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"Red Spinner"

LINES IN PLEASANT PLACES

BEING THE AFTERMATH OF AN OLD ANGLER

by

William Senior

("Red Spinner")

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INTRODUCTION

The half a dozen or so of Angling books which stand to my name were headed by *Waterside Sketches*, and this is really and truly a continuation, if not the end, of the series. They were inspired by my old friend Richard Gowing, at the Whitefriars Club, of which he was for many years the well-remembered honorary secretary, and of which I still have the grateful pride of being entitled to the name of father.

Gowing had become editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1874, and in his sturdy efforts to give it new life he looked round amongst the youngsters who seemed likely to serve him. The result was that he invited me to try my hand at something. He had read my *Notable Shipwrecks*, which the house of Cassells was at that time bringing out, and said that its author, known to the public as "Uncle Hardy" only, ought to be able to offer a suggestion.

The Stoke Newington reservoirs had about that time given me some good sport with pike, large perch, chub, and tench, and I had long been an angling enthusiast. Out of the fullness of my heart I spoke. I told him that fishing was my best subject; that if he would accept a series of contributions the direct object of which was to make Angling articles as interesting to non-anglers as to anglers themselves, I would be his man.

Verily I would not wonder if, in showing how botany, agriculture, out-of-door life generally might be woven into the warp and woof of the fabric, I became eloquent; for, as I have said, out of the heart the mouth spoke. So it was agreed, and for a while "Red Spinner's" articles graced the pages of the magazine, and they were by and by republished in *Waterside Sketches*. They afterwards gave me entrance to *Bell's Life* and to the *Field*, and a name at any rate amongst the brethren of the Angle, as to which I must not gush, but which is very dear to the musings of an old man's eventide. How much I owe

to "Red Spinner" I shall never know. The name has followed me, and my brothers of the Highbury Anglers have adopted it, but last year, in honour of their always loyal, but I feel sure no longer useful President. I was much amused to find how it had also followed me to Queensland. During one of the Parliamentary recesses I went up country, the guest of a squatter who was afterwards in the Ministry, and he introduced me to a fellow squatter member in my surname as an officer of Parliament. Neither the name nor office meant anything to him. But when we were smoking in the veranda, and my friend mentioned, as an aside, that I was "Red Spinner," the visitor leaped to his feet, came at me with a double grip, and shouted a Scotch salmon-fisher's welcome, turning to my host and furiously demanding, "Why the dickens didn't you tell me so at first?"

On another Bush visit an officer in the Mounted Police showed me amongst his curiosities a copy of *Waterside Sketches* half devoured by dingoes, and found with the scraps scattered around the skeleton of a poor wayfarer left at the foot of a gum-tree. To fly-fishers the name had an intelligible story of course, and it puzzled those non-anglers for whom I tried always to write. The scores of times I was asked "What does 'Red Spinner' mean?" by ladies as well as gentlemen, told me how well I had kept the promise to the good Richard Gowing when those articles were arranged.

Journalism proper, now and henceforth for the rest of my life claimed me. It became my profession in fact; but it was always fishing that kept the longing eye turned towards the waterside. Somehow for a time the water was all round me, but I had not the means of learning the art at that time, nor of practising it. Somehow I was always being reminded that the fishing rod was to obtain the mastery by and by, but I had to wait a long while for the opportunity. At first I was in what may be called a good fishing country, but I seemed to have no say in it. I had no rod; no fisheries were open. Indeed, it was journalism that gripped me, and in those early days I followed the mastership of it very closely, for there was so much to learn, as I shall be able, I hope, to explain when any reminiscences that I am able to write call for it. That longing must meanwhile be kept open for some years to come.

Now, however, came the time when, as I have always considered, my real life began. It was my fate to be appointed representative of the *Lymington Chronicle* in 1858, when I was duly installed in its office in that town, engaged to look after the local news, the advertisements, the circulation; and especially it was my business to see that not a single paragraph was ever missing from the budget which I duly sent to the head office in Poole at the end of every week. But still there was no fishing, save in the river, where bass came occasionally to my hook in the tidal portions; and one of six pounds I remember as the best that came to me on the hand line. There was some talk once of a visit that I was to pay to a trout river at Brockenhurst; but practically nothing came of it, nor did a casual chance which Lord Palmerston gave me at Broadlands, which was too far from my beat and altogether above me in its salmon runs. As for perch, which I had fished for as a boy, there were none to be heard of in the district.

In due time I was transferred from Lymington to Southampton, where I remember catching smelts, and nice little baskets of them, from the pier at the bottom of High Street. Next I went to Manchester, where there was less of such fishing as I required than before; and on a daily paper like the *Guardian*, journalism soon proved to be real business to engage my attention, and left me without the slight opportunities I found even with the *Lymington Chronicle* or *Hants Independent*. In due time fortune, as I thought, beamed upon me when I got an appointment on the London *Daily News*, which was then in its prime. Here I began to find what fishing meant, for very early, thanks to the kindness of Moy Thomas and his friend Miles, the publisher, who was one of the directors, I got a ticket for the famous New River reservoirs. I was here introduced to many members of the fishing club—men of the place—and became a member of the Stanley Anglers, where I won some prizes, and of the somewhat famous and somewhat high-class True Waltonian Society, which met at Stoke Newington. The general result of this was that wherever there was fishing to be secured I got it, and was seldom without opportunity of turning that longing eye of which I aforesaid spoke to the waterside. I made pretty rapid progress too, for I became a well-known pike fisher at Stoke Newington, got large chub and much perch, and generally took various degrees in the piscatorial art.

Best of all, by means of my membership of the True Waltonians, I had the run of the Rickmansworth water. It was here that I learnt fly-fishing, even to the extent of catching my first trout, and here that I went through a course of practice at some large dace which then existed in the Colne; and they very freely, to the extent of half a pound or so weight, took the dry fly, which in later years they did not. As a very active travelling member of the special correspondence staff of the *Daily News* I went here and there on various errands, and was soon known never to travel without my rod and creel. Then the introduction to my old friend Gowing of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, as I have already described, made me as eager to write as I was to fish; and, in a word, this was how "Red Spinner" was manufactured.

Now I have explained how I became a practical angling writer, and the half-dozen or so of books which I inflicted upon my brethren of the Angle gradually came into existence. It is necessary to mention this to account for the fact that the majority of what I write has appeared before the public from year to year. Indeed, I did not allow the grass to grow under my feet. My voyage to Queensland gave me a book, and a series of the *Gentleman's Magazine* chapters gave me another; and so it went on from time to time, as I had the opportunity, in magazines and papers, finding what I may call even a ready market for all I chose to publish. The reader will understand, therefore, that after these half-dozen books, if any of them are to be found registered against me, there was not a great deal left for gathering together; and that is the excuse for this volume which I have ventured to call the *Aftermath of Red Spinner*. Indeed, just before the war broke out I had agreed to supply a book to my old friend Mr. Shaylor, to be published by Simpkin, Marshall & Co. It was to contain just what had been left over

by *Bell's Life*, the *Field*, and various magazines, and this I have described as the "Aftermath." I therefore publish it, and I do so, if I may be permitted, just as an old man's indulgence. Will the reader be so good as to let it stand at that, and will my old friends accept a humble plea for that indulgence? I make it very sincerely, and with a grateful heart for long years of brotherhood and kindly comradeship.

There are obligations which must, however, be clearly and promptly acknowledged with thanks most cordial: to the proprietors of the *Field*, (now the Field Press, Limited), to *Baily's Magazine*, the *Windsor Magazine*, and many others who kindly gave permission to select what was required for my purpose. I hereby thank them one and all, with apologies to others not mentioned through inadvertence.

AN OPEN LETTER TO WILLIAM SENIOR

MY DEAR RED SPINNER,

Only the other day I found in a bookseller's catalogue your *Waterside Sketches* with the word "scarce" against it. I already possess three copies, one the gift of the author, but I very nearly wrote off for a fourth because one cannot have too much of so good a thing. What restrained me really was honest altruism. "Hold," I said to myself, "there must be some worthy man who has no copy at all. Let him have a chance." For it is a melancholy fact that Red Spinner's books have been out of print an unconscionable while, only to be obtained in the second-hand market, and even there with difficulty.

I am not surprised at this (failing new editions at rather frequent intervals), but as a friend of man, and especially of man the angler, I am sorry. I believe I have read almost everything that has been written on the subject of fishing which comes within ordinary scope, and a certain amount which is outside that scope, and I have amassed fishing books to the number of several hundred. There is, however, comparatively little of all this considerable literature that I keep on a special shelf for reading and re-reading, a couple of dozen volumes maybe—and a quarter of those Red Spinner's. Realising what a pleasure and refreshment these books are to me and how often one or other of them companions the evening tobacco, I can the better appreciate the loss occasioned to other anglers by their gradual removal from the lists of the obtainable.

But not very long ago I heard the good news that you had another volume on the stocks, and I felt that the situation was improving. And now I have had the privilege of actually reading that volume in the proof sheets and can report the glad tidings for the benefit of my brethren of the angle. At last they will be able to procure one of your books by the simple process of entering a bookseller's and asking for it. I do not propose here to say much about the new volume except that it will certainly stand beside *Waterside Sketches* on that special shelf and that it will take its turn with the others in the regular sequence of re-reading. It is the real article, what I may call "genuine Red Spinner," hallmark and all. I must express my satisfaction that you have given in it some further record of the angling in other lands which you have enjoyed in your much-travelled experience. The Antipodes, Canada, the United States, Norway, Belgium before the tragedy—you make it all just as vivid to us as those cold spring days on the rolling Tay, the glowing time of lilac and Mayfly, or the serene evenings when the roach float dips sweetly at every swim. Whatever one's mood, salmon or gudgeon, spinning bait or black gnat, Middlesex or Mississippi, your pages have something to suit it.

Ever since I first met you, on a September evening at Newbury now nearly twenty years ago, you have consistently given me ever-increasing cause for gratitude. Whether as accomplished journalist and Editor of the *Field*, as writer and author of books, as a man with a genius for friendship, if I may quote the phrase, or as an expert with rod and line—in whatever guise you appeared I had cause to thank you for allowing me "to call you Master." That I am able to do so now thus publicly means that one at least of my ambitions has been realised. And I will take leave to subscribe myself with all affection, "Your scholar,"

H. T. SHERINGHAM.

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LINES IN PLEASANT PLACES

CHAPTER I

ANGLING AS A REAL FIELD SPORT

One of the commonest misconceptions about angling is that it is just the pastime for an idle man. "The lazy young vagabond cares for nothing but fishing!" exclaims the despairing mother to her sympathetic neighbour of the next cottage listening to the family troubles. Even those who ought to know better lightly esteem the sport, as if, forsooth, there were something in the nature of effeminacy in its pursuit.

Not many summers ago a couple of trout-fishers were enjoined by the open-handed country gentleman who had invited them to try his stream to be sure and come in to lunch. They sought to be excused on the plea that they could not afford to leave the water upon any such trifling pretence, but they compounded by promising to work down the water-meads in time for afternoon tea under the dark cedar on the bright emerald lawn. As they sauntered up through the shrubberies, hot and weary, the ladies mocked their empty baskets, and that was all fair and square; but a town-bred member of the house-party shot at a venture a shaft which they considered cruel:

"You ought to have joined us at luncheon, Captain Vandeleur," said she. "I can't imagine what amusement you can find in sitting all day watching a float."

To men whose shoulders and arms were aching after five hours' greenheart drill at long distances, and who prided themselves upon being above every form of fishing lower than spinning, the truly knock-down nature of this blow can only be imagined by those who understand the subject. The captain, who is reckoned one of the worst men in the regiment to venture with in the way of repartee, was so amazed at the damsel's ignorance that he answered never a word, leaving some of her friends in muslin on the garden chairs around to explain the difference between fishing with and without a float—a duty which they appeared to perform with true womanly relish as a set-off against the previous scoring of the pert maid from Mayfair, who had borne rather heavily upon them from a London season elevation.

Allow me to recommend angling as a manly exercise, as physically hard in some of its aspects as any other field sport. During the lifetime of those of us who will no more see middle age this recreation has become actually popular, and it is generally supposed that the multiplication a hundredfold of rod-and-line fishermen in a generation is explained by the cheaper and easier modes of locomotion, the increase of cheap literature pertaining to the sport, and the establishment of a periodical press devoted

to it amongst other forms of national recreation. These reasons are undoubtedly admissible. Yet I venture to add another, namely, the great and beneficial movement which has opened the eyes of men and women to the importance of physical exercise.

When the young men who had in their boyhood been taught to regard almost every form of recreation as a sin to be guarded against and repented of, were taught another doctrine, a new impulse was given to cricket, football, and all manner of athletics, and angling was quickly discovered by many to offer exercise in variety, and to carry with it charms of its own. To-day it is therefore so popular that anglers have to protect themselves against one another if they would prevent the depletion of lakes and rivers, and salmon and trout streams are quoted as highly remunerative investments.

Let us see, however, where exercise worthy of the name is found—the inquiry will at the same time indicate the nature of the fascinations which to not a few good people are wholly incomprehensible, if, indeed, they are not a mild form of lunacy. We may take for granted the antiquity of the sport, though probably the first anglers had an eye to nothing nobler than the pot. Angling has never been worth following as an industry, for one of the first lessons learned by the rod fisherman is that there are superior devices for filling a basket if that alone is the object. "Because I like it," is the least troublesome reply to one who asks you why you will go a-fishing. Happy he who can go a little further and aver, "Because I find it the most entrancing of sports." And with equally sound sense may it be urged by old and young alike, "Because it is splendid exercise."

Angling in truth is often made much severer than it need be. The American fishing-men, in their instinctive search for notions, discovered long ago that the rods which they had copied from us were too long and heavy, and the necessary tackle altogether too cumbersome. They seldom use a longer salmon-rod than 15 feet, and frequently kill the heavy trout of their lakes and rivers with delicate weapons of 8 and 9 feet.

In Scotland and Ireland, where the best of our salmon fishing is, you may still meet with anglers who will have no rod under 18 or 20 feet. Only big strong men accustomed to it can wield an implement of this calibre through a hard day's casting without extreme fatigue. They have a sound justification for their choice on such streams as Tweed, Dee, and Spey, where the pools are of the major size and the getting out of a long line is a necessity. They are not on such sure ground when they urge that a heavy salmon can only be landed by a rod of maximum dimensions. I saw a friend last autumn produce a 15-foot greenheart rod on Tweedside. The gillies shook their heads incredulously at the innovation, but honestly unlearned what they had always believed to be infallible dogma when he killed his twenty-three pound fish as quickly and safely as if the cause had been the 18-foot rod which they had implored him to substitute for his most unorthodox concern. It is true that there are "catches" which can only be covered by long rods, with their undoubted advantages in sending out the fly, picking the line off the water, and settling a fish with the promptest dispatch.

The young salmon-fisher should learn to handle a rod that is sufficient for his height and strength and no more. For ordinary purposes 17 feet of greenheart or split-cane are ample, and the modern salmon angler has come to look upon even this—which our forefathers would have pooh-poohed as a mere grilse-rod—as excessive. The secret of comfortable and successful angling, as an exercise no less than as a sport, is in the choice of a rod. Some men seem to be unable to make the right selection; they seem to lack the correct sense of touch and balance. Others suffer from love of change; disloyal to the old friend which fitted their hand to a nicety, they discard it for the passing attractions of some newly-advertised pattern.

It is distressing to watch the efforts of the right man with the wrong rod, or vice versa. With man and rod in harmony the latter does the real work; unfitted to each other, the power of man and rod is alike at its worst. Unfortunately this matter is one upon which the angler must be his own teacher; but the angler's troubles, in the majority of instances, arise from the fatal predilection for a rod heavier than the owner can legitimately bear, or from the use of a line too fine or too coarse for the rod. Exercise is then over-exercise, injurious, and not good for body or temper.

Salmon fishing from a boat is imagined by some to be objectionable because it demands no exertion by the angler. This is an erroneous conclusion, though doubtless the method brings certain muscles into play to an unequal degree. At the same time, fishing from the bank, as it is called for convenience, though the angler never stands upon one, is the most enjoyable of all methods. There is a rapture in the stream as in the pathless woods.

In the foregoing remarks upon heavy rods I had possibly in my mind the angler whose life is not entirely devoted to the open air. The increase to which reference has been made has been chiefly from the class of professional men, merchants, and others who have duties which allow of only occasional relaxation devoted to the river. To such the donning of wading gear for the first time in the season, the entrance into the clear running water, the cautious advance upon the amber gravel or solid rock, the swirl of the rushing stream around the knees, the sensation of cold through the waterproofing, the arrival at length at the point where the head of the pool is within range—these are a keen delight. The pulses fly again when the hooked salmon is felt, and the tightening line curves the rod from point to hand. Exercise, indeed! Half an hour's battle with a fighting salmon, including a race in brogues of a hundred yards or more over shingle or boulders will, when the fish is gaffed and laid on the strand, find the best of men well breathed and not sorry to sit him down till his excitement has cooled and his nerves are once more steady.

Next in order, as a form of healthy exercise, comes pike fishing, as practised by the spinner with

small dead fish, the artificial imitations of them, or the endless variations of the spoon, invented, it is claimed, by an angler in the United States. Live baiting in a river with float requires sufficient energy to walk at the same speed as the current flows; by still water or in a boat the angler comes, of course, fairly into the comprehension of the lady who was introduced on another page. He watches and waits, and the more closely he imitates the heron in his motionless patience the better for his chances. The troller of olden times was at any rate always moving, and finer exercise for a winter day than trolling four or five miles of river could not be prescribed. But the gorge hook has gone out of fashion and is discountenanced.

Spinning is for pike what the artificial fly is for salmon, the most scientific method, and followed perseveringly it is downright hard work, bringing, as the use of the salmon rod does, all the muscles of the body into play. The degree of exercise depends upon the style adopted. Casting direct from the Nottingham winch is less trying than the ordinary and more familiar custom of working the incoming line dropped upon the grass or floor of the boat, or gathered in the left hand in coils after the manner of Thames fishermen. Few anglers are masters of the Nottingham style, which has many distinct recommendations, such as freedom from the entanglements of undergrowth and rough ground.

