scholar, let Maudlyn alone; do not you offer to spoil her voice," &c. "Spoil her voice, indeed! Oh, you naughty old man! Ikey, Ikey, I'm fairly ashamed of you!" Well, Mr. Propriety, what have you got to say to it? Because you choose to wear a sour phiz are there to be no more cakes and ale? I warrant me, faith, "and ginger shall be hot i' the mouth, too."

And once more our old friend steps into the stream and floats his fancies on the rippling eddies. There should be a good one on the edge of that eddy. It looks a knowing sort of hole enough. Swoop, the fly comes trailing round the eddy buried inches deep in the swirl, and, lo! once more the pliant timber doubles in his grip. I saw no rise—nay, nor was there visible break or boil of surface; but the line checked for a brief half second in its sweep, and that was warning good to our canny old performer. He knew full well that "who checks at me to

death is dight," and there be no checks without a cause, and so he nipped Thymallus on the nose right skilfully; a liberty which he resented by diving down into the crystal depths, and, being both large and lusty, betook him willy-nilly to a branching root in the bank, in which he left the angler's drop fly sawing in the stream, while he carried off the other to his museum.

"Drat him!" for that is the strongest expletive our friend ever employs; "that was a knowing dodge, but had he not been a big one, a regular three-decker, he had not sped that fortune."

"Ah, sir, I knows him well," as the water bailiff said to him two hours later, as we were drinking at the Chequers. "I knows him well; he's over three pound, and m'appen will touch four. I've seed 'n there on many a day. He sarved Muster Rodgers just the same saace as he served you. That ould stump's a rare friend of his'n." Meanwhile, our friend pulled out his fly book, a marvel of neatness and arrangement, and picking out another brace of killers, fitted out another yard or so of gut in place of that which he had lost, and, dropping his new cast in the water, drew it slowly past, scanning the appearance of the flies critically. ("They should do—ay, they must do. Drat 'em, they *shall* do——")

"When you've done conjugating 'do,' my friend and pitcher," I remark, "chuck over to that bush; there's a good fish making hay while the sun shines, which won't be much longer, I take it; so do you follow his example." That good fish was doomed; he came and he saw, but *we* conquered, even though he was "a seizer," as I remarked to my old friend, who looked very reproachfully at me.

"You'd better take the rod," he said.

"As a punishment?" I asked.

"You're as bad as a modern burlesque, and I shall expect to see you dancing an idiotic breakdown all to yourself if this goes on," grumbled the incensed performer. "Phew! that was a good fish, and I touched him sharply. What a pity! No, he won't come again. There's another! Bah!—only a little one. Pitch him back again. Another wee one, and another. The stream gets shallow, and the fish will mostly be small. Let us go on to the next bend."

The next reach is a quiet bit, comparatively still, with hollow banks. Here the river ran through pleasant meads, with here and there a huge symmetrical oak that was perhaps a stout sapling when the Wars of the Roses drenched the land with blood and tears; and at their feet all in good season, the

Daisies pied and violets blue,
And ladies' smocks all silver white,
With cuckoo buds of yellow hue,
Do paint the meadows with delight.

Here, under deep mossy banks, the river murmured and eddied quietly, while a short mile on perhaps it runs through a steep ravine, with rocky sides and high o'er-arching trees, with a course oft fretted by big stones and rugged rocks. Setting fishing aside, it was a charming ramble.

So far the day had been somewhat sunny, but within the last ten minutes or so the sun had gone in, and the air was colder. Not a fish that could be seen was moving. It did not look promising to the uninstructed eye. But Piscator hummed a bar or two of "Nil desperandum." "We shan't get many, but we may get a few," and our friend pitched his flies close under the banks on either side, and searched them thoroughly. It wasn't long before a little dimple under a bush on the far side, as if a water drop had fallen on the surface, was followed by a gentle strike; and a bending rod once more told its tale, and a nice three-quarters fish, after the usual amount of running and tumbling, came to net and joined his comrades; and shortly after a pounder followed suit. Then he had a scrape and a break away, and after that another three-quarter pound fish turned his tail up.

By the time we get to the end of this stretch the fish have gone off, so we sit down and eat a sandwich, and chat and smoke for half an hour or so, as is the wont of fishermen during the slack noontide. Autumn tints begin to show themselves. Russet is creeping onward like old age; we have had our spring, our summer has almost waned and winter is coming; but still the angler's time—so as he can be by the river—is not all barren and joyless; and even memory counts for a considerable something.