The recovery of the spinning bait by regular revolutions of the winch is not always a gain, since, with all his shark-like voracity, the pike has his little caprices, and sometimes suspects the lure which is moving evenly on a straight course through the water. The bait spun home by the left hand manipulating the line while the right gives the proper motion to the rod top is considered best for pike if not for salmon. One of the good points about spinning for pike is that it is a recreative exercise to be followed after the fly-rod is laid by after autumn. November, December, and January are indeed the months to be preferred before all the rest, and when pike fall out of season the salmon and trout rivers are open again.

Trout fishing is the sport of the many amongst fly-fishermen, and the exercise required in the methods which are recognised as quite orthodox is probably the happy medium, yielding pleasure with the least penalty of toil. The members of the most recent school of trout fishers are believers in the floating fly, but it is wrong to assume that there is any burning question in the matter. The best angler is the man who is master of all the legitimate devices for beguiling fish into his landing net, and I am not now concerned with any controversial aspects of the dry-fly question. The spectacle of an angler upon a chalk stream, where this style is to all intents and purposes Hobson's choice, is not at all suggestive of bodily activity should he happen to be "waiting for a rise." The trout will only heed an artificial fly that is dropped in front of them with upstanding wings, and in form of body and appendages, as in the manner of its progress on the surface of the stream, this counterfeit presentment must strictly imitate the small ephemeridae which are hatching in the bed and floating down the surface of the stream. As the trout do not rise until the natural fly appears, and as the hatches of fly are capricious, there are often weary hours of waiting when the angler must be perforce inactive. His exercise comes in full measure when the hour of action does arrive, and he will find some motion even in the eventless intervals by walking up the river on the look-out for olive dun or black gnat.

The whipper of the mountain streams, or the wet-fly practitioner who fishes a river where the trout are not particular in their tastes, is in the way of exercise the most fortunate of all. He is ever passing from pool to pool, lightly equipped, changing his scenery every hour, now whipping in the shadow of overhanging branches, now crouching behind a mossy crag, and now brushing the sedges of an open section of the stream. The broad tranquil flow is exchanged for merry ripples and sparkling shallows, and these are succeeded by strong and concentrated streams foaming and eddying down a rocky gorge. Trout here and there are dropped into the pannier from time to time, and it is a wholesomely tired angler, with a grand appetite and capacities for sound sleep, who at night will welcome his slippers at the inn.

Sea-trout angling is to me the choicest sport offered by rod and line. One degree more exacting to arms and legs than the more universal employment of the pretty 10-foot trout rod with the purely fresh-water species of the salmonidae, it still falls short of the heavier demands of the salmon or pike rod. The double-handed rod, the moderately strong line and collar, and the flies that are a compromise between the March brown or alder and the Jock Scott or Wilkinson, offer you salmon fishing in miniature. The sea trout are regular visitors to the rivers which are honoured by their periodical visits, but they never linger as long as salmon in the pools, and must be taken on their passage without shilly-shallying.

A good sea trout on a 14-foot rod, and in a bold run of water fretted by opposition from hidden rocks and obstinate outstanding boulders, is game for a king. The exquisitely shaped silver model is a dashing and gallant foe, worthy of the finest steel tempered at Kendal or Redditch. No other fish leaps so desperately out of the water in its efforts to escape, or puts so many artful dodges into execution, forcing the angler with his arched rod and sensitive winch to meet wile with wile, and determination with a firmness of which gentleness is the warp and woof. While it lasts, and when the fish are in a sporting humour, there is nothing more exciting than sea-trout angling. Perhaps for briskness of sport one ought to bracket with it the Mayfly carnival of the non-tidal trout streams in the generally hot days of early June, when the English meadows are in all their glory, and the fish for a few days cast shyness to the green and grey drakes and run a fatal riot in their annual gormandising.

The greatest happiness for the greatest number in angling, I suppose, must be credited to the patient disciples of Izaak Walton who take their sport at their ease by the margins, or afloat on the bosom, of the slow-running rivers which come under the regulations of what is known as the Mundella Act. They are mostly the home of the coarse fish of the British waters—pike, perch, roach, dace, chub,

barbel, and the rest. Some of them also hold trout and one or two salmon in their season. They yield little of the kind of sport that gives the exercise which I have made my theme as an excuse for, and recommendation of, angling. But the humbler practices of angling with modest tackle and homely baits take thousands of working people into the country, and if sitting on a box or basket, or in the Windsor chair of a punt on Thames or Lea does not involve physical exertion of a positive kind, it means fresh air, rural sights and sounds, and the tranquil rest which after all is the best holiday for the day-by-day toiler.

CHAPTER II

MANFORD AND SERTON'S COSY NEST

It would be interesting to know who invented the phrase "Cockney Sportsman"; we may fairly conclude, at any rate, that *The Pickwick Papers*, backed persistently by *Punch*, gave it a firm riveting. It applied perhaps more to the man with the gun than the rod, though the most telling illustration was the immortal Briggs and his barking pike. The term of contempt has long lost its sting, though it still holds lightly. The angler of that ilk fifty years ago, as I can well remember, for all his cockneyism, worked hard for his sport, and enjoyed a fair amount of it. When, for example, I used to fish at Rickmansworth in the middle 'sixties, you would see anglers walking away with their rods and creels from Watford station to various waters four or five miles distant. There are more railways now, but less available fishing, and the anglers have multiplied a thousandfold, making a wonderful change of conditions.

There were plenty of little-known, out-of-the-way places where common fishing could be had for the asking, and excellent bags made by the competent. Manford and Serton were two young men who, I suppose, would have been in the category of Cockney Sportsmen, being workers in City warehouses, members of neither club nor society, free and independent lovers of all manner of out-of-door pursuits and country life. They were both devoted to all-round angling, and Manford, in a modest degree, fancied himself with the gun. These young men are here introduced to the reader because a passing sketch of one of their sporting excursions to the country will indicate a type, and show that they might be cockney, but were also not undeserving the name of sportsmen.

The young fellows made their plans in the billiard-room of the Bottle's Head, just out of Eastcheap, chatting leisurely on the cushions while waiting for a couple of bank mashers to finish their apparently never-ending game. Thirty or forty years ago young fellows in the City did not think so much about holidays as they now do. We have reached a stage of civilisation when it seems absolutely necessary for our bodily and spiritual welfare, however comfortably we may be situated in life, to rush away for a change as regularly as the months of August and September come round. Manford declared that exhausted nature would hold out no longer unless he could take a holiday. Serton suggested that he should try and rub along somehow until nearer October, when he might go down with him to a quiet little place, where he gushingly assured him there was splendid fishing, where they might live for next to nothing, meet with nice people, and be in the midst of one of the most beautiful parts of the country. The one condition was that probably they would have to rough it a little. All these were genuine attractions to S., who agreed to go, M. adding, as they rose to secure the cues, that besides fishing there would be chances with the rabbits.

A spring-cart and a horsey-looking person were awaiting the travellers outside the small roadside railway station at the end of their journey, and they were already joyous and alert. They and their belongings were bundled into the "trap" (how many misfits are covered by the word!) and driven through a tree-arched lane. M. could extract something even from the autumnal seediness of the hedgerows, affirming that they were for all the world like a theatre when the holland coverings are on. S. exclaimed with surprise as a squirrel ran across the track, telling M. that this proved how really they were in the country, squirrels being seldom seen, as weasels are, crossing a road. The driver, who was in fact the keeper, found his opportunity in the uprising from a field of two magpies chattering a welcome. "I think you'll have luck, genl'men," he said. "'Tis allus a good sign to see two mags at once. See one 'tis bad luck; see two it be fun or good luck; see three 'tis a wedding; see four and cuss me if it bain't death."

A rustic cottage, approached between solid hedges of yew, was the bespoke lodging, and M. and S. were quickly out of the cart, and roaming the garden among fruit trees, autumn flowers, and beehives. Thence they were summoned to the little front room, the oaken window-sill bright with fuchsias and geraniums, the walls adorned with an old eight-day clock, a copper warming-pan and antique trays, while over the mantel-piece was a small fowling piece, years ago reduced from flint to percussion. Upon the rafters there were half a side of bacon, bunches of dried sweet herbs, and the traditional strings of onions. The pictures consisted of four highly coloured prints of celebrated race-horses, long ago buried and forgotten. It was in this cottage that the young men remained, and very comfortable they were, for the bedrooms were fitted up with the queerest of four-posters, made in the last century, while the walls were covered with prints from sundry illustrated papers, and illuminated texts. Serton had sojourned in this humble dwelling-place before, and expatiated upon its manifold merits to his friend, who prided himself upon being practical, and said 'twould do, but a five-pound

note, he supposed, would buy the lot. "No doubt," replied S., "but to me 'tis a cosy nest for anglers."

The fishing, however, was the first consideration, and with a sense of satisfaction induced by good quarters out went the anglers, across meadows, by the banks of a river. It was fine fun to help the lock-keeper with his cast-net and store the bait-can with gudgeons and minnows, and to crack jokes before the tumbling and rumbling weir, with its deep, wide pool, high banks around, and overhanging bushes. Serton, electing for a little Waltonian luxury, sat him down in comfort, plumbed a hard bottom in six feet of water, caught a dace at the first swim, and, with his cockney-bred maggots, took five others in succession—three roach, and a bleak which he reported in town, at the Bottle's Head, as the largest ever seen.

Meanwhile M., who was paternostering with worm and minnow, came down to inform S. that he had already landed four perch, and that the shoal was still unfrightened. With a recommendation to his friend to do likewise, he returned to his station, and his basketed perch might soon have recited, "Master, we are seven." Thereabouts a shout from S. made the welkin ring; he cried aloud for help, and M. sprinted along in time to save the fine tackle by netting a big chub. From the merry style of the beginning, the captor had felt assured of more roach, and now confessed that they and dace had ceased biting, though he had used paste and maggot alternately. Then he took to small red worm and angled forth a dish of fat gudgeon, that would have put a Seine fisher in raptures. Next he lost a fish by breakage, and while repairing damages was arrested by a distant summons from his companion, whom he discovered wrestling with something—no perch, however—that had gained the further side of the pool, and was now heading remorselessly for the apron of the weir, under which it fouled and freed. The witnesses of the defeat were probably right in their conclusion that this was the aged black trout that had become a legend, and was believed to be the only trout left in those parts.

During the afternoon M. and S., in peaceful brotherhood, sat over the pool, plied paternoster and roach pole, and fished till the float could be no more identified in the dusk. They carried to the cottage each ten or twelve pounds' weight extra in fish caught, but in his memories of the homeward walk S. must have been mistaken in his eloquent reference to the crake of the landrail, though he might have been correct as to the weak, piping cry of the circling bats, and the ghostly passage of flitting owl mousing low over the meadow. These alone, he said, broke the silence; in this M. took him to task, having himself heard the tinkling of sheep bells and the barking of the shepherd's dog.

Next morning the anglers were somewhat put out at first at the necessity of fulfilling an engagement with the keeper, being reminded of the promise by the appearance of a shock-headed youth in the cottage garden, staggering under two sacks. M. was better versed in these things than the other, and able to inform him that this meant rabbiting; here were the nets and the ferrets, and he had undertaken to stand by with the single-barrel and see fair play. Ferreting is a business generally transacted without hustle, and the keeper was a noted slowcoach. With this knowledge, and the presence under his eye of a basket containing ground-bait kneaded in the woodhouse while the breakfast rashers were frying, S. opined that he might snatch an hour or so of honest reaching in the backwater while the rabbit people were getting ready.

The roach master eventually came to the rendezvous, indeed, with a dozen and five of those beautifully graded roach which are between three-quarters and half pound, and which, when they are "on the feed," run marvellously even in size and quality. M. did not now concern himself about the roach. He was no longer a Waltonian; his mind had taken the tone of the keeper's. Yesterday his soul was of the fish, fishy; to-day it was full of muzzle-loaders, nets, and ferrets. But he, too, had his reward, and S. noticed that as they plodded athwart a fallow he looked out keenly and knowingly for feathered or four-footed game as if he were Colonel Hawker in person, and not the patient paternosterer with downcast eye. After S. had witnessed his bright eye and upstanding boldness when he brought the single-barrel to shoulder and dropped a gloriously burnished woodpigeon at long shot, he conceived an enhanced respect for him evermore, and was endued with a spirit of toleration to watch the coming operations, in which he took no part.

Nets were pegged down; there was much talk of bolt holes between the keeper and the rustic shockhead working on different sides of the bank, and M. and the dog Spider had vision and thought for nothing but the open holes they guarded. It transpired that the keeper wanted rabbits for commerce. The couples that speedily met fate in the nets were insufficient. He required fifteen couple. M. rolled over a white scut with obvious neatness and dispatch, and in shifting over to another hedgerow he shot a jay and gloried in its splendour. The keeper, however, moderated any secret intentions there might have been as to the plumage by one sentence: "That's another for the vermin book. I gets a bob for that."

The keeper's cottage gave lunch and rest to the party, and the talk was either of ferrets, hares, and rabbits, or of the two rudely carpentered cases which contained well-set-up specimens of teal, cuckoo, wryneck, abnormally marked swallow, pied rat, landrail, and polecat, each being a chapter in the life history of the keeper.

The tale of rabbits being incomplete, M. returned to his former occupation, but S. fished again, continually finding sport of the miscellaneous kind, such as a chub with cheese paste, perch with dew worm out of the milk-prepared moss, roach rod with running tackle, and leger tackle on a spinning rod. With this and a great worm on strong hook he had the surprise of a fight that gave him not a little concern. The fish at first appeared to be going to ground, even boring bodily into it. Then it gave way to panic, and shot about the pool as if pursued by a water fiend. Winched in slowly, it plunged into the bank, thought better of it, and ran up stream. At this crisis M. arrived, commandeered the net, and

stood around offering advice. It was a monster eel, he said. Give him more butt; be careful; be more energetic; certainly, all right. The last remark was simply a receipt in form of a little speech from S., who had briefly bidden him to mind his own business. The unseen fish abruptly had given in. Was it collapse? Slowly, slowly it followed the revolution of the reel, both men peering intent for first sight and grounds for identification of species. The first sight, however, must have been on the part of the fish, which went off in a fright deep down with renewed strength, and then it did surrender, a barbel of 6 lb., a somewhat rare fish for the river, and only taken when, as in this case, it had wandered up into the weir pool.

Having told M. to mind his own business with a minimum of ceremony, it was not surprising that S. was left alone, not exactly to his sport, since, as it happened, the barbel closed his account, unless one or two losses may be included in that definition, and, to give him his due, he was so thorough a fisherman that he did regard losses, shortcomings, and mishaps as legitimate assets in the general game. He had forgotten in his barbeline absorption to inquire, according to usage, how his comrade had been faring, and did not meet him again till they were in the throat of the lane cottage-wards bound. "Well, old 'un; what luck with the paternoster?" he asked, cheerily. M., with a sly twinkle in the eye, said, yes, he had done somewhat; three pike. It may be premised that the young men had both been trying at intervals for a certain marauding pike reported to them as a ferocious duck destroyer by a gentleman farmer who came down to gossip. He indicated the field and a gravel pit as a guide to the place where his cowman had seen a duckling seized by a pike, and the man embellished his account by swearing that the fish had ploughed his way down the river half out of water, with the ball of feathers bewhiskering his jaws. Manford, it seems, had revenged the raided ducks. A large pike lay at the bottom of his rush basket underneath three jack and a covering of rushes, and it was produced as a crowning show, a golden fish of 17 lb. lured to execution by a live bait. There was talk of nothing else that night but this prize at keeper's cottage, village tap-room, at the lockheads, and by five-barred gates; and the exultant keeper, who took credit for all, was heard to say that it was the best bloomin' jack he had seen "for seven year come last plum blight," whenever and whatever that might be.

CHAPTER III

MAYFLY DAYS AND DIALOGUES

[SCENE: straw-roofed fishing-hut, door and windows wide open. Table covered with remnants of luncheon, floor ditto with mineral water and other bottles, very empty. In the shade outside, fishermen lying on the grass gazing at the river, upon which the sun strikes fiercely. Keeper and keeper's boys standing sentinel up and down the meadow, under orders to report the first appearance of mayfly. Heat intense. Swallows hawking over the water. Fields a sheet of yellow buttercups, with faint lilac lines formed by cuckoo-flowers on the margins of carriers and ditches. Much yawning and silence amongst the lazy sportsmen sprawling in a variety of attitudes; caps thrown off their sun-scorched faces, waders peeled down to the ankles.]

R. O. (the Riparian Owner, and host of the party): Well, it's about time, I fancy, something stirred. The fly was up an hour before this yesterday, and it would be naturally a little later to-day.

SUFFIELD (a barrister of repute, tall and thin, sarcastic, and a first-rate angler): I don't believe we shall see a fly till three o'clock, and then we shall have the old game over again—short rises and bad language all along the line. Terlan's rod is enough to drive flies and fish out of the county.

TERLAN (a merry little squire, who takes business and pleasure alike with imperturbable placidity of temper, and who always uses a double-handed rod for mayfly fishing): The same to you, old blue-bag. I'll back my 14-footer against your miserable little split cane.

The GENERAL (a retired Indian officer, given to ancient recollections and gloomy views of life): Yes, and very little to brag about either. A brace and half of trout on this river in the mayfly week is a very pitiable sight. When I was a boy nobody had a basket of less than eight brace. Even the trout seem under the curse of this so-called new age.

SUFFIELD: Ay, you not only could, but did, get them easily in the good old times. Why, I have seen the old fogies up at Lord Tummer's water fish from chairs and camp-stools. (Laughter.) Fact, 'pon my word. Each man took his place with his footman behind him, and every man jack of 'em fished in kid gloves.

The GENERAL: But they got their trout, and plenty of 'em, and if they did take it easy, they filled their baskets.

The PARSON (the least parson-like member of the party, and beloved, as the right sort of parson always is, by everybody): This is stale matter. We went over all that ground yesterday, and agreed to take the modern trout as he is, and make the best of him. Call it education or what you like, trout-fishing is not what it was.

The GENERAL (grunting): And never will be. I say it all comes from your overstocking and returning hooked fish to the water. You are all too particular by half, and are eaten up with new-fangled notions.

R. O.: If we fail, it is not, at any rate, for want of preparations, precautions, and theories. Here, Georgy, get up, and arm yourself in regular order.

GEORGY (a stout, elderly stockbroker, supposed to be like the lamented George IV, rising with a laugh, and leisurely filling his pipe): Begad! what am I the worse for my paraphernalia? The General there and all of you, i' faith, are very glad to make use of my little odds and ends.

The GENERAL (contemptuously): When I was a young man we never bothered ourselves very often with so much as a landing-net. Now you are laden with stuff like a pack mule. Look at Georgy's priest dangling from one button, his oil-bottle from another, his weighing machine from another.

R. O.: Ay, and there's the damping box for the gut points, and the pin to clear the eyeholes of the hooks, and the linen cloth to wrap the trout in, and the clearing-ring, and the knee-pads, and whole magazines of flies.

The PARSON: Good! I know Georgy has at least twenty patterns, and by the time he has found out which is the killer the rise is over.

SUFFIELD: Hello! See that?

ALL: What? Where?

SUFFIELD: I beg your pardon: it was only a swallow, or a rat.

R. O.: No; Harvey is signalling up at the bridge. Let us be moving. The fly is coming. Tight lines to you all. [Piscatorum Personae collect their rods, pull up their waders, and stroll away in various directions.]

GEORGY (an hour later, seated amongst the sedges by a broad part of the river, mopping his forehead, rod laid aside on the grass behind: to him approaches the Parson from the shallow above): That was a warm bout while it lasted, parson. How did you get on?

PARSON: Get on? Not at all. For a time the fish rose in all directions, but they did not seem to take the natural even. Flopped at 'em and let 'em pass on.

GEORGY: I didn't like to say it before the R. O., but I'm sure we begin this mayfly fishing too soon. There ought not to be a rod out till the fly has been on at least a couple of days, and not a line should be cast till the fish are taking them freely.

PARSON: What have you done?

GEORGY (motioning to his creel, and creeping softly up the bank, with rod lowered): Only a couple, and handsome fellows, too. Why one of them is full to the muzzle with drakes; there's one crawling from between its jaws at this moment.

PARSON: Heigho! he's into another.

GEORGY (having stalked his fish and hooked him, retires from the bank and brings a two-pounder down to the net, which the parson handles): Well, I've got my brace and half, anyhow.

PARSON (laughing): To tell you the truth, I came down to beg a touch of the paraffin this time.

GEORGY: I thought so. Here you are. (Parson returns to his wooden bridge.) They laugh at my fads, but somehow take toll of 'em. (General approaches from below.) Any luck, General?

GENERAL (disgusted): Yes, infernal bad luck! Two fish broke away one after another. They won't fasten a bit. Never saw anything like it. But I want you to give me one of those gut points out of your damping box. I must get one of those boxes for myself.

GEORGY (supplying the requisitioned goods): You'll find it a very useful thing. Your gut will always be ready to use. Ha! my friend (to trout rising madly twenty yards out), I rather think you'll make number four. (Done accordingly. Spring balance produced; trout weighed at 2 lb. 1 oz. in sight of General.)

GENERAL (moving off to the next meadow, and commanding a deep bend, the haunt of heavy trout); I suppose I have lost the trick; but catch them I can't. I have risen six fish, and lost the only ones that took me. Here's the keeper. What are they doing at the ford, Harvey?

HARVEY: The master's got four, General, and he wants you to come down. The shallow's all alive, and they are taking well. There's a trout, sir, at the tail of that weed.

GENERAL (casting a loose line): Missed it again, by Jove! Why was that, Harvey?

HARVEY (coughing slightly): Well, General, if you ask me, I fancy you had too much slack on the

water. You'll have a better chance on the sharp stream below. Let me carry your rod, sir. (Hitches fly in small ring.) No wonder, General, the fish got off: the barb's gone from the hook.

GENERAL (pacing downwards): That's it, is it? Nobody knows better than I that after a fish balks at the hook, one should examine the point. Yet I preach without practice. Ah, me! I'm not in it.

R. O. (genially greeting, and wading out of the shallow): Come along, General; they are rising well, fly and fish both; and this is a bit of water where they generally mean business. Good luck to you! There's a grand trout a little higher up, look. He takes every fly that sails over to him. Pitch your Champion just four inches before his nose, and he's a gone coon.

GENERAL (encouraged and inspired, casting with confidence; and, believing that he is going to be successful, succeeding): *You* are all right, my spotted enemy (playing the fish down stream firmly). Come along, Harvey, no quarter; get below those flags, and I'll run him in before he knows where he is. That's it: two pounds and a half for a ducat!

R. O.: Capital! We can't send for Georgy's scales, but I bet you he is two and three-quarters (as the General bangs the head of fish on the edge of his brogue sole). Georgy's priest would come in convenient here, too.

SUFFIELD (at upper end of water, kneeling patiently at the edge of an older coppice, smoking the pipe of perfect peace, and soliloquising): They don't rise yet. But a time will come. Hang it! but this is sweet. Yea, it is good to be here. Now, if that little *Waterside Sketches* chap was here, let me see, how would he tick it off? Forget-me-nots—and deuced pretty they are; sedge warblers, three; kingfishers, one; rooks melodious; picturesque cottages on the downs nestling—they always put it that way—nestling under the beech wood; balmy air—'tis a trifle nice; cuckoo mentioning his name to all the hills—Tennyson, I know, said so; drowsy bees and gaudy dragon flies—yes, they are actually in the bond; and all the rest of it, here it is. And I've chaffed my friend at the club time out of mind for his gush, and swore by the gods that all the angler cares about is gross weight of fish killed. Yet, somehow, I must have taken all this in many a time, without, I suppose, knowing it. Softly now. (Casts deftly with a short line, lightly and straightly delivered, to a corner up-stream where the current swerves round a chestnut tree leaning into the river. Leaps to feet with a split-cane rod arched like a bow. Retires down stream, smiling.) No you don't! I know you. If you get back to that first floor front of yours, I'm done. Out of your familiar ground *you're* done. Steady, steady! Keep your head up, and on you come. What? More line? Well, well; one more run for the last. Thanks; here you are. (Turns a short, thick two-pounder out of the net into a bed of wild hyacinths in the copse.)

TERLAN (in possession of a side stream which he had won at the friendly toss after breakfast): Fortune has smiled upon me to-day. They laugh at my big rod, but I make it work for me. A fish has no chance with it. I saw the Parson weeded four times yesterday with his little ten-foot greenheart. My fish don't weed me; they can't. Ha, ha! Now look at that trout close under the farther bank, sucking in the fat Mayflies with a gusto worthy of an alderman. Here I am yards away in the meadow; I am out of sight. The rod seems to know that I rely upon it. I don't cast, so to speak; simply give the rod its head, as it were, and there you are. (Fly alights on opposite bank, drops gently, with upstanding wings; is seized with a flourish; trout is brought firmly and rapidly over a bed of weeds, never permitted to twist or turn, and attendant boy nets him out with a grin on his chubby face.) Dip the net a little more, Tommy; you don't want to assault a fish, only to lift him out. How many is that? Eight do you say? Then I want no more.

[SCENE: Straw-roofed fishing hut, as before. Fishing men returning in straggling order. Bottles opened without loss of time. Black drakes dancing in the air. Surface of river marked by never a sign of fish. Flotsam and jetsam of shucks drifting down, and forming in mass at the eddies. Swifts and swallows exceedingly busy everywhere. Sun hastening to western hill-tops. Beautiful evening effects on field and wood, especially on hawthorn grove, in the light of the hour, snow-white, touched with golden gleam.]

R. O. (handing rod to keeper, and taking creel from boy): It's all over now. Short rise to-day. We shall be having a morning and evening rise to-morrow very likely. Now for the spoil. Where's Georgy? We want his steelyard.

GEORGY: Here I am. Here's my basket, and here's my game-book on my shirt cuff—1 1/2, 1 3/4, 2, 2 1/4, 1 1/4, 1 1/4, a d—d big dace, and a black grayling.

R. O.: Oh, a grayling on the 3rd June!

GEORGY: Couldn't help it; fly right down his gullet. Besides, you said you wanted them all out of the water.

The PARSON (weighing his fish): Mine is a back seat. I had twenty misses to one hit. Still, I'm content—3 lb., 2 1/4 lb., and a pound roach.

The GENERAL (smoking a cheroot on a chair brought out of the hut): My muster roll is soon read—three fish, total 4 lb.

R. O.: Harvey has reckoned me up. There are five fish, weighing 10 lb.

SUFFIELD (sauntering up and humming "Now the labourer's task is o'er," and surveying the

groups of trout, disposed on the grass in their tribes and households apart): What a sight for the tired angler. Ah! after you with the shandy-gaff. How many? I really haven't counted; but I've had a lovely time at the wood. (Harvey turns out basket, and weighs fish.) Only seven—well, I must do better next time. 13 lb., too; that's not high average; but I report myself satisfied. Here comes Terlan with the mainmast of his brother's yacht.

TERLAN (smiling): Yes, the spar is all right. Sport? Pretty fair, but I haven't been working like galley slaves as some of you have. Lay the lot out decently, Tommy, and don't smother them in grass next time.

R. O.: This is the bag of bags, gentlemen. Four brace of trout, and at the head of the row a fish of 3 3/4 lb. Have him set up, Terlan; it's the most shapely fellow I ever saw taken out of the river. But I see the wagonette coming down to the mill. Where's the doctor?

SUFFIELD: Oh! we shall find him presently. He has been away at the mill-heads and carriers; what the General would call outpost duty.

[SCENE: Road in front of mill. Music of droning and dripping wheel. Bats wheeling overhead. Mother in cottage singing child to sleep. Dogs barking in distance. Sack-laden wagon rumbling over bridge. Doctor seated on a cask smoking, and pulling the ears of a setter. Gleam of fading light on quiet, mirror-like water. Corncrake heard near. Nightingales in concert in adjacent park. Scent of May-bloom heavy in the air.]

R. O. (on box of wagonette with tired fishermen behind): Well, Doctor, what have you done?

DOCTOR (youthful and of goodly countenance): Six brace.

PARSON: You mean fish—not brace.

DOCTOR (shrugging his shoulders): What time did the Mayfly come up? Three or thereabouts, did it? That is just about the time I came in to have a nap, and I have not fished since. I told you not to idle about waiting for Mayfly. Here are my trout, and I got every one of them with the small fly—Welshman's button—before one o'clock.

The GENERAL: They run small.

DOCTOR: H'm, perhaps they do. Two of them seem to have rather bad teeth, too. Still, I don't grumble. Ah, well; good-night. (Wagonette rumbles off down the dusty road.)

R. O.: Good chap, that. He always sleeps at the mill; says the wheel grinds him to sleep. (Later, at the porch of the Black Bull.) We shall have the great rise very likely to-morrow; but I really do think there's something in that small-fly business.

TERLAN: Not forgetting my mainmast.

GEORGY: And, while you are about it, my fads and fanglements.

CHAPTER IV

MY FIRST TWEED SALMON

It may, I trust, be forgiven me if, when thinking of all the salmon I have taken in half a century of attempts and hopes for that 70-pounder which is ever lying expectant in the angler's imagination, I catch my first Tweed salmon over again. A good deal of water must have run through Kelso Bridge since, for I had better confess it was in the month of October, 1889. In that year the autumn fishing in all Scotland on the rivers that remained open during the month was decidedly capricious. This was one of those expeditions when it is wise to make the most of the tiniest opportunities of amusement, and I began very fairly with a fellow-passenger in the train, one of the class which, seeing your fishing things amongst the baggage, arrogates to itself the right to open a volley of questions and remarks upon you about fishing. This example at once showed the extent of his knowledge upon the subject by the declaration: "I never have the patience to fish; it's so long waiting for a bite." He also hinted agreement with the saying attributed to Johnson. There is not so much ignorance in these days on the subject, and the majority of people I fancy now know the difference between sitting down before a painted float and the downright hard work and incessant activity of a day with salmon or trout rod.

Next morning, in clean, quiet Kelso, I mused over the intruded opinions of the gentleman in the train (whom I had ticked off as a good-natured bagman), and having been warned beforehand by a laconic postscript, "Prospects not rosy," remembered that in angling there is something needed besides endurance and energy, and that when you are waiting day by day for the water to fall into condition there is a substantial demand upon patience. However, the thought must not spoil breakfast, nor did it. Then I read my letters, glanced down the columns of the *Scotsman*, lighted the first tobacco (the best of

the day verily!), and issued forth from the yard of the Cross Keys, hallowed by the periodical residence of eminent salmon fishers, such as Alfred Denison, who, with so many of the familiar sportsmen of his day, has gone hence, leaving pleasant memories behind.

The stony square of the town is in front of you; Forrest's shop is next door as you stand in the gateway of the old inn, and after a glance at the sky and at the weathercock on the top of the market house you look in there. A local fisherman was coming out, and in reply to the inevitable question as to the state of the river, he said, "Weel, she's awa' again." Pithy and characteristic, and full of information was this. It was a verdict—You may fish, but shall fish in vain this day. The Tweed is away again.

Gloomily now you walk ahead, leaving your call at the tackle shop for a more convenient season; at present, at any rate, time is of no account. Past the interesting ruins of Kelso Abbey you proceed, and soon, leaning over the parapet of Rennie's Bridge, on the right-hand side, your eye straightaway seeks the Tweedometer fixed against the wall of Mr. Drummond's Ednam House garden. The bold black figures on the whitened post mark 2 1/2 ft. above orthodox level. Two days ago the 3 ft. point had been reached; then Tweed sank to 2 ft.; now "she" is up again 6 in.

One does not care how high a river may rise, provided it gets over the business once for all, and recedes steadily, to have done with change for a reasonable time. The worst phase of all is that which is represented by intermittent ups and downs on a small scale; for the fish follow the example of the river most religiously in one respect—when it is unsettled they are unsettled too. Such experience as this, morning after morning, for many days, may be handsome exercise in the finishing-off touches of your lessons in patience, and are probably entertaining enough to your friends who are not anglers. There is no amusement for you; only resignation. Make up your mind to that, my brother.

There must have been a quantity of downpour away to the west up amongst the hills; the skies are leaden with rain clouds even now; the air is saturated with moisture. Up beyond the picturesque little island at the junction of the two rivers the water thunders over the rocky ledge which forms the dub at the bottom of Floors Castle lower water, and if you observe closely you will soon conclude that Teviot is bringing down an undue amount of Scottish soil. Cross the bridge and look over to the heavy pool under the wooded slope, and note, where the light strikes the eddy, the yellow hue; 18 in. above ordinary level is the outside limit which the initiated on Tweed give you as a bare chance for a fish, and it is evident that, even if those dark clouds do not fulfil their threats, this chance will scarcely come tomorrow, or perchance next day. Wherefore, once more, let patience have her perfect work.

The bait fishers are busy, to be sure. Your extremity is their opportunity. With the worm they make fair baskets of trout in this dirty water. The public on Tweedside are indeed a privileged race. Nearly the whole of the river is free to trout anglers, and there is an abundance of trout in it. The inhabitants of Kelso ought to be full of gratitude to the Duke of Roxburghe, for he gave them, as a generous supplement to their free trouting, miles of the Teviot for salmon fishing. They had only to enrol themselves members of a local association and pay a nominal fee to obtain salmon fishing on the Teviot for a certain number of days in every week. Mr. James Tait, the clerk to the Tweed Commissioners (whom hundreds of anglers had to thank for much kindness to strangers), informed me that when the water was right plenty of salmon were taken in Teviot, especially at the back end. I think, though some people of course are never satisfied, that this great boon was duly appreciated by the inhabitants. You talk to people by the riverside about the Duke, whose fine mansion crowns the high ground ending the pretty landscape above bridge, and they curiously harp upon one string. They say nothing about his Grace's rank, or wealth, or good looks, or the historical associations of his ancient house. They simply remark, "Eh! but the Duke's a kind mon."

The Duke walked down to the opposite side once and hailed me in my boat, said he was glad to give "Red Spinner" a day on his beat, and chatted for a quarter of an hour, the embodiment of man and sportsman. The late Duke of Abercorn was just such another nature's nobleman, and while upon the subject of dukes I may include the Duke of Teck as one with whom I had many a friendly chat about fishing.

That, with the terrible worming the Tweed gets in these autumnal floods, the trout fishing should be so good is marvellous. The plentiful supply of suitable food is one reason why the Tweed has not long been ruined for this summer sport. The hatch of March Browns in the early portion of the season is a sight not to be imagined unless seen. All the summer through insect life abounds, and I have seen in the middle of October hatches of olive duns that would satisfy even a Hampshire chalk streamer, while the trout were rising at them beautifully on every hand. On one of the flood days I strolled up and down Tweedside, and of the dozen or so of anglers I encountered pottering about with the worm, the majority had something like a dozen trout in their baskets. On a day when Teviot was cleared down to porter colour I met a young gentleman who had been fishing down with flies (the blue dun and Greenwell were on the cast), and had filled his basket. There were some fish of three-quarters and half a pound, but the bulk were smaller. These trout were not in good condition, for they spawn early in these parts, but they were not so bad as one might have supposed.

But let us return to our salmon. While you are trying to play your game of patience like a philosopher, you will naturally make a superficial acquaintance with such portions of the river as are accessible to a wayfarer, and if you have not seen it before you will speedily understand why "she" (on Tweedside you always hear the river referred to in the feminine gender) has so many admirers, who pledge her in a life-long devotion. It is indeed a winsome river, and the scenery, never tame, is in many parts lovely. Where can there be a more beautiful place than Sir Richard Waldie-Griffith's park at Hendersyde, as it shows from the other bank of the river? The autumnal tints are in advance of those

farther south, and the beeches glow ruddy from afar. This borderland is admirably wooded, and the Tweed valley is pre-eminent in that respect. The historical associations are so numerous and so interesting that the mind, if you allow it to run riot, will become overburdened with them. For myself, to assist in the development of the ripe fruit of patience, I kept mostly to musings that had Abbotsford for its centre, and re-read Lockhart on the spot with which that ponderous volume is so closely concerned. Thanks to Mr. David Tait, I secured one of the early editions, where are to be found all the references to fishing and other sports which are not included in other editions.

The Wizard of the North lived awhile at Rosebank, a short distance below Kelso, and the old tree, I believe, was still flourishing in which he used to sit and take pot shots at herons as they flew over the Tweed, which rolled beneath his leafy perch. Driving down to Carham, "Tweedside," who was my companion, showed me Rosebank across the broad stream, and, while I was reminding him of Walter Scott's gunnery, we saw in an adjacent ploughed field three herons standing close together, apparently in doleful contemplation. On this drive also we crossed a burn which divides English from Scottish soil, and it was tumbling down in angry mood. Scores of other rivulets on either side were pouring their off-scourings into the vexed river, each precisely as gracefully described in the lines:

Now murmuring hoarse, and frequent seen,
Through bush and briar no longer green,
An angry brook, it sweeps the glade,
Brawls over rock and wild cascade.
And, foaming brown with double speed,
Hurries its waters to the Tweed.