I think in the whole English language (to me, at least) there is no poem or scrap of poetry which appeals to me with a more profound sense of melancholy than poor Tom Doubleday's "Auld Fisher's Last Wish." One seems to feel every word and every longing so keenly. How goes it?

There's joy at merry Thristleyhaugh the new maun hay to win,
The busy bees at Todstead Shaw are bringin' honey in;
The trouts they loup on ilka stream, the birds on ilka tree,
Auld Coquet's side is Coquet still, but there's no place for me.

Oh! were my limbs as ance they were to jink across the green,
And were my heart as light again as sometime it has been,
And could my fortunes blink again as erst when youth was sweet,
Then Coquet, let what will betide, full soon we twa should meet.

Or had I but the cushat's wing, where'er I list to flee,
And wi' a wish might wend my way owre hill an' dale and lea;
'Tis there I'd fauld that weary wing, there gaze my latest gaze,
Content to see thee ance again, then sleep beside thy braes.

Ay! they were charming poems *in petto*, many of those Newcastle garlands—delicious pictures of Nature, exquisite bits of feeling! It is strange how all that poetical sentiment seems to have died out of our craft."

"We get more and more practical," said my old friend; "we want to be always killing. There is no such thing as a contemplative man nowadays. No one contemplates. They would tell you they haven't got time for it. You act upon impulse; you never contemplate. No one, for example, would sit down in tights at the mouth of a damp-looking cave on the river's bank with a book, and gaze apparently at futurity, like your friend in Moses Browne, while the otter ran off with his fish. We waste no noontide hours for the benefit of our minds as well as our bodies, not we. We must be a-fishing, Sir, whether we be catching or no. It is just the same in shooting; to make a big bag we make a toil of a pleasure!"

"Just so; and I think that fishing matches have had a good deal to do with this deterioration."

"I am afraid that the fishing matches are merely an offshoot—a symptom of the deterioration, which has a wider basis than this."

“I wonder who first thought of catching grayling with a fly.”

“The art was known more than 1700 years ago, for Ælian the Sophist, writing in the time of the Emperor Severus, says that there is but one way for the angler to catch ‘Thymallus,’ and that is to eschew all the ordinary fish-baits, and to use in the place thereof, that troublesome little fly the *Conops*, which night and day torments mankind by his buzzing and biting. By using this he will be sure to get sport wherever *Thymalli* are found. No doubt either Ælian, or some one else, has muddled this; for no hook could well be contrived small enough to impale a gnat. Aldrovandus, in citing this passage, makes this remark, and as Badham, from whom I select the passage, also says, ‘no doubt Ælian, no great adept himself in myology or fly-fishing, has substituted, by mistake, the *culex pipiens*, for some other fly more or less resembling it in shape, perhaps ‘for the Mayfly itself.’ A shrewd guess of Badham’s, as the Mayfly is much used for dressing, and is much liked by the grayling. Howbeit, there can be no doubt that fly-fishing for grayling was known more than 1500 years before Cotton wrote of it. But, to quit this subject, what a pity it is that there are not more streams in which the grayling are found in England! It is such an agreeable extension to one’s fly-fishing.”

“I fear that on some streams even where he does exist the grayling is not very popular. I know some of the Hampshire streams where grayling grow to a great size—even, in rare cases, up to 5lb. weight; while I myself have killed several up to 4lb. I know that they have a strong objection to the grayling on the score that they diminish the trout; and I have frequently been asked in May when they are in a kelted state to kill all I catch.”

“And do you think they are at all inimical to the trout?”

“In some degree they must be so; for, to say the least of it, they must take a considerable portion of the trout’s food, though not more than a trout himself would. The only question is, whether for the sake of prolonging your season you will have fewer trout and replace them with grayling. Not being a glutton in slaughter, I can be satisfied with moderate sport. A few brace satisfies me, and therefore the prolongation

of sport would be so much actual gain. Whether the grayling, being rather a ground rooter, as the formation of his mouth and snout shows, does not pick up a good deal of trout spawn, seeing that in the winter, when trout spawn, they are active and in good fettle, is another question; but a very little artificial hatching would easily set all that right, and as the grayling is not a very pronounced fish-eater, as soon as the fry were able to feed they would be safe from them. Could the spawn be procured it would be easy enough to distribute them. The case of the Clyde shows that clearly; and the odd part of the thing was that when the grayling were introduced into the Clyde they soon exceeded in size the trout in their native waters. But I have seen a fish or two move while we have been talking, and I see you have changed your cast."

"Yes, I have put on a bumble and a small caperer; they will suit just beyond yon hatchway; there, where the little brook falls in in that wide swirley hole, is always a safe find, and I shall be disappointed if I don't get a tug or two there."