The morning, however, comes at last when John, who has been to the station with the early train, meets you as you descend to the coffee-room with "She'll fush the day." But you will not forget that Tweed has been out of order for twelve days, rising and falling, never settled. Still, though the chance is very much an off one, it has to be taken. A day on any water, from Galashiels down to the last pool below Coldstream, is exceeding precious at this time of the year. Every boat is apportioned for the riparian owners and their friends to the very end of the season. If, therefore, you have had kindly leave to fish any of these celebrated waters, and have been unable through bad weather to live up to the opportunities, I could almost weep with or for you; or, if you think strong language more manly, I would make an effort for once to meet you on that ground. I speak, alas, from the book. The wounds inflicted by jade Fortune in these regards are yet unhealed. Take, then, your very off-chance and be thankful.

The truth is that you never quite know what will happen in salmon fishing. On that drenching Saturday, when you were working like a galley slave without raising or seeing a fish on the Lower Floors water (where Lord Randolph Churchill subsequently slew his four fish), did not Mr. Gilbey take five at Carham and Mr. Arkwright four at Birgham? On the Monday, when the water was a little better, did you not find that the salmon had moved right away from the beat for which you were that day booked? It was surely so; and the only sport obtained was by a young gentleman who had handled a rod for the first time on the previous Friday, and who now happened upon a 25-lb. fish, the only one killed that day, with the exception of a pound yellow trout, which took your own fly—a Silver Doctor 1 1/2 in. long. This, and a couple of false rises from salmon, constituted your only luck. Yet there were salmon and grilse in all the streams, splashing in the slow oily sweep that crept under the wood yonder.

It was consolation that night to discover that not much had been done anywhere. A gossip in Mr. Forrest's shop had heard that the Duke of Roxburghe had killed a couple, and the Duchess, who fishes fair with a good salmon rod and casts the fly in a masterly style, also a brace. Mr. Drummond, up at the meeting point of Teviot and Tweed, had done something also. That night, too, the gallant General arrived from Tayside, to make your mouth water as he, being cross-examined as to sport, elaborated the record which had appeared in Saturday's *Field*. If there is any wrinkle in salmon fishing that the General does not know, you would like to hear of it, would you not? Mark his artful little plan of using the common safety-pin of commerce for stringing his flies upon, threading them upon the pin by the loop before the affair is closed up.

If you are wise, upon a river like the Tweed, where all the fishermen are men of experience and skill, you will not only ask their advice, but take it in the main—say, when it suits you. You were pretty hopeful at the beginning of this final day, though Jamie and his colleague were cautious in expressing an opinion. No doubt Scotchmen are nothing if not cautious, and the trifle of doubt they adventured when they surveyed the sky and studied the water might be merely national caution asserting itself in the very nature of things. Time passed, and when at noon or thereabouts you sat down upon that very comfortable platform near the stern of the boat, and wondered whether your back were as broken as it felt to be, a cold shiver went through you as the horrible thought flashed into your mind. "Good heavens! surely this is not going to be another blank?" The sun, at any rate, after shining brightly for a couple of hours, retired behind the clouds now rolling up from south-west; wind, in meagre catpaws, skirmished across the dub below, reserved for the afternoon, and you prayed that it would strengthen to half a gale.

That grand water above—all streams of a model character—was fished fairly, perseveringly; Wilkinson, Jock Scott, Silver Grey, Greenwell, and Stephenson were tried in succession, large and medium. The afternoon wore on apace without a sign. Down under the high rocks, wooded to the water's edge, you repeated the work of the forenoon, trying, in addition to the flies already named, a harlequin-looking pattern which you had seen amongst Forrest's tempting collection, a novelty named

Tommy Adkins. It did no effective service, however. With a levity pardonable at that time you hummed, "Tommy, make room for your uncle," and put up a large Wilkinson, one of the Kelso-tied double hooks, than which you cannot get better. Down to the weir and back again to the same old tune—nothing. An angler from below came up for a chat and told you that he had taken a grilse, and you envied him the possession of that measly little kipper.

By and by there was a pluck beneath the water, and you struck. Whatever else it was, it was no fish; but you carefully winched up and brought in a black kitten not long drowned. Fortune was not content with smiting you, it derided. As you blushing remarked to the laughing but unappreciative Jamie, this was nothing short of *catastrophe*. Jamie beguiled the next drift by reminiscences of Sir George Griffith (the angling father of an angling son), Alfred Denison, Liddell, John Bright, George Rooper, and other anglers whom he had piloted to victory—a charming method of rubbing the salt into your smarts.

The dogcart was to be at the head of the dub at five, and the rumble of its wheels had been heard while we were yet about fifty yards from the landing place on the upward course, fishing deep, and letting the long line work slowly round to its farthest limit in the wake. There were no more puns now; I freely admit that I was silent—ay, depressed. Jamie, too, was disappointed; a couple of spectators on the bank were also practising the silence of sympathy. The game was up, and nothing need be said.

Ah! what a magnificent swirl. Deep down went the fish, as up went the rod, and, backache and despondency vanishing, I held him hard. The first dash of the fish told me an unexpected and alarming bit of news. The confounded winch would not run out with the salmon, and I had to ease out line with the left hand and keep the big rod raised with the right. Luckily the winch worked after a fashion when reeled in, and if the single gut at the end of the twisted cast would hold all might be well. And behold it did hold. The fish was heavy, as everyone saw from the first, and it behaved fairly well. One ugly rush, which was the critical point of the battle, passed without accident, and the salmon was revealed—a silvery beauty that was more than ever your heart's desire. Easy and firm was the motto now. The fish was at last safe in Jamie's net, and if it was beaten so was I, thanks to the treacherous reel. The prize was a baggit of 22 lb., as bright as a spring fish, and perfectly shaped.

CHAPTER V

MUSINGS OF A BUSH RIDE

Here I am riding along the sandy track all alone in the Australian bush, flicking off a wattle blossom singled out from the yellow mass with my hunting crop, fancying it is a fly rod, and rehearsing the old trick of sending a fly into a particular leaf. Ah! little mare Brownie, what are you doing? Did you never before see a charred stump that you should shy so? Do you fancy that you are a thoroughbred that you should bolt at such a gentle touch of the spur? So you espy the half-way house, do you, and fancy that fifteen miles, up and down, in a trifle under two hours, has earned you a spell, a bit of a feed, and something of a washing? And you are right. Take charge, Mr. Blackfellow-ostler, and while you do your duty let me amuse myself with my notebook. After all, memory is even-handed. It keeps us in remembrance of many things we would fain never think of more; but it performs similar service for others that are pleasant to ponder over. Out of the saddle bag I have taken a copy of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, newly arrived by this morning's mail, and while the mare took her own time up the hills I have been glancing through a "Red Spinner" article on "Angling in Queensland," with an author's pardonable desire to see how it comes out in print. That was why I took to making casts at the leaves with the riding whip. That is why, halting here for an hour on the crest of a hill, overlooking scrub of glossy green, bright patches of young maize, and a river shimmering in the valley, I am noting a few of the best-day memories which the easy paces of Brownie have allowed me in the saddle.

What a day was that amongst the trout on the Chess! I wrote for permission to spend one afternoon only upon certain private waters, and the noble owner by return of post sent me an order for two days. It was June. The meadows, hedgerows—ay! and even the prosaic railway embankments—were decked with floral colouring, and at Rickmansworth I had to linger on the platform to take another look at the foliage heavily shading the old churchyard, and at the distant woods to the left. When I came back to quarters, after dark, having fished the river for a few hours, I began to think I might as well have stopped in London. The fish would not rise that afternoon, and there was but a beggarly brace in the basket. Some wretch above had been mowing his lawn and casting the contents of the machine into the stream at regular intervals. He got rid of his grass, certainly; but this was no gain to me, whose hooks perseveringly caught the fragments floating by. At last the grass pest ceased. The mowing man had left his task at six o'clock, no doubt, and the soft twilight would soon come on—time dear to anglers. But the cattle had an innings then. During the most precious hour they waded into the river—higher up, of course—and a pretty state of discolour they made of it. In this way the first essay left me abundance of room to hope for the morrow.

Fresh, sweet, and dewy it was at four o'clock on the next morning. The keeper had told me of a certain upper reach of quiet water where, during the Mayfly carnival a fortnight before, Mr. Francis

Francis had astonished the natives. As a rule the fishing is not good until the trout have got well over their Mayfly debauch, but I determined to work hard, nevertheless, if haply I might experience that traditional exception by which the rule is proven. The fish in this part, which was in truth practically a millhead, seemed to be feeding close to the bank. The first cast secured something—but what was very uncertain. A trout would not wobble and tug in that sullen, carthorse manner. Lo! it was a pickerel. A second time, lo! it was a pickerel. The next fish, however, was a trout—a big and somewhat lazy fellow, who allowed me to bring him to the top of the water, and to wait (with him well in hand, however) to see what his next movement would be. As he appeared to be reticent about troubling me with an orthodox tussle, I gave him no further grace, but winched him in and netted him out. His colours faded at once, and the dirty grey mottlings which broke out upon his sides proclaimed him a degenerate. One other big fellow—they were each 2 1/2 lb.—went to keep him company, and then, the sun being now high in heaven, I returned to breakfast.

About three o'clock in the afternoon it was cloudy, and a gentle, melancholy, sighing west wind wafted to my assistance in the lower meadows, where the stream is small and typical of perpetual motion. The keeper and his boy strolled along towards five o'clock, and the game was by this time so merry that they never left me so long as I could see to throw a fly. Smooth water or broken, deep or shallow, alike gave up its increase. The fish were not particular as to the fly, with the one exception of the black gnat, which they would not as much as look at. Replace it with a governor or coachman, and they came with a heartfelt eagerness most charming to behold. As day declined they rose short, and when the vapours began to distil from the meadows they retired from business.

The keeper volunteered a statement. He said he would not care to carry the basket half a dozen miles; whereupon I offered a suggestion. Acting upon this, he turned the spoil out upon the buttercups. There were thirty trout, averaging 3/4 lb. each, and not reckoning the invalid, which came out on the top of the heap, so mottled and dull that it bore no resemblance to its beautiful associates. The keeper that night received double largess. I had to exercise much self-control to keep myself from smiting him familiarly on the back and executing a Red Indian war dance around the victims. He said he hoped I would come again to those regions, turned over the coin I gave him, and intimated that if the trout (which he was now packing neatly into the creel) were not satisfied with the gentlemanly manner in which they were treated they would be pleased at nothing. And it was not for me to dissent or rebuke.

My best-day memory of grayling fishing up to my colonial interlude is of a wet, muggy November day in Herefordshire. It was late in the month, and as the previous week had been marked by early frost, the sere leaves, having lost their grip, were rattling down on the water with every gust, and, indeed, from the mere weight of the rain. It was pretty practice, dropping the flies so as to avoid these little impediments; but it wasted time and strained the temper, for, according to custom in grayling land at that period, one had attached three or four flies to the cast, and thereby increased the chances of fouling. Yet I finished the day with eighteen grayling, to be placed to the contra account against a most complete soaking. The better fish were invariably found in the eye or tail of a moderate stream, the rest on gravelly or sandy shelves where the water was about 2 ft. deep. The former hooked themselves, taking the fly fairly under water; the latter came direct to the surface, and demanded careful striking and playing.

Picking my way through a copse where the banks were high, I sat down on an overhanging rock to rest. When the eye became accustomed to the water and its buff bed it detected a couple of grayling that had before escaped notice, so closely were they assimilated in colour to the ground in which they foraged. Of course, I had always accepted the teaching of my betters that this fish rises perpendicularly from the bottom in deep water after the fly, but I had never verified the statement for myself. I did so now. By proceeding quietly I could "dib" the fly over the fish. It darted straight upwards, missed, and descended again. As it seemed uneasy after the exercise I repeated the experiment, with precisely similar results. The fish, agitating its fins at the bottom, was evidently excited, perhaps angry, and it behoved me to restore tranquillity, if possible, to its perturbed spirit. Instead, therefore, of dibbing, I now allowed the fly to float, a little submerged, from a couple of yards above the fish, which, I fear, had never in its youthful days been taught the mystical proverb, "First, second, but beware of the third." It came up with a gallant charge, and went down soundly hooked.

There was no possibility of getting the landing net to the water, and no opportunity of travelling the grayling up or down stream to a convenient place. I had to make the best of the position, and the best was the employment of brute force. Hauling up a 1/2-lb. fish bodily a distance of several feet, when the said fish is held only by a tiny golden palmer on the finest gut, is not a likely manoeuvre. The grayling behaved well for a couple of yards or so, and then bethought himself of plunging, the consequence being that I lost my hook, and he dropped into a tuft of bracken in a niche below, to die uselessly.

Down in Wessex lies the scene of a memorable day with pike. There were occasions when I caught more fish at live baiting, but that is a process of which one ought not to be as proud as of the more workmanlike method of spinning. This was a spinning day pure and simple. The sport was good; the adjuncts were enjoyable. It was a fine lake in an ancient park, and on Guy Fawkes Day I found the autumn tints such as I have never seen them for magnificence at any other time. Then I had a comfortable boat, an intelligent keeper to pull it, and plenty of fresh, medium-sized dace for bait.

The lake, if left to itself, would have been choked with anacharis; but the proprietor, by means of a machine driven by steam—a sort of submarine plough—kept certain portions clear. The pike I knew would not at this time of the year be absolutely amongst the weeds if they could avoid it, for they prefer cover without a taint of decay; but I reckoned rightly that I should meet with them in the water lanes through which the machine had been driven. One large triangle in the vent of the bait was sufficient

tackle. I am not certain that more elaborate flights are better anywhere; for weedy water I should have no reservation. From ten o'clock till five, with half an hour for luncheon, I toiled on, acquired a grand shoulder-ache that lasted me three days, and covered the bottom of the boat with close upon three-quarters of a hundred-weight of pike in prime condition.

The largest fish ought to have weighed 20 lb., but it only turned the scale at 16 lb. According to the recognised rules of the game this fellow should have been taken in the deepest water; but it was a fish that could probably afford to set rules at defiance. I struck it, anyhow, in less than 16 in., and when I least expected it. We had worked our way to a shallow end of the lake, where the submarine plough had not ventured, and, observing one clear space in a waste of anacharis, I threw into and spun across it, moving a fish that went into the weeds beyond. It went so leisurely, and made so distinct a track, that I, more out of curiosity than anything else, gave it a second chance. The bait was for a moment entangled in the weeds, but was released easily. There was then a sudden splash that could be heard afar, and a furious running out of line. A salmon would not have fought more gamely than did this pike during a splendid quarter of an hour. Another five minutes and it would have been scot-free, for it was held by one hook only of the triangle. Even this had been much strained in the tussle, and it came away the moment the gaff was driven in.

If Nawabs have memories, and the Nawab Nazim of Bengal should to-day be thinking in his Indian palace, as I am in the Queensland bush, of the same subject, he will remember that summer day in hay-time when we sat side by side roach fishing in the Colne, and how we both agreed, after it was over, that it was the best day's bottom fishing we had ever enjoyed. He made this admission to me with the gravity natural to an Oriental potentate; I, not having so many jewels and claims against the Government on my mind, with, I hope, not unbecoming jubilancy. But we were both in earnest. The worthy Hindoo and his son were adepts in this modest branch of the gentle art, and the Nawab, spite of his big spectacles, could detect a bite as if he had been a roach fisher all his days.

Any other description of angling would, I presume, have been alien to the tastes of an Oriental, but this offered a minimum of exertion. I seated myself a respectable distance above their highnesses, and if now and then my pricked fish disturbed their "swim," they must admit they received the full benefit of my ground bait, which, as the balls gradually dissolved, crept down to sharpen the appetites of the fish within their sphere. The Nawab used one of those immense bamboo rods, the sections of which have to be unshipped at the taking of every fish and whenever rebaiting is necessary. This I am aware is the regulation mode amongst Thames and Lea roach anglers; but its clumsiness always forbade my cultivating it. A light rod and fine running line were more to my fancy, even though I had occasionally to pay for its indulgence by losses.

On this particular day the roach were, in angler's parlance, "on the feed"; and the water was of the precise degree of cloudiness suitable for the operation. The Nawab and his son had selected a reach of water where the current was sluggish, and they undoubtedly took the finest roach. I had chosen a favourite swim at the tail of a rapid, and commanding an eddy, where you could generally make sure of picking up an odd chub or wandering dace; and it was my fate to have a good deal of amusement with the latter. A logger-headed chub of 3 lb. or thereabouts ran down to pay homage to the Nawab, but I contrived to check its career before it intruded itself into the presence, and the capture of this fish was watched and criticised with much eagerness by my neighbours. About three-and-twenty pounds' weight of fish fell to my share that day, and the distinguished strangers had ten pounds or so more. Roach fishing is not an exciting phase of sport, but it is by no means the tame or simple pursuit many persons affect to think it, and it is not unworthy of the name of high art. Moreover, it is a most pleasure-yielding occupation, and, amongst London anglers at least, furnishes, it cannot be denied, the greatest happiness for the greatest number.

Best-day memories of this fish should assuredly take us back to the far-off schoolboy times when we used to "snatch a fearful joy" by surreptitious visits to the mill stream, and when, with a little hazel rod, length of whipcord, and rude hooks whipped to twisted horsehair, we would hurry home to breakfast with a dozen roach strung through the gills upon a twig of osier. They were all best days then.

I should be the most ungrateful of anglers if I did not acknowledge my indebtedness to the dace. It so happened that, whatever else fortune denied me, it gave me opportunities, of which I could without hardship avail myself, for dace fishing; and, whatever sins of omission I may in my old age have to bring forward in self-accusation, I shall never be able to plead guilty to neglecting any opportunities soever in the matter of angling. For the dace, therefore, as a fish whose merits I have appreciated from youth upwards, I entertain great respect. There is no dulness about it. Go down to the fords where the dace are gathered, and you shall see the water boiling with their gambols, and shooting silver as they wheel and frisk about. Take them under any circumstances, so long as they are in season, and they always impress you with their liveliness of character. The roach in biting sometimes scarcely moves the quill float; the dace startles you by its sudden, sharp onslaught. A roach firmly hooked ought never to be lost; it requires a dexterous hand to pilot a dace safely out of a rapid current—that is to say, a dace of two or three to the pound.

And the dace is deserving of respect because it will honestly take the fly. True, the roach does so too, occasionally; but the dace, any time between June and September, rises regularly. We used to get them in the Colne considerably over 1/2 lb. in weight, and an afternoon's perseverance and a little wading would, in favourable weather, put from twenty to thirty fish into your basket. But it is questionable whether this can be done now. Many a pleasant evening have I spent by Thames-side, beginning at Ham Lane and working upwards, or crossing the river below Richmond bridge; fishing

always with fine tackle and a black gnat somewhere on the footline.

The finest bit of sport I had with dace was in a mill stream a couple of miles out of Norwich. It was specially welcome because quite unexpected. We were on a pike-fishing excursion, and the fly rod was put into the dog-cart to provide bait for the party. The great mill wheel was revolving, and the pool swirling and foaming, when we arrived, and a few small fish could be detected in the shallow water. The general outlook was not inviting, but the apparatus was put together on the chance of things proving better than they looked. Chance favoured us. The first cast produced a dace on each hook, and in a quarter of an hour I had whipped out a good supply of bait for the trollers and spinners. So long as the dace were rising all the pike in the river could not tempt me to accompany them. I stuck to the whipping, and only left off when I was too tired to wield the rod any more.

But enough. It would not be difficult to call up best-day memories of gudgeon, of bleak, and even minnows; of tench, and carp, and bream. The moment for my departure, however, has come. The little mare is ready, the notebook must be closed. There are fifteen miles to be disposed of before dark, and darkness will be upon us in a couple of hours. I can continue my soliloquising as I canter through the bush; there will be no one to disturb me or ridicule me, unless, indeed, the bird named the laughing jackass should make the woods echo with his idiotic chuckle, or the parrots should scream their harsh derision.

CHAPTER VI

WITH VERDANT ALDERS CROWN'D

If you will step across to your bookshelf and take down that volume of Pope's miscellaneous works, you will find the fable of Lodona, and the words which I borrow for a heading. The little man so wrote of the River Loddon, which he quite correctly described also as slow. The Loddon is scarcely a river of itself to inspire a poem, being without cataracts going down to Lodore, not being mountain born, nor overlooked by crag and summit; but it is in an especial degree the kind of stream which pastoral poets have from time immemorial loved to bring in as an indispensable adjunct. Almost any portion of the country watered by this river might have yielded the scenes of the immortal Elogy in a country churchyard, though you may remember that Gray does not in the poem make mention of a river, and only introduces the rill, and "the brook that babbles by" as the habitual resort of the youth whom melancholy marked for her own. But I have heard the curfew toll the knell of parting day while watching the float, have marked the beetle wheel his droning flight (half inclined to chase him to tempt the wayward chub), and have looked upon the lowing herds winding slowly o'er the lea as the signal for bringing the day's delights to a close by winding up my fishing line.

"Sweet native stream," Warton calls the Loddon, and that is just the association one familiar with its meads and wooded banks would bear with him in a cherished corner of memory. For the ordinary angler perhaps the river is a trifle too much with "alders crown'd." On the contrary, to the person who can command the use of a boat, and drop down upon the lazy current with a long line ahead of him, those dense defences of the bank become conservators of sport. They are better than a keeper, for they are always there, and cannot by any bribe be seduced from their duty. And more than any other tree the alder is the familiar companion of the angler. Upon some rivers the willow would contest the position, perhaps, but Fate demands that it should run to pollard, and so get too high up in the world to be a close companion to man.

We always make friends with the somewhat prosaic and even sombre alder, and, in return, it always has something to show us. All through the autumn and winter it makes as goodly a display as it can with its long barren catkins; in the spring it is thick with the queer black little husks; and in the summer and autumn its defects of shape in the matter of branches are hidden by close, dark, glossy leaves, which sturdily hold on when others have been snatched and scattered. And does not an old poet ascribe to our alder the quality of protector to other growths?

The alder, whose fat shadow nourisheth—
Each plant set neere to him long flourisheth.

But it is interesting to remember that a still older poet had his eye on the alder, and it is a pretty conceit in which Virgil fixes upon its wood as the origin of shipbuilding. The timber is so easily worked and so handy that it might well have been actually used by primitive man when the gods prodded him on to activity and invention by piling up obstacles and difficulties in his path. Virgil, therefore, had fair warrant for

Then first on seas the hollowed alder swam.

Spinning tackle and fly casts have I left upon alder bushes of a score of streams, but instead of

bearing it any ill-will I hereby offer it humble and sincere homage, especially as in my early days of fly fishing I, in honest faith and unbroken conviction, used one of its juicy leaves for straightening the gut collar.

The Loddon, if not important as a navigable stream, or as busy as other rivers in the service of the miller, does a fair share of steady work. Rising in the North Hampshire downs near Basingstoke, the river runs through historical country. Cromwell's troopers, for instance, during the siege of Basing would no doubt water their horses in the fords of the Loddon, and Clarendon, who wrote the history of that rebellion, lived at Swallowfield. Near this village, almost within our own times, lived Mary Russell Mitford, whose delightful book, *Our Village*, neglected for years and almost forgotten, has set sail again before the favouring breeze of the cheap edition. She wrote her sketches at Three Mile Cross, some two miles from Swallowfield, and I refer to them because in the little volume you have faithful scenic pictures of the Loddon country. I have also a personal story to tell, to wit: On returning from one of my visits to Loddon-side I secured through an old friend of Miss Mitford a note in her handwriting, and was not a little impressed and amused on discovering that the envelope in which it was inclosed had been previously used and turned no doubt by the lady herself. It was only by accident—so neatly had the operation been performed—that I saw inside the original address, "Miss Mitford, Three Mile Cross, Reading, Berks." Soon after leaving Swallowfield, the Loddon, passing Arborfield Hurst and Twyford, yields up its life to the Thames by way of a modest delta.

Are there anywhere in England larger chub than those of the Loddon? It is not to be supposed that the alders extend their fattening influence to the fish as well as to the plants; but its existence in bush form, and in the serried ranks to which I have above referred, undoubtedly favours the long life of this shy fish. He lies under its overhanging boughs out of the way of even the most daring long corker, and from the leaves during the hot summer days drop unceasing relays of luscious insect food. The Loddon chub are nevertheless extremely voracious at odd times. Pike fishermen often get them with both live and dead bait, and I myself in the unregenerate days of trolling took a big one with gorge bait. An honest-minded chub may anywhere be expected to be led astray by a prettily-vestured minnow, and there is no disgrace attaching to its character if it allows itself to be seduced by a well-spun gudgeon; but to tackle a 4-oz. dead roach, and be ignominiously finished off by a coarse gorge hook, is not exactly what one looks for. Yet this frequently occurred on the Loddon.

I rather suspect I had an experience in this direction. A kind friend had invited me to spend a day on the Loddon, not very far from that same Swallowfield of which I have been sentimentalising. We drove in the fresh autumn morning along the charming country road, inhaling the balm of the pines and watching the graceful squirrels at their after-breakfast antics in the oaks. And we congratulated ourselves upon the prospect. There was a little rime on the grass, for I had left town by gaslight, but all other conditions were as favourable as if they had been made to order. There were plenty of bait and a boat at our disposal.

My kind friend pointed with a warm smile to a snug hamper in the carriage. The world under these circumstances looked fair. We noticed the yellow mottlings of autumnal decay on the chestnut trees and elms, the ruddier shade of the beeches; we discussed the failure of the blackberry crop, and pretended to knowledge about turnips. Thus, interchanging thoughts, we arrived at the Loddon, to find a deep, dirty brown colour. The world then was not so fair. It was a miserable disappointment, in short, and we had to make the best of it. We found a few jack by trolling in the eddies close to the bank, but the day was to all intents and purposes a blank.

In the afternoon my friend pulled me upstream that I might find quiet corners and the very off-chance of a jack. At one part there was a break in my friends, the alders, and a scoop in the bank where the water was deep. Discreetly and naturally I dropped the dead bait, and on the instant it was grabbed and worried. My first impression was that it was a perch. I have known a big perch seize a large bait and shake it in that dog-like fashion, and that impression was confirmed when, instead of the strong run of a straightforward jack, the seizure was followed by jerky movements and very little running out of line. It was no more than I expected that the bait should be by and by impudently deserted. Its head I found to have been savagely bitten half through. From the size of the semi-circular gash the chub or perch, whatever it might happen to be, was no youngster.

Upon reflection, and upon re-examination of the wound, my friend, who was an experienced Loddon angler, agreed with me that the fish was a chub. The leather mouth proper of the cheven, chavender, skelly, or chub, scientifically known as *Leuciscus cephalus*, is, as the angler knows, or should know, without teeth, but if you will have the goodness to push your finger down the throat of a freshly-caught three- or four-pounder, you will be more than likely to discover that nature has furnished this innocent-looking member of the carp family with two rows of very decent lacerators. The best result nevertheless of that day's fishing was the receipt in a letter two days later of a specimen of the showy yellow leopard's bane from my friend. We had pointed out to each other solitary wildflowers left alone to tell of a summer that was past, and he had found this somewhat sparingly-located bloom two months overdue for its grave.

So many years have passed since I fished Loddon and St. Patrick's stream that I will not be tempted to lead anyone astray by pretending to prescribe, advise, or dogmatise. It was not first-rate in the days of my personal knowledge, but it yielded then as now tolerable coarse fishing, pike and perch being the standing dish; and there are deep, slow-going lengths, natural haunts of heavy roach. A brother angler who knows the river thoroughly had a curious theory about the Loddon perch. With minnow or worm, he truly said, for I can corroborate him, "any quantity" of perch of 1/2 lb. or 3/4 lb. might be caught; but there was also another set of fish of 1 1/2 lb. and upwards—not, of course, of a distinct breed, but still

distinct from the smaller grade just mentioned. These rarely took a minnow, but a gudgeon on the paternoster, and on the upper hook thereof, frequently proved fatal to a two-pounder. One July, within my own remembrance, a splendid fellow of 3 lb. 2 oz. was taken with a lob-worm from one of the Loddon milltails.

Much of the Loddon is private fishing, as it has always been, but there are still portions accessible to the public. The Loddon is closely associated with the good work done in the whole of that district for preservation in the interests of the angler, and at one time the Reading and Henley Associations jointly rented the length from the Great Western Railway to the Thames (including the St. Patrick stream) with the object of preservation as a breeding ground for Thames fish. A change in riparian ownership put an end to this arrangement, but anglers generally should never forget the time, labour, and enthusiasm devoted to Thames, Loddon, and Kennet preservation by a band of workers, amongst whom I must include as one of the invaluable friends once or twice referred to in the foregoing notes—Mr. A. C. Butler, of the *Reading Mercury*. In his own district his is a household name, and in many a metropolitan club "Old Butler of Reading" has been familiar for many years as one of those quiet helpers of the cause who work for the sheer love of it.

Once upon a time when there was no talk of changes, and no great demand for them, the fishing of the Thames district was the bulk of "Angling" in the columns of the *Field* and *Bell's Life*, which then almost alone made a serious subject of fishing, and amongst the men who wrote were Greville F., Brougham, and Butler, who was for years and years the *Field* correspondent long after the others had passed away. As a man barely in his sixties one ought not to dub him a veteran, but for all that he is one of the old guard of angling correspondents and provincial journalists. In a letter from him a week or two since he regrets that rheumatism and journalistic duties have interfered with his outings, but still cheerily mentions "a measly half gross of gudgeon" at Mapledurham, and the year before last he adds "with water dead stale, we had about the same number of gudgeon, and quite sixty roach from 1/2 lb. to 1 1/4 lb." And yet they tell us that the Thames is played out!

Three days since I saw a colleague who was going to the City to see a 1/4-lb. roach which had been taken out of the Thames in a bucket at London Bridge the day before. It should be stated that Mr. Butler was with "John Bickerdyke," now in South Africa, and A. E. Hobbs, the hon. secretary, founders of the Henley Association, and co-workers in other directions with his friends, James Henry Clark, Bowdler Sharpe, Thurlow of Wycombe, and many another. He founded the Reading and District Angling Association in 1877, and practically ran it during its successful career; it ended three years ago, but its work remains in the head of fish in the district and a thorough loyalty amongst the working men's clubs which he helped to start and establish. Mr. Butler, too, was the prime mover in stocking the Thames in the Reading district with two- and three-year old trout, buying and bringing the fish from High Wycombe. I know and appreciate his voluntary work for anglers and am glad of an opportunity of recording it.

Might one trespass so far on the reader's patience as to return to the inspiration of the beginning of this sketch for a conclusion? The remark of which I would deliver myself is that the artificiality of which the poet Pope is accused in his natural scenery generally applies to his references to sport. He is more sympathetic with his anglers than with his fowlers, but neither appears to kindle the fire as in the lines in which he traces the name of the Loddon to Lodona, the fabled nymph of Diana. Pan's chase of the hapless nymph through Windsor Forest calling in vain for aid upon Father Thames is full of spirit, and he aptly justifies the name of Loddon—

She said, and melting as in tears she lay,
In a soft silver stream dissolv'd away,
The silver stream her virgin coldness keeps,
For ever murmurs, and for ever weeps;
Still bears the name the hapless virgin bore
And bathes the forest where she rang'd before.

It is in "Windsor Forest" that many lines are found by which Pope is perhaps alone remembered by many sportsmen. The references to the well-breathed beagles and the circling hare are happy, and very characteristic of the poet's telling style in the couplet in brackets.

Beasts, urged by us, their fellow beasts pursue,
And learn of man each other to undo.

Equally characteristic of his defects are the shooting touches in which the "unwearyd fowler" is introduced, with the "leaden death" of the "clam'rous lapwings," and the "mounting larks." The glimpse of lonely woodcocks haunting the watery glade is sufficiently apt, but let the shooting man stand at attention when grandiloquently informed.

He lifts the tube, and levels with his eye;
Straight a short thunder breaks the frozen sky.

Ten lines further in the poem stands the picture which endears Pope to anglers for all time, and which need only be indicated, as in the hymn books, with the first line:

CHAPTER VII

A FIRST SPRINGER AND SOME OTHERS

There is no specific virtue that I ever heard of in a first anything, yet you very often hear of it as a remembrance that may be pleasant, and is often otherwise. The sportsman is as prone as anyone to such references, and I defy the fishing or shooting editors of the *Field* to count off-hand the number of MSS. that they receive headed first salmon, first tiger, first pheasant, or first something. At this moment I seem to have a better understanding of the reason. The heading is used to get rid of the difficulty as to what exactly would be better, and in much the same way as A. is made a member of the Cabinet lest there should be awkwardness over the claims of B. and C. My choice of a title of this sketch is not precisely so to be explained. I simply plead sequence.

In a previous chapter I wrote of my first Tweed salmon, and in this chapter there is no reason why I should not fall back upon the dear old formula for a reminiscence of the Tay. The emphasis should be on "springer," for I went northwards with a desire to catch one that had taken the form of a longing, a yearning for many successive seasons. Besides, it was February, when the springer is prized more positively than at a more advanced period of the spring. You will probably get a dozen kelts to one springer, and the fish, therefore, is in the category of the important. By the river report of last Saturday I see that Lord Northcliffe (who will always be Alfred Harmsworth to the republic of the pen, and who always has been a keen and travelled angler) has been rewarded with four salmon, and congratulate while I envy him. In truth, it was this statement in the report that forced me to forget this miserable weather by catching my first springer over again as fondly remembered.

The seeker for the springer has not a little call upon endurance, not the least being in the uncertainty of the conditions. How well I know what it means on those beats above Perth when in sleet and gale the river is 15 ft. above the normal, flooding the Inch levels at the beginning of the season, as happened in the early days of this season. In my case the uncertainty was so felt and protracted before starting on my journey. You can understand probably that the feeling of the man who is ready for the summons, yet who is put off by telegrams and letters day after day, gets at last beyond longing; it works up into a sort of innocent fury. An old angler, hampered for many a season, and finding freedom at last, consoles himself with the reflection that passion, too much intensesness about such a matter, will trouble his philosophy never more. Yet one morning he is swept off his feet. A kindly friend has days of salmon fishing for him; fish have run up and are plentiful; he need but wait the signal, and go. What, in all reasonable conscience, could be nicer? But how true it is that there is nothing in life so certain as its uncertainty! Day succeeds day in the customary fashion, and the expected summons cometh not. Those days on fine beats that were set apart for you pass in flood; you tick them off as materials for the book you mean to write on "Chances that I have Missed."

"She rose 2 ft. yesterday, but better wait," had wired my friend, and in due time I find that on that very day the man who took my place killed three fish. When I hastened down to the bridge on my arrival to see how she was, the river, which had risen strongly as soon as that three-hour, three-salmon man had got off the beat, had fallen to a point between impossibilities and chances. And the wind had slewed round from south-west to west, with a flirting to north. Here was another day, if not lost, certainly without fishing.

Having looked at the river and read my fate in the heavy stream—a mighty race of water, 400 yards from bank to bank—I sought the sight of some salmon, and went to the fish house. The quick returns had not come in that morning, but there were about a hundred salmon laid out on the floor ready for prompt dispatch to market. They averaged 20 lb., but, silvery as they all were, I could pick out the few that had come in that morning. There was one lovely she-fish of about 23 lb., with a ventral fin literally as purple as the dorsal of a grayling, and for suggestions of pearls and opals, maiden blushes, and the like, nothing could have been more perfect than the sheen of this Tay salmon. In another hour the glory would have faded away. And all those fish had been taken by the net. The angler who was lusting for one of them under his rod spake not, and went away sorrowful.

But, after all, what would the morrow bring forth? The great river was running down, the night was fair, and there was hope—for the glass was rising, and the wind really had been good enough to get out of the south. As a matter of history, the morrow promised fair things, though I went forth in fear and trembling. The miry ways of the past month had given way to a frost, and we walked across to the station on frozen puddles. Exhilaration was in the air. The glass showed half an inch to the good since last night. Our gillie, who met us at Stanley station, admitted this; yes, but 2 ft. less of water would warrant better confidence. And that was sensible Scottish caution. We got down to the river, and, though the colour was not bad, she was too big and strong.

The prospect of even a happening fish was of the poorest. To be brief, the odd fish did not come my way, and there's an end on't. Only two pools were fishable. No boat could be worked in any other part. If I say I fished every inch of the water, first with fly, and then with a small dace spun from the Malloch

reel, I simply state facts. Over the pool did I patiently fish with Nicholson and Dusty Miller of large size, and a second time with the spinning bait. Two fish showed during the day, a shockingly black beggar of not less than 30 lb. which jumped out of the water, and another kelt which plunged out of range. It was an absolute blank, and a fall of snow before I caught my train was ominous. There had been a flood of 15 ft. (a favourite figure apparently on that Tay gauge) and it takes any river a long time to settle down, and the fish to resume their ordinary habits, after such riotous excess. Still, I had enjoyed a downright hard day's work, and had deserved the success which was denied. The position, therefore, was—Friday, Saturday, and Monday lost through the unfishable condition of the river, and just a chance on Wednesday if there was no further rise of water.

Wednesday was sunny, and the water had fallen about a foot during the night, so that Tay ought soon to be in ply, for another frost occurred in the night, and the snow did not appear to be serious. The order of the head boatman was for harling. You have two boatmen on this river, and they had to exert themselves to the utmost to handle her with so heavy a current. It was my first experience of systematic harling. The rods are out at the stern of the boat, and the angler sits on a cross seat facing them, and so placed that he can lay hands upon either in an instant. Three greenheart rods of about 16 ft. are displayed fanwise; that is to say, there is a rod in the middle extended straight forwards, the rods right and left slant outwards, and they are kept in position by a contrivance in the bottom of the boat into which the button of each rod handle fits, and by grooves on the gunwale on either side in which the rod rests and is kept at the proper angle. The butts of these rods are close together in these appointed niches under the seat in the bottom of the boat, and the points are naturally right, left and centre, widely separated. The fourth rod in this boat was a single piece of greenheart, 6 ft. in length, but admirably made, and in thickness was something like the second joint of an ordinary salmon rod. The workmanship was so good that it was a perfect miniature. This is the rod that is used for a spinning bait, and is placed at the angler's left hand. It was equipped with a sand eel and the gay little metal cap with flanges, which was invented by Mr. Malloch to facilitate the spinning. The 3 in. flies we used were Jock Scott, Nicholson (a favourite Tay fly), and Black Dog.

The two men settled to their oars, and I sat before my rods ready to play upon them as occasion arose. We had not been under way five minutes, and I had not finished wondering how the Tom Thumb rod would behave at a crisis, when a sudden test was applied. The winch sang out, and I had the rod up and under mastery in the twinkling of an eye, with the fish running smartly and pulling hard. Meanwhile, the head boatman winched up the other lines and gave me a fair field of action. The fish was evidently not enamoured of that delicate sand eel, for there was a good deal of head shaking for a few minutes. Presently the boat touched shore, and I had by then discovered that the little rod was as good as an 18-footer, and more powerful in holding a salmon than many of full length which I have used. The fight was a good one, though I stuck to my policy of a pound per minute, and it was good to know that it was a clean fish. This was my first springer, and the poor chap had been badly mutilated by a seal in the sea not many days ago, yet they told me that it is no uncommon thing to have salmon so wounded taking freely.

Once more on board our lugger, we zigzagged on our course, the men pulling with regular stroke, and though they row sturdily the boat is merely held, and drops down rather than advances. If salmon are not in the humour harling presents the elements of monotony, and the wise plan seems to me not to think of the rods, nor look at them, nor wonder which will be first in action. Such were my thoughts, and I laid out a line of thought as a corrective. Thud, thud, go the oars, steadily nodding by the movement of the waves go the rod tops. Aye, hours of this would suggest a certain sameness, probably. And then came the startling moment that is so delicious, the jump of the flat pebble off the line pulled out upon the bottom boards, the rattle of the check, the strong curve of the rod. It all takes place in a swift moment. You are on your feet and playing your fish as if by instinct. The Jock Scott had attracted this fish, and the familiar process was followed—the stepping ashore, the retreat up the bank backwards, the rod well curved all the while, and the fish held hard, since there was doubly rapid water below, and it must be kept sternly in hand. The gillie did not take up the gaff now, and my hopes were dashed, for it meant that he had recognised a kelt, which must be tailed. And it was tailed, and being freed from the hook was not slow in shooting into the depths. The fish was well mended, and would be taken by most people for a clean salmon. The expert can, on the contrary, deliver judgment at a glance.

There remained another hour before luncheon, and the time was not wholly uneventful; at any rate, there were little thrills. A decided pull happened to the Black Dog rod, but the fish was away before I could take it up. A similar bit of frivolity was practised by another fish ten minutes later at my middle rod, which, I forgot to say, had brought the well-mended kelt to bank. Going to land for the midday rest, as it was not quite one o'clock, I put up a rod which I wished to try, and proposed to warm myself with a little casting. The second cast rose a fish close to the bank, and, after allowing the usual time for restoration to confidence, out went the Nicholson, and very bravely did that noble fly work round, swimming, I could swear, on an even keel, and shaking its finery all around in the water. The fly did not reach the fish which had risen, because another was before him, and I knew that the hook had gone home. We thought this was a good fish, and fresh run, albeit he lay low and confined his movements to a small area. Alas! it was kelt number two, and not more than 10 lb. at that. All the same, I had landed three fish of sorts by one o'clock, and enjoyed minor sensations.

There was no more fun. We had heard that 3 in. of snow had fallen in the hills a few miles up, and the sun of the forenoon had no doubt melted it. We harled for two hours, and with neither pull nor sign of fish. To-morrow ought to bring the river into fair order; though, even so, a foot less would be more to my mind.

The next day opened with a heavy storm of wet snow, and this continued, with intervals of sleet, till

the afternoon. It was not expected that this would put the river up, and she was in fact falling very slowly. At this point, however, every inch of drop is to the good. I landed six fish that day, only one a springer. The boats had done better in the reaches where the clean fish lie in such high water, and two gentlemen at night brought into Malloch's five grand springers, caught on the beat which was to have been mine on Friday. The Tay still remained a foot too heavy:

Strong without rage,
Without o'erflowing full.

The novel experience (to me) of salmon fishing in a heavy snowstorm is worth a few words of amplification, for all new experiences add to the interest of the game. It was snowing at breakfast time, and Mr. Malloch was so kind as to snatch a day from the demands of his own affairs to share my boat, and from the way he and the boatmen took the storm as a simple matter of course—indeed, as not calling of a casual comment—I take it that up here, at the foot of the Grampians, they are used to this sort of pleasure. But sea and fresh water anglers all over the world need not be reminded that a wet boat is an abomination; what, then, must it be when it is caused by hours of snowfall, large flakes softly wet? Everything gets drenched and sopping, and it really appeared as if these white hazelnut flakes were possessed by an elfish desire to baffle your most careful efforts to keep them out. My waterproof bag was to the human eye impervious; but there was one unnoticed opening not an inch long by half an inch wide, and the flakes discovered it at once. There was a japanned metal fly box upon which they might have had their will, but that was not sufficient; they fixed upon the soft leather wallet with the precious gut casts, and made a much too successful attack upon the paper packet of sandwiches. At the waterside I had looked at my companions, expecting them to cry off; as I said before, however, this almost blinding snow was merely ordinary business, and I huddled down in my place, thankful that there was no cold wind, no wind at all, to drive the trial home.

We were soon turning to shore with our first fish, and I was grateful for the stout arm and shoulders of the friendly skipper, who helped me out of the slippery boat, up and up to a standing point on the more slippery bank. On this beat the banks were awkward, high, and backed by copse, so that you stood amongst undergrowth, and this was a very different thing from the gentle slopes of clear sward. It came all right, nevertheless; in life generally the wind undoubtedly very often, if we had but the common gratitude to think so, is tempered to the shorn lamb. Wherefore the old bell wether got through these trifles without a tumble. The incidents that had to be deplored were what the salmon fisherman calls the kelt nuisance. We had it in liberal allowance this day. It would be wearisome to enter into details of the successive happenings so great is their family resemblance.

The first landing was to get rid of a kelt; and in all, if I may anticipate, we had five of them—a small fish of, say, 6 lb., and the rest between 12 lb. and 15 lb. Now and again with the kelts you have a positive fight, but as a rule they hang on and move tardily, yet without risk of smashing something you cannot hasten the finale. At the worst they are a little better than pike. The one bonny spring fish was an absolute contrast, though of course even clean salmon in February are not so defiant and reckless in their defiance as they are months later. Let us still be thankful; a kelt is better than nothing, a spring fish is welcome, and we must be content with such chances as we can obtain.

Consider the time consumed on a short winter day by six landings. There is the getting in the other lines by winching them up, making bait and fly fast to the winch bar, rowing to shore, sometimes from the middle of a 200 yards' river, and securing adequate foothold ashore. The fish is to be firmly controlled with a bent rod all the while, and when he comes in there is no decisive finish with the cleek, since your kelt must have his freedom unharmed if possible. The dexterity with which the boatmen carry out these operations is marvellous, the result of being masters of their calling combined with long practice; also because they have the soul of the sportsman almost to a man. The cost of six landings, in fact, works out at nearly half an hour a time, and the reward on this particular day was one good fish of 18 lb., which had taken a Black Dog. The flies were most attractive, and there were some pulls at tails of bait or feathers, two or three rises, and a respectable fish which remained for five minutes on one of the baits. By a pull, let me explain, I mean the rattle of the reel for a fraction of a minute, a sharp dip of the rod top, and the bait or fly resuming its progress "as you were."

To end this narrative I must not forget the novel effect of the snow clinging to the tree tops. The firs high up the steeps on either side for a couple of hours looked as if they had burst into rich white blossom in full bearing. The small sleet, which followed in the afternoon as a natural fizzling out of the storm, and a warm wind quickly did their duty, and we had the pleasure of seeing the pines shed their blossoms before our eyes; they fell with melancholy drip down to the carpets of rotting leaves, leaving the trees to their funereal winter black.

One other musing of the day. There is a legend in Nithsdale that Burns used to go a-fishing when he lived at Dumfries. If so, it is quite possible that his famous poetic idea came to him one day while fishing, perhaps with a brother exciseman:

And like a snowflake on the river,
One moment here, then gone for ever.

Friday brought a contrast indeed. A sharp frost hardened up the country during the night—and the sun rose boldly into a cloudless sky without any shilly-shally before nine o'clock. It was along iron-

bound roads, with the meltings of yesterday converted to ice, that I drove to my allotted beat. There was a wonderful change from yesterday; the golden plover on the flats were not briskly moving on the moistening turf as before, though flocks of woodpigeons were astir. The pure snow, which remained on the low land, was crisp and sparkling, diamonding a fair white world. The river had fallen, of course, since the snow of yesterday had made no difference. The evidence was plain enough. You read it in the green margin glistening against the snow line sinuously left along the banks. Tay looked beautifully black, moreover, and the boatmen said "They ought to come." But I never knew salmon take properly till a frosty day has well advanced. On this bright day I resolved to try to write up my notes, in the fervent hope that every good sentence would be spoiled by a summons from one of the four rods of which I was in command. For one hour my pencil wrought without a pause, and delightful it was under the sunshine to indite to the steady strokes of two pair of oars, the rhythmic swish of the water, now tranquilly flowing, and easy for all of us.

Fortunately our most unlikely water came first, and all the while the frost would be getting out of the water. It was a very heavy reach, and Tay was still too big for such; fish would be lying lower down, and those that we were rowing over would not take well. Those five lovely springers that I mentioned before must have come out of a particularly favourable stretch. That is part of the glorious uncertainty of it all. The boat of to-day, for example, accounted yesterday for one solitary kelt, though it had shared our experience of futile pulls and visible rises in the afternoon. Now if— Ah! The shrill tongue of Tom Thumb's reel gave a welcome view holloa (half-past eleven) and the sentence I was pencilling remains unfinished. I have forgotten what it would have been. By this time the motions of a kelt had become familiar, and I liked not the docility with which this fellow allowed himself to be towed to land, nor his inertness when I had him in grip afterwards. My verdict I gave in a look at the headman, and his confirmation of my unspoken thought was, "Yes; he's too quiet." Yet it was a long while before I could get him up sufficiently for recognition beyond doubt; that accomplished, it was short shrift. He was lifted into the boat by the tail, the triangles came out easily under the knife, and off went a well-mended fish of about 13 lb. That is to say, I call him a fish; the boatmen decline to render even this nominal honour, and I appear in the returns of yesterday as having killed one fish, whereas I had landed half a dozen.

And now followed an unproductive hour, at the end of which there were two ineffectual pulls, one at the Nicholson fly, the other a second or two later at the bait. The former was not enough to rattle off the stone from the loop of line; the latter ran out a yard and merely ticked the winch. The sunshine was not treating us as handsomely as the snowstorm, for by this time yesterday we had brought off three engagements. However, the day was not over, and we landed for lunch, believing that better fortune would be vouchsafed—lunch, too, in open, warm sunshine.

Harling and the notebook were resumed, and lest we should settle down too readily to monotony, a flutter down stream betrayed the whereabouts of the Black Dog, betrayed also a wretched little kelt (about 5 lb.), called in these parts a "kelt grilse." So far had I noted when the left rod, upon which the fly had been replaced by a sand eel, strained for a gallant run. Down on the thwart went book, pencil, and spectacles, and I had an exciting five minutes in midstream with an undoubted "fish." He fought like a Trojan—and then the line fell slack. The fish was off. How do they escape from these triangles? Caught lightly by one hook, I suppose, and, as a result, an easily broken hold.

The sun was for a couple of hours too bright, and four o'clock came with nothing to record. Only one hour left. Then a succession of short runs from non-fastening fish, and one lightly hooked on the fly, which came away at the initiatory tightening. By now half an hour remained, and an exciting finish consumed it. I do not admit that it was wasted; I only mean that "fish" was not the cause. Kelts were. The centre rod with the Black Dog briskly rang me up, and I leaped to the call with "Got him!" "So have I," cried the head man. Tom Thumb had found a fish, and we were each busy for a while. The men had all they could do to get the boat to land and winch in the two loose lines. But it was done, as usual, promptly and cleverly. I was too intent upon my own fish, the heaviest I had battled with that day, to see how it was done; suffice that there was no hitch. We both stepped ashore. The head man worked his fish above me, and, it being a small 10-pounder, soon threw it in again, and his mate was free to come down to me. We all knew it was a kelt, and get him to spurt or be lively I could not. He lay low and solid till patience had done its perfect work, and in he came. There was an end of my back-ache when the rod and I could straighten ourselves and leave the men to tail out the fish. They hurled him in regardless of his feelings, and, indeed, like gentlemen whose honour had been sorely wounded.

"Eighteen pounds, wasn't he?" I ventured to remark very humbly as they turned their contemptuous back on the fish floundering awhile in the shallow. "Weel, saxteen punds, maybe," was the reply. These kelts, anyhow, left us no time for further operations. The sun had been so effective that it had changed the outlook all around in a few hours by restoring the land to its original green and brown. Business done, as "Toby, M.P.," puts it—four landings, six pulls, two fish hooked and lost, one of them, of course, the fish of this or any other season. I shall always maintain it was a "fish." That night I had a chat with a brother angler, who had made a grand bag, and he introduced me to his friend who had enjoyed the success of the novice in killing a beautiful fish of 22 lb.

There was not long to wait on Saturday morning. The first line to be put out was at the left hand, baited with sand eel, and I had barely touched the next to lift it from its groove when the winch at the left screamed as if hurt. The fish was on, but it was proclaimed at once an insignificant one. Still, the rites and ceremonies must be duly observed; the boat must go to shore, the angler must step over the thwarts and stand on *terra firma*. All this trouble for a kelt of about 6 lb. After the lapse of an hour Tom Thumb gave signal. The gudgeon, which had a wobbling spin, had been touched twice already by short comers; now it was fairly taken just as the boat was turned on its zigzag course. For anything I could

feel it might be a trout. It ran out a few yards, and meekly came in to slow winching. The same lack of spirit was maintained even when I landed, but a surprise came as I retired further up the brae, for the fish sharply resented the liberty I was taking with him, as if he objected to my contempt. In truth, he inspired my respect during the next ten minutes—ran across and down, and generally bucked up, as a modern school miss would say. He gave up dawdling, and fought it out briskly. By and by we got a glimpse of a flash of silver, and it was an undoubted fish. The gaff, which I had not seen yesterday, now appeared, and the second boatman stood by with the priest to administer the quietus to a lovely spring salmon of 17 lb.

Within a quarter of an hour I was rudely roused from a reading of *The Fair Maid of Perth* by the sand eel rod to the left, and here was a fish powerful and alert from the start. He was held hard, but took out line persistently; if I winched up a few yards they were torn angrily off again. And so the contest was maintained, and intensified when I stood on the turfy slope. It was encouraging to see the men step forth with gaff and priest again. For twenty minutes the salmon kept down and never quiet, and then very slowly I winched up the fifty yards which had been taken out in instalments. The silver swirl satisfied us all, and presently the career of a stately 19-pounder was ended.

After luncheon we put out again, and I was tolerably certain that if no other fish came to boat I should not break my heart nor die of grief. The taking of that handsome pair of spring salmon was an admirable tonic, and I resumed my Scott in a contented mood. After three chapters the mood was not quite the same; after a fourth I felt somewhat ill-used. Two hours, in short, passed, and the wind had veered round to the north. In other words, it was cold. Tom Thumb warmed me up eventually; its gudgeon had been taken, and I had something in secure custody. A big one, at any rate, of what quality we should determine later. I had grave doubts, however, of the issue, for he terminated each run by coming to the top and swirling there most uncannily. Patience and the butt in time revealed him the best fish of the day, and I heaved a sigh of relief and sat down on a rock for breath when the gaff lifted him out, the priest shrived him, and the balance stood at 20 1/2 lb. A truly handsome leash of salmon!

CHAPTER VIII

ANGLING COUSINS AT THE VICARAGE

The girls seemed to have moderated their zeal for the bicycle, and in truth it was too hot to last. Then they were all for angling, and for this we had to thank certain books recently reviewed and the vicar of Netherbate. It fell to a useful cousin's lot to purchase the books. The girls were intensely interested in Mr. Dewar's *South Country Trout Streams*, because they knew most of the Hampshire country so pleasantly described, and they liked the photographs, one of the two readers being herself a kodakeer of no mean skill. It was the illustrations, too, of Mr. Halford's Marryat edition of *Dry Fly Fishing* that pinned their attention to that work for at least two hours. They wondered not a little at the attitude of the dry-fly gentleman as he is photographed doing the overhand cast, downward cut, steeple cast, and dry-switch, and under the vicar's tuition fell in love with the Mayfly plate, not excluding the uncanny larvae likenesses. The reverend monitor, indeed, proposed that they should drive forthwith over to the Trilling, a chalk stream tributary at the further limit of the estate, and dredge in the mud, or whatever their home may be, for the beasts themselves.

To keep to the story, it must be stated that after this interlude the girls came to Lord Grey's *Fly Fishing*, the attractive *avant coureur* of the Haddon Hall Library. The vicar, who had dissuaded them from end-to-end reading of Halford's standard book because it was strong meat and they were babes (apologising in his cheery way for talking shop in such a connection), dealt out quite the contrary advice about Lord Grey's book, not because the author is an eminent statesman and titled, or because it was the best looking, but by reason of its glamorous word pictures of the country. He artfully picked out passages that, having no reference at all to fishing, very poetically touched off the six great blossoms of May, and the singing summer birds easily espied amongst the young leaves and sprouting brushwood; the long days and warm nights of June, when the wild rose is a beauty to be admired, and the distant masses of elder have a fine foamy appearance. These extracts settled Belinda offhand, and she and Lamia laid their heads together and read the book faithfully. They are good girls, spite of the names selected for them by a fanciful parent, and if they are not proud of those names, and prefer being called by their intimates Blind (with a short "i") and Lammy, there is, I hope, no great harm done. That is better no doubt than the Miss Blinders and Miss Lame-ears of the cottage folk.

The practical issue of this study of fishing literature (for which also cousin had to pay) and this not-minding of his own parochial business by the vicar (dredging hideous larvae, forsooth, when he ought to be a-fishing of men) may be reckoned at very little change out of a bank note—for cousin. It is true that this is a minor matter, and in a measure a somewhat sordid consideration. Also, I am anticipating a little. Perhaps I ought to have at once made it clear that the really practical issue of the aforesaid was an insistence on the part of the girls that they should be taught fly fishing, and equipped with the correct "things" (their expression not mine), for a new diversion; it must be done immediately, expense not to be considered. The vicar was strong as to the hang-the-cost doctrine, and this he said knowing that cousin would see his ten-pound note no more for ever. Perhaps the reader will comprehend why

cousin was passing sore; he paid the piper, and the vicar evidently meant to dance to the tune. In plain phrase, he undertook, if cousin would drill them sufficiently into the mysteries of fly fishing, to lead them into action in earnest during the approaching Mayfly time. Wherefore cousin fitted them out with rods, winches, lines, casts, and flies. But he drew the line at waders, as not being in the department of a mere he-cousin.

With curious indiscretion he brought home a tackle-maker's catalogue, with the "things" which he considered generously requisite. Then the girls consulted the pamphlet, and, backed of course by the vicar, insisted that a silver spring balance in morocco case (to weigh up to or down from 4 lb.), an oil bottle for odourless paraffin, and other small trifles were needful. Cousin gave them all credit for gratitude evinced after his second trip to town, and any reader must give him credit for the honest pleasure that was his recompense. They were satisfied for the time being, as the reader will readily understand. "A very neat little rig-out indeed, my dear," said B. to L., the vicar corroborating like the sound of a small amen. For a while the donor resolutely declined to buy split-cane rods, deeming high-class greenhearts sufficient for beginners, though the vicar argued that it was always wise in tuition to begin as you intend to proceed. This casuistry cousin heeded not.

"Very well, my dear fellow," he said airily, "you know best. We shall have the Mayfly up in about a month; the girls will know how to use a rod by then, and you'll simply have to buy split canes after all. *You* use a split cane, *I* use a split cane, and you must be deplorably ignorant of girl nature if you suppose they will be content with greenhearts two minutes after they have seen our rods put together."

Such an argument the young man respected, and, relenting, he bought split-cane rods. Light gun-metal winches, 30 yards of tapered line, and the regulation etceteras were completed by a couple of waterproof bags of the finest material, as taking more kindly to the female form than a hard, bumping, stick-out creel. As was explained to Blind, there would be always someone to look after the fish caught, if any; the bag was for fly-book, scent bottle, spring balance, and trifles of that kind, never forgetting fine cutting pliers in case of accidents with fingers, lips, noses, or ears hooked foul.

The preliminary lessons being rudimentary and in the nature of drudgery were of course entrusted to cousin. They were to be imparted, to begin with, on the smooth sward of the bowling green. The girls required to be persuaded a little to this humble curriculum, which, in truth, is a comfortable, serviceable, and labour-saving way of mastering the rudiments. Granted it is make-believe, yet not more than practising at a target. The pupils at last were convinced that it was a sensible means to an end, and began with a flower-pot saucer varying yards up the lawn. Blind took almost naturally to the trick of allowing the rod to have its natural way. It was wonderful how after a quarter of an hour she intuitively understood what to do. But that was her nature; as a child she was never flustered, and at the first trial her leisurely sweep, with the needful pause of the line in air behind her, was admirable. She did, in fact, at the outset what many an experienced angler has never thoroughly acquired. Lammy, on the contrary, was hard to coach; that is her nature, too; she always was so impetuous. From the bare line they advanced to a gut cast and hackled fly with filed-off barb, and Blind could deftly drop the palmer into the saucer at twelve yards days before her sister could get out the line with anything like an approach to straightness.

The time arrived for applied science, and cousin director bade the girls don those waders which they had clamoured to use even on the lawn, and come away to the stream. It was fortunate that they had a shallow which, for practical essays in casting, was a nice compromise, as a position for throwing a fly, between the unnatural level of the lawn and the elevated banks of an ordinary trout river. There was a bridge spanning a smart run of knee-deep water, and above a beautiful broad shallow, aglow with white ranunculus blossoms, growing out of yellow sand held together with small gravel perpetually washed by crystal clear water. The damsels had to do their best with shortened walking dresses until certain smart clothes, about which there had been many whisperings, came down from the tailor; and in they went, skirts notwithstanding, like merry children as the stream rippled and gurgled four inches or so above the feet, which were encased in dainty rubber combination waders.

Bless the maiden, how delighted Blind was in delivering her first real cast with a real artificial fly on real water! They had not yet attempted the mysteries of dry fly; a fat alder on a No. 1 hook was honour enough for a beginning. A red spinner, in compliment to one who was a spectator, first chosen, alighted and floated well, but swiftly came down to the fair practitioner. Some trouble followed in gaining the delicate touch of line and winch, and knack of recovery essential to workmanlike up-stream casting, but the amiable pupil, being a listener rather than a talker, was quick to learn, and the lesson was over when the vicar arrived. To him Lammy soon contrived to explain that she was left on the bank, or, rather, paddling below in the shallow, ignored and lamenting. They were therefore left to operate in company while the others crossed the bridge and sought fresh water a little higher up the shallow.

Though there was no idea of catching fish that evening, fortune smiled upon the placid Blind. Obeying cousin's order to drop the fly between two well-defined patches of weed up-stream, she achieved a neat cast straight and clean to the desired spot. The fly, with the evening light showing it startlingly distinct, had not travelled three inches before something took it fiercely, and the winch was heard as sweet harmony. Neither of the operators had reckoned upon this. Cousin dared not speak at such a momentous crisis. Blind was startled into a little "oh," and, as he might have been sure without protestations, she kept cool, and remembered precisely the order of procedure which he had expounded in theory at odd times on the lawn—point of rod raised, winch left free but still at ready command, fish to be humoured, and no excitement. The battle was really over if she maintained her presence of mind, and in this she failed not.

The rod top was nodding sweetly, the hand gently turning the reel handle, the fish held and guided. All was well. "What shall I do, cousin, now?" she asked. "Take it easy," he answered from the bank; "walk gently out towards me, don't slacken the line, and don't hurry the fish." And successfully done as formulated. Blind was throughout mistress of the situation, and in the absence of a landing net, which had not entered for a moment into calculations, she backed in perfect order up the gentle slope, and the fish docilely followed her up and up till it was high and dry, gasping on blossoms of silver weed. It was only a grayling, to be sure, black, and out of condition; but there it was, admired and petted. Blind would have kissed the creature I do believe if spectators had not been present; anyhow she would not hear of return to the water. What was close time to her? It was the first captive of her bow and spear, and nothing would content her but embalming, and a glass case.

Lammy was not so happy as her sister that night; the vicar had tried almost in vain to induct her into the art of fishing up-stream, and her casts across, on wet fly principles, while not so very bad for a beginner, were so obvious a contrast to those of Blind that she was not eager to dwell too much upon the wonderful luck that had befallen. Much conversation ensued for days as to the approaching Mayfly carnival. The girls demanded the water to themselves during its period, and as Lamia had landed a small trout that had hooked itself down stream on a submerged olive dun, she was soon as much bitten with the fishing mania as Blind herself. It was comforting to the vicar and cousin to be informed by the girls that they would henceforth accept no services from "hangers-on"—meaning that they would do their own landing and basketing. "We shall see," said cousin to the parson; "meanwhile (after I have bought the correct article in landing nets) we shall be having a lively time, I can perceive, when the old man slouches up some evening to say 'Mayfly be up now, missie.'"

"Aye, they are still faithful to the gentle art." Seasons had flown with that year's Mayflies, and Netherbate and its kindly people had to me become just a pleasant remembrance. But spite of the archidiaconal hat and gaiters I knew the vicar when accidentally met on the platform of York Station, and his reply to one of my questions about the happy people at Netherbate was precisely as I have written it. Of course the calls of romance had been fully answered by the marriage of Lamia to the vicar, and Belinda to cousin, and sunshine had blessed them all in basket and in store. I was now to learn that while the parties were still free they had continued their angling studies and practice, duly progressing from wet to dry fly, from trout to salmon.

"In fact," said the archdeacon, "I have had a letter from your old pal 'Blinders' this very day, telling me that she landed a Tweed fish yesterday above Kelso, and her boy was allowed to hold the rod while the boat rowed ashore. Lamia started by the train just now to join in her fishing, and I am left to the dubious excitements of the Congress. So glad to see you looking so well! Adieu."

CHAPTER IX

A CONTRAST IN THAMES ANGLING

My personal knowledge of the Thames trout is not profound; but if it has left me somewhat short of the affection which many anglers proclaim, it has inspired a high respect; and if my interest in him is not precisely direct, I always have been able to sympathise keenly with his multitude of lovers and admirers. On this entrance upon another Thames trout season I have him in my thoughts, and am pleased to know that his status, character, and honour are on the whole nothing diminished as the years revolve. In the past I have, indeed, seen something of Thames trouting, and though I have, by lack of opportunity, not engaged largely in it, yet have formed ideas upon the subject that may be formulated as a seasonable topic. Also I have reason to remember this fish as figuring in one of the curious printer's errors of my early journalism. In a special big-type article in a daily paper I had glorified the breed and the business by the magniloquent demand "Who that has battled with a fine Thames trout in a thundering weir will ever forget, etc., etc.?" The step from the sublime to the ridiculous appeared next morning in the rendering "Who that has *bathed* with, etc., etc."

The ichthyologists who have made a study of the interesting salmon family have, perforce, unanimously agreed that the Thames trout is of the house of Brown: is in a word a true *Salmo fario*. But these learned gentlemen seem to have overlooked the equally undeniable fact that there are three distinct species of this excellent fish. First comes the Thames trout of the professional fisherman. Of this class there is an untold number. Their movements are keenly watched, and often chronicled with surprising minuteness. They are liberally scattered over every likely district from Teddington upwards, and there is a degree of familiarity with their habits, on the part of local observers, that at once whets our appetite and craves our admiration. You hear about them often by the riverside. At six o'clock yesterday morning a fish of 7 1/2 lb. appeared at the tail of the third stream from the right bank and disported for the space of an hour amongst the trembling bleak. He was rather short for his weight, and had remarkably white teeth. Later on, another of 5 lb., full weight, with a cast in his left eye, took a leisurely breakfast at the edge of yonder scour. Three trout, that can only be spoken of as "whoppers," are beyond question in possession of this pool; others are to be found between four and six of the afternoon at home in hovers, the whereabouts of which are known to a nicety. The gambols and predatory raids of this class of Thames trout afford great excitement and pleasure to the observant

passers-by, and there is no doubt in the world that our friends are not always romancing with regard to them. Yet it may not be gainsaid that the Thames trout of the professional fisherman is but too often a Mysterious Unknown to the angler, and a creature never to be dissected by mortal fingers.

A second species of Thames trout is that of the unsuccessful angler. Hieing him blithely in the sweet spring morning to the waterside, the angler beholds this fine specimen to great advantage—by the eye of faith. His step quickens as, in all its magnificent proportions, it flashes before his inner vision. Saw you ever such brilliant vesture, such resplendent fins? By the time the sanguine sportsman has clambered over the rails in the third meadow, the line of hope has run out from the winch of imagination, and he has mentally struck that trout, played it, brought it to the rim of the net, played it yet again, and finally, after a battle heroic in its every detail, beheld it gracefully curved in the friendly meshes, and transferred to a grassy couch, to be the envy of his club and the boast of his family, even to the third and fourth generation. This also is a numerous species, for there is not a member of the great army of Thames anglers who has not, in this manner, seen specimens during the first three or four hours of that day which witnesses the spiritless return of the bearer of an empty basket.

The third species of Thames trout is of a more substantial kind, and although as to its quality we may allow ourselves to be as enthusiastic as the most hearty of Thames trout worshippers, we dare not blink at the cruel fact that, as to quantity, it ranks far below the two other species to which I have so charitably and gently referred.

What it may be to-day I know not, but in my time there was not a more likely spot than Boveney Weir for one of these goodly Thames trout in the flesh. From the sill over which the river churns into a splendid mass of milky foam, past the island, and for a couple of hundred yards down the water looks as much like the correct thing as any reach can do. But even in fishing matters, perhaps in them more especially, things are not always what they seem, and, reduced to the practical test of results, Boveney Weir, in the estimation of many practical anglers, is not now what it was, and decidedly not what it ought to be. On the Saturday after a Good Friday, which fell in April, one of the experts, as he worked a delicious little bleak in a most artistic fashion down the middle of the weir, bemoaned himself in my hearing on this account. Yet he could not complain. He had caught a trout on the previous Monday. And it has come to this! A man who evidently understands how to do it takes one fish in the course of a week, and, being conscientious, admits that he will not sin by complaining.

In the course of an hour, four gentlemen, nicely equipped with spinning rods, arrived at the scene of action, and paid out in the orthodox way at the head of the weir. I could see that they had been having brave sport with the above-mentioned species Number Two; but, so long as I remained, that was the sum total of their spoil. One could almost observe, by the gradual melancholy which settled upon their countenances as the time went on with no thrilling rap to make the top of the limber rod dance again, the hopeless fading out of these unsubstantial specimens from even the imagination. The east wind of course had been against everything ever since the trout season opened, and it was not surprising to learn that; though the weir had been well fished from All Fools' day onwards, only six fish had been taken, and they of the smallest size.

A Thames trout of 2 1/2 lb. is regarded as a mere minnow by the man who has drunk the deep delight of landing a fish of the normal weight of 6 or 7 lb.; yet this seemed to have been the average. Put it down to the east wind by all means. An honest Thames trout, properly educated up to the modern standard, would be unworthy of the confidence of the great metropolitan angling clubs if he so violated piscatorial law as to allow himself to be caught under such conditions, and it is but charity to suppose that these legally sizable but morally undersized fish were giddy youths, upon whom the example of the veterans, poisoning themselves steelproof in the current, yet virtueproof against temptation, was sadly thrown away.

Fish or no fish, it is, nevertheless, worth something to stand awhile at the head of the weir and indulge in those soothing reveries which a running stream provokes. You cross the lock, and by the permission of the lockkeeper (whose good temper is sorely tried these holiday times by the incessant passage of pleasure boats, bound for Surley, and maybe Monkey Island) pass over the pretty island, and enter upon the plankway which communicates with the further bank. The weir is broad, and its construction such that the heavy body of water from above stampedes through at your feet in magnificent force. Shout at your topmost pitch of voice if you would carry on a conversation with the roar of the swirl in the listener's ears. No fewer than seventeen distinct floods are pouring between the beams with never two escaping alike. As different are they as the current of our individual lives; now quietly gliding in, but not off, the racket on either side; now confidently asserting themselves by a semi-turbulent merriness; now all babble and bubble and surface; now dark, deep, and masterful through hidden force under a calm countenance; now tearing, and dashing, and running away with quickly scattered impulse.

Yonder, the sleeping island o'ershadowed by trees on the left, and the high indented bank on the right, seem to gather these diverse streams within their arms and reduce them to something like uniformity of purpose. And then, looking up and around from the seething pool, you see the stately grey towers of Windsor rising above the land, and the level meadows stretching green towards the eminences made picturesque by the woods.

The tradition amongst the fishermen is that Boveney Weir is full of "rum uns." This I take to be a confession of faith in the existence of large trout, and at the same time a delicate compliment to their wariness. All Thames trout are wary, and it is probably their outrageous artfulness which adds to the rapture of circumventing them. Old Nottingham George would tell many a tale of cunning trout which

had been angled for so often and pricked so many times that they were supposed to have become as learned in the matter of fishermen and fishing tackle as humanity itself. The reader may not have read, or, reading, may have forgotten, that the principles of the Thames Angling Preservation Society were very early applied to Boveney Weir, for it is written that William, the son of Richard de Windsor, in the first year of the thirteenth century, gave a couple of marks to the king, in order that the pool and fishery might be maintained in no worse a condition than it used to be under the reign of Henry II.

Spinning for Thames trout, which is undoubtedly the most legitimate way of treating them, seeing that they so little appreciate the beauties of an artificial fly, is an art that requires perhaps more patience than skill. Your bleak, dace, gudgeon, minnow, or phantom, in point of fact, humoured fairly into the stream, does its own work; but anyone who watches the old-timers at such weirs as Eton or Boveney must perceive that there are many degrees of such science as the catching of a Thames trout demands. No doubt it is delightful to sit on a weir-head, reading your favourite author, while the rod is conveniently placed to give early notice of a run. It is delightful, but it is not angling. The most dunder-headed trout of the pool, at sight of a silvery bait racing apparently for dear life half out of water, yet never advancing, must metaphorically place its forefinger along its snout, and with a leery wink sheer off into the deep.

The majority of anglers seem too readily satisfied when their bait spins, whereas their chief aim should be to produce a movement as true to nature as possible. They spin too fast by half, not sufficiently calculating the varying force of the streams, and I am convinced that one of the most common faults of Thames spinners for trout and pike is working too near the surface. "Spin as deep as the character of the water will allow you" will be found in the long run a wholesome rule to follow, and, rather than keep on spinning in the same water, it will pay the angler to cease fishing for half an hour and begin anew with a bait as unlike its predecessor as he can make it. I can never fully understand the frequent admission, "He was a fine fish, but he got off." The breaking away of a lusty trout upon whom the fine line has been too heavily strained, or who has been hooked with rotten tackle, is explainable enough. It is a natural consequence. The "getting off" of such a fish is quite another matter, and argues something, in nine cases out of ten, radically wrong in the disposition of the hooks. You often see three or four triangles so fixed to the bait that only by accident can one of them get into the mouth of the fish, and not a half of one *deserves* to get in. There is no sense in having the hooks too small, and, if I may venture to offer one more opinion, no spinning flight for trout is perfect which has not a hook or hooks clear of all impediment at the tail.

About the tackle and methods of fishing for Thames trout there is nothing new to say. Of late years the use of the live bait with fine snap tackle, and on Nottingham principles, has prevailed to an increasing extent, but the familiar style of spinning from the weir beams still holds its own. It presents a minimum of toil, and the rushing water helps you so much that it appeals irresistibly to the happy-go-lucky instincts of the fair-weather sportsmen, who are probably, after all, a majority of Thames trout fishers. Our friends are persevering, but they persevere in the wrong way, contenting themselves by fishing the same water from morning to night, instead of working the bait far and near with constant change of tactics. The Thames trout is particularly cute, and is not such a fool as to be taken in by a little fish that is always twiddling at one place, in a strongly running current, yet never gets an inch forward. A good Thames man spins his bleak everywhere, steadily and naturally, into eddies, close to piles, under trees, near the banks. The glittering object is never at rest, but flutters hither and thither, covering new ground with every yard of advance.

More through lack of opportunity than dislike, intention, or design, I have not, at least to the present time, enjoyed my full share of fishing from a punt, or in the river Thames. On the few occasions when I have sought it the experience has therefore been a little peculiar, like that of going to school to learn something. Together with the very proper keenness of the fisherman who wants to justify himself with the rod, there have been a spice of inquisitiveness, the wide open eye of inquiry, the sense of something not quite familiar, in such days as I have spent in a Thames punt. My acquaintance with barbel is also so limited that it counts for little. In a well-known barbel hole of the Kennet I fished in vain; once in April I caught a gravid specimen spinning for trout in a Thames weir; while spinning for pike I have hooked small barbel foul by the tail as they stood on their heads at the bottom of a mill pool when the wheel was stopped. This acquaintance, in fact, was intermittent and casual. But I bear in mind one day of close intimacy with the strong, sporting barbel; and on this March morning, when the windows are being bombarded with snow, hail, and sleet, making it, I trust, bad for the Zeppelins, I intend to lose myself in the impressions of that one instance of intimate terms with the fish. It must have been in late autumn, for I seem to hear a sad sobbing of wind from the elms, and a whispered dispersal of decayed leaves, loosened by recent white frosts.

I remember, too, that the professional fisherman, Hawkins, was very hopeful. He said his comrade, Jorkins, on the previous day, with two patrons from town, had had fine sport amongst the barbel, although the fish did not run particularly large, and he added that he had often known before, in previous years, a sudden eruption of cold weather sharpen the appetites of the fish and bring them on, as he termed it, headlong, for a fortnight or three weeks.

After all, there is something pleasant and soothing to the middle-aged and somewhat lazy man in sitting upon a Windsor chair in a punt, with pleasant objects to look at on either bank, with a tranquilly

flowing stream between, and an occasional boat or barge moving up or down. The Castle, the familiar church, and the customary house-tops, were prominent features in the picture; and now and then the distant scream of a railway whistle and rumble of a train came in to save us from imagining that we were altogether in the country. Then, it is not disagreeable to the lazy man to have a fisherman (especially when it is a good handy man like Hawkins) fussing about, and handling the nasty baits, and making himself generally useful, as the deft-handed and willing professional so well knows how to do when afloat. All this, of course, was very well for a while. We looked round upon the prospect, and discussed it. We made inquiries of the fisherman as to whether the swallows had all departed for their winter quarters. We inquired who lived in yonder mansion, and heard a long tale about the owner having made money by inventing a wonderful kind of automatic blacking-brush.

As the story fizzled out, the leger lines having been down for some little time, I thought, and not without reason, that I saw the point of my rod trembling. Surely enough it was a bite, but, as Hawkins suggested (doubtless borrowing the pun from some bygone customer), it might have been an audacious dace. At any rate, the only result we achieved at that particular time was the necessity of affixing another lob-worm to the hook, and the casting out of the bulleted line again. This story, together with the hearty way in which Hawkins expressed his contempt for the patentee of the blacking-brush and his family, was so interesting and amusing that I looked at him instead of at my fishing rod; and as he at the same time looked at me, the position was left unguarded, and we were both of us recalled from the realms of scandal by a vigorous plunge of the rod-top. It was a sharp "knock," in fact, followed by a series of tugs, so violent that the rod rattled on the edge of the punt. There was no merit on my part in getting that barbel, for the fish had hooked himself, and had gone down stream at racing speed, before I could get command of him.

This, let me tell the young angler, is a dangerous position to be in. The handling of a rod under such circumstances, with a fine line like that with which you always ought to fish for barbel, requires great care. The tendency is to be over excited, and in the agitation of the moment one frequently commits the grave error of striking hard at a running fish. The result is obvious. With a fish going strongly away, and a man striking more strongly perhaps than he imagines in the contrary direction, it is almost a certainty that something or other will give way. However, an old stager at that kind of work gets out of the predicament without any loss, and after the usual resistance secures the fish. The battle was really fought about fifteen yards below the punt.

Why the barbel should choose that particular ground to try conclusions I am not aware. The water I know was deepest there, and, as I afterwards satisfied myself by plumbing, formed a saucer-like hollow, and there were also some obstructions about, of what nature I could not exactly make out. But I shrewdly suspect that there were either stakes or an ugly piece of wood, or some other object that would be dangerous to the line, and that the enemy went straight away for this, having probably tried the dodge successfully before, with the object of boring and boring until he parted from the hook that held him. A barbel is artful and apt to play games of this description, and it is prudent when you find a barbel making for a particular place and again returning to it after he has been brought away, to use every exertion compatible with safety to keep him away. This was not a large fish—something about 6 lb. or 7 lb.—and as he lay in the bottom of the punt for five or ten minutes after he had been turned out of the net, he certainly did present a striking picture of pale bronze colouring and comely shape.

A couple of hours passed by without either myself or my friend being fortified by a knock, and by that time we had run through the history of the occupants of every one of the country houses within view of the river at the place where we were pitched. It was now two o'clock in the afternoon, and the cold had increased. We discussed the possibilities, and both of us resigned ourselves to fate, deliberately arriving at a conclusion, almost in resolution form, that we were to have no more sport that day. Hawkins, however, would not hear of such a thing. He said the fish were there, and the fish would come on to bite sooner or later. Then he consulted us as to the advisability of shifting the position a little, and we agreed that if he could do so quietly perhaps it would be well to drop down so that the punt would be a little below rather than above the pollard willow.

This was done and with immediate effect, for our leger lines had scarcely reposed to their mission on the river's bed before both rods were wagging their heads. At one and the same time, and apparently keeping time, the tops of those rods told us that we might both expect a fish. We struck simultaneously; in unison we shouted "I've got him!" and we were each engaged with a fish that we knew to be not small. As a rule you prefer when in a punt to catch alternately with your friend; that is more like cricket, and indeed there is nothing more risky, unless both anglers are remarkably cool, than two lively fish being played in so small a space. Whether it is that they have a sympathy with each other, whether it is that the one suspects that he has got into trouble owing to some diabolical treachery on the part of the other and is out of temper; whether it is that they know all about it, and were taught in their childhood that fouled lines are generally broken lines, so much I know not; but be it in sea fishing or fresh water fishing, two fish hooked and struggling within sight by instinct often make towards each other.

This happened in our case. My fish was the smaller, and would have been the sooner played out if the barbel that my friend had on his hook would have allowed it; but just as I was winching in, with the intention of getting it into the net with all possible speed, my friend's fish made a deliberate dart to starboard, and the result was a foul. To have attempted playing them with our rods would have been ruin, therefore we dropped them, and by getting the two lines in my own hand and using them as one, I managed to haul in the brace of fish by sheer strength, and the somewhat novel feat was accomplished of getting into the landing net a 3-lb. and a 5-lb. barbel upon lines that were entangled. As our lines were of the fine Nottingham description, and the gut fine also, this was to say the least a piece of good

fortune. There will, I know, be some reader who has been in the predicament here described, and I feel that he smiles at the thought of the fearful work of disentangling those clinging, wet, white, undressed silk lines. I will tell him. We cut them.

The shoal below took time to reflect upon the circumstance of which they had no doubt been witnesses, and we had no further touch of them for several minutes. Then they came on again with an inspiring regularity, distributing their favours alternately to myself and friend. For an hour a barbel came to net every five minutes; and there was no chance of loss, as the fish simply gulped at the worms and went off with them at once, and the hook had to be removed sometimes with a disgorging. In the very midst of the sport I thought I would make an experiment in the matter of baits. I had my own box of gentles. One, I suppose, never goes afloat or engages in any bottom fishing whatever without this reserve, if the maggots are in season. Hawkins also happened to have a small supply of stale greaves.

"Don't do it, mister!" Hawkins pleaded pathetically, when he saw me stringing on a bunch of gentles. "Leave well alone, mister! You can't better the business, and you may change the luck if you don't stick to the lobs."

But I was obstinate, and was very glad that I tried the experiment. It was not the first time I had discovered that when the fish are really "on" they do not distinguish much between this and that bait. Even in fly fishing I have successfully tried the experiment, during a mad rise, of putting on a fly that was the most opposite I could find to what was on the water. The barbel took the gentles as freely as worms, and greaves as freely as gentles, but I noticed that the fish were smaller.

It will be concluded that our prowess on this occasion came somewhat into the slaughter zone. So at any rate it occurred to one of us as we landed, and in the grey mist spreading over land and water, saw the dead fish laid out decently and in order upon the grass. There were two dozen and one barbel, the largest 7 lb. and the smallest 3 lb., the average being about 4 lb. With a few accidental dace and chub thrown in, there would therefore be over a solid hundredweight of fish. Was this a thing to be proud of? Though I ask the question I do not answer it myself. We had enjoyed the outing and even the sport; we looked down upon the spoil with satisfaction, and if there was a sort of sense of shame at the back of the mind that was for analysis afterwards. Even as we pondered, perhaps to the degree of gloating, Hawkins was enumerating instances of much greater numbers taken by his customers. Yarrell records 280 lb. of large barbel in one day, and our old friend, the Rev. J. Manley, who preferred "a good day's leger-fishing for barbel to any other day's fishing within reach of ordinary or even extraordinary mortals," states that he took "thirty-seven fish one day on the Thames at Penton Hook, and there were several over 4 lb. and one nearly scaled 10 lb."

But these were the good, the great, the red letter days of a past time. The barbel is extremely capricious, abnormally so of late years in the Thames, and there are plenty of blanks to one fortunate day. There is, however, a fascination in barbel-fishing that is not a little surprising, and men have been known to boast aggressively that it is the only form of angling that appeals to them. It must be confessed that if the barbel is of poor esteem as food, he is the very gamest of the coarse fishes and a fighter to the last. His rushes are fierce and continuous; and as Providence has provided him with a decided snout, he bores downward with dogged persistence, relying apparently as much upon his classical barb appendages as upon his powerful tail for aid in time of trouble; and an infallible sign of his unconquerable spirit is the difficulty of bringing him into the net when he is close to it. There is not to my mind any fish that bolts so often when to all appearance played out.

The uncertainty of barbel and barbel fishing was illustrated by the sequel to our day on the Thames. Our adventures were told to the members of a certain society on the evening of our return, and no doubt they were envious, miserable, or glad as it might happen. We can only speculate as to that, but what can be told is that by the first trains next morning six brethren from different quarters of London went down and made their way to Hawkins. They had not whispered their intentions to one another, and looked rather sheepish as they stood in a cluster to receive the announcement from the fisherman's wife that H. was not at home. They looked a little more sheepish when they took boat to the pollard tree swim and found two very young gentlemen with Hawkins seated in a punt. But they smiled again on learning that there had not been a touch at either of the three lines, which had been out since daylight. That swim was diligently tried after our visit, but I had reason for knowing that not another barbel was taken there during the entire winter.

CHAPTER X

TWO RED LETTER SALMON

It is not often that the angling clubs which encourage prize-taking offer booby consolations for the smallest fish, but I have known exceptions, especially at the holiday competitions by the seaside. The biggest fish are another matter altogether. Sooner or later the world is bound to hear of them. And who dare say us nay? That man was not a fool who wanted to know, if you did not blow your own trumpet, who was to blow it? Blowing it need be neither boasting nor defiance. In this honest belief I shall try for a while to forget the butcher's bill in Flanders by recalling the capture of my biggest salmon, and that

of a still bigger one by a friend during the same bygone back-end on Tweed, leaving the general memories of autumn days on the great Border river for future revival.

It was during Mr. Arthur N. Gilbey's tenancy of the Carham water, and he was, besides being my host, also the hero of the very best of the two salmon which are my text. He rented a country house overlooking the river, with the fishing, and no fortunate angler who sojourned under his roof in those good days can ever forget the puzzle into which he fell while deciding whether it was the gentle hostess or the ever-considerate host who most contributed to his happiness. Among the bright Carham remembrances no one will omit the after-breakfast descent of the steep-wooded brae down to the boat animated with eager anticipation, and the climbing home in the gloaming in whatever mood the events of the day had warranted.

The Carham fishing is really the lower and the southern section of Birgham, famous for its dub, the rival in piscatorial fame of Sprouston, a little higher up-stream. Its situation immediately above Coldstream and not far from Berwick makes it a characteristic water for the salmon fisher. The incoming fish sometimes linger there awhile early and late in the season, and men catch salmon at Carham while those in the higher beats are waiting their arrival or bewailing their disappearance. Here, too, you may hook your fish in Scotland and land it in England, for the Tweed begins to be the boundary between the two countries at Carham burn.

The Tweed is picturesque rather than romantic, as are so many of the Highland rivers. They have their legions of admirers, but there is no Scottish stream that can count so many ardent lovers as the Tweed, and this for many reasons. It has much varied and positive picturesqueness of its own, it has associations of legend and history; Walter Scott lived on its banks, and its dividing course between the nations that used to harry or be harried invests it with an abiding interest. As a river it is distinguished by a characteristic dignity, and, save at its narrowed channel and rocky bed at Makerstoun, maintains a stately yet irresistible strength of flow from Kelso seawards. Nevertheless, there are times when it shows moods of sullen rage, and is certainly too full for the angler, to whom, in spite of faults, it is always Tweed, the well-beloved.

"How is she the morn?" is, therefore, a common question amongst all sorts and conditions of men along Tweedside in the fishing seasons, and at the visit now under course of recall there was assuredly ample excuse for the formula. It soon transpired that the old-fashioned barometer in the hall had been having a hard time of it for many days. The master of the house never passed from drawing- to dining-room without an anxious tap. While the maids were doing their ante-breakfast work I myself stole down and consulted it, opened the front door, studied the sky, and noted the drift of the clouds. I make my forecast at once if the tokens are depressing. But I had ere this seen the river. One of my bedroom windows gave direct outlook upon a shrubbery, the most notable feature of which was a maple of most brilliant tints, varying from bright red to faint orange; the other framed a landscape picture of park, grassland, woods, and the broad Tweed sweeping round towards the lower portion of the water for which the angler cares. There was, however, another view from the front of the house—a nearer reach where there was a mass of rough water, and a certain tongue of shingle thrust out from the further bank. For days and weeks these river marks had warned the anxious inquirers that they might not expect sport. The diminution of the tongue of land on the one side, and a blur in the pure white of the foam on the other, told the one-word tale "waxing."

At the outset I was saved any anxiety by finding the river dirty. Travelling through the night, I had turned out at Berwick at half-past four in the morning in the cold of a roaring gale that sent the clouds flying express over the moon, and shrieked into every corner of the deserted station. There had been heavy rain, and, in short, when day broke bleakly near upon six o'clock, and I caught my first sight of the river from the early train to Coldstream, my fate was evident. In good order on Sunday afternoon, the Tweed was in flood when I drove over the bridge on Monday morning before the village was awake. Not for the first time, therefore, the kindly welcome of host and hostess was pointed with mutual condolences.

The October casts, so far, had been disappointing below Kelso. The Tweed anglers above that town had been more favoured, being beyond the malign influences of the Teviot, which has a wonderful facility for gathering up anything that comes from the clouds, and sending down dirt and volume to the beats eastward of the Kelso Tweedometer.

The records of a week such as this was to be are not worth telling, for men neither like to write about their own disappointments unless they can treat them from the comic side, nor to read about the woes of others unless they have the unhappy gift of gloating over them. Let this indication, then, cover several days, and no more about it, except that the time arrived when I caught a fish badly scored by seals, which infested the tideway, and that I worked hard for odd hits and misses with small fish on other days.

My best fish, in all senses of the word, was a godsend, and I rose her with a full-sized Wilkinson. She weighed 31 1/2 lb., and was the largest baggit which either Sligh or Guthrie could remember being caught in the Tweed. Up to the date of capture I believe it was the heaviest fish taken with a fly that season, but a week later a lady angler in Sprouston dub above took one of 35 lb. My fish gave me a rousing bit of sport, lasting a little over the accepted average time of a pound weight to the minute. But the circumstances warranted five minutes' grace. It was one of the very bad days, with blustering hailstorms, and evening was coming on. A grilse had risen short, and contributed another item to the losses account (nine in four days was the added total), and I was as gloomy as the weather, but fished on in calm desperation.

At last a long-drawn "Ha" from myself duetted (if I may coin the word) with "Y'r ento 'm, sir," from Guthrie. The fish walloped an instant near the surface, and then behaved with orthodox correctness, went