The pool in question was a biggish eddy caused by two falls, the streams meeting and uniting at this point. On the side we stood the water was deep and swirly, but on the further side it eddied up under some spreading branches of trees on a bank of beautiful gravel, making a wide shelf of some three feet deep, and here the grayling usually "most did congregate." Although there were few at present very active, I could see several shadowy forms (true "umbra". doubtless) moving slowly from deep to shallow and back again with scarce perceptible motion, waiting a descent of fly. Forth went the slender line over the broken water till it was swept on to the shelf; but it came all round into the straight with no result.

"That top chap moved at it; but—Ha! then he took a natural fly. Now for it again," and once more the line extended itself.

There was a good big shadow at the head of the shelf, suddenly I lost sight of it, and the next moment our friend was playing the old game of give and take in a lusty pound and a halfer which I landed for him. Again the line went forth, and again a shadow was missing from the gravel, and once more a lusty fish plunged down the rough centre stream, and we followed him to the point, where we landed him also.

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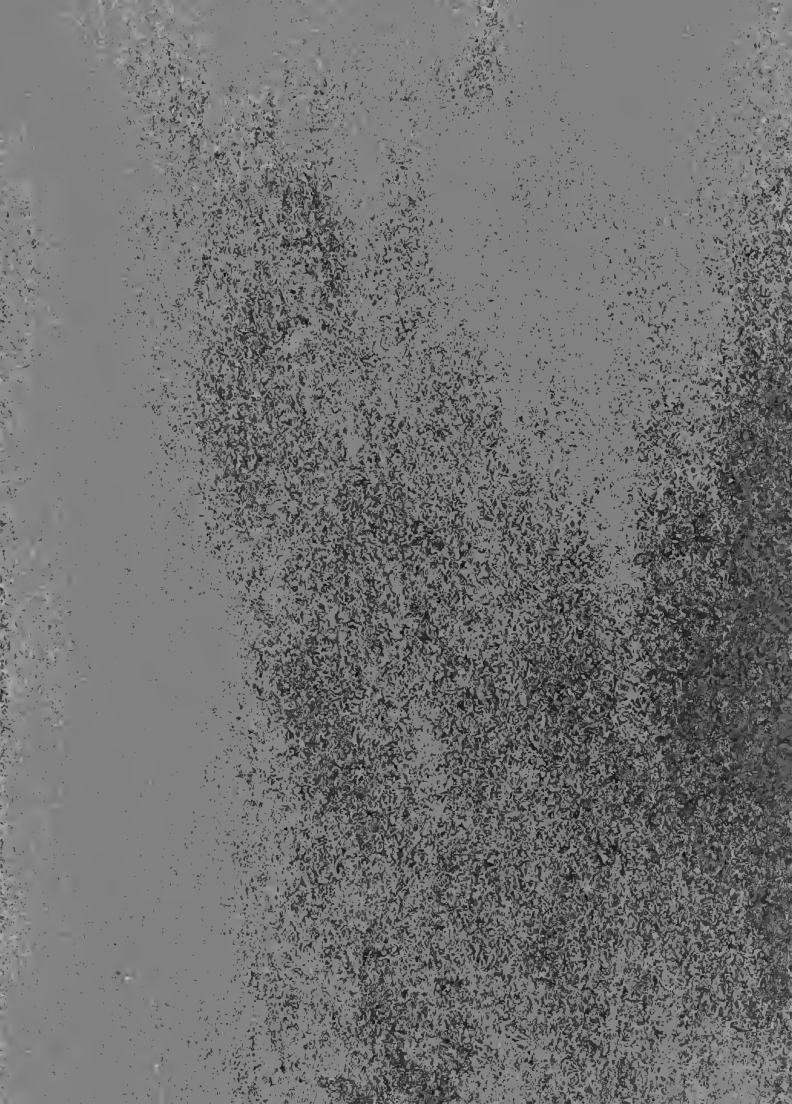
"They're fond of the bumble just now, but later on they'll take the caperer," said old Experience, and he was right. When we walked up once more to the eddy the shelf was vacant. The alarm had been given and every shadow was away, and as they would not be back for half an hour or more, and the days were getting on, we sought the streams below, on the edges of which the caperer served his turn, as our friend foretold.

By four o'clock the rise for the day was over, and we walked home well satisfied with eleven brace of lovely graying basketed.

And so Mr. Cooper's and my own labours come to an end, and we can but hope that they have been satisfactory to the reader.



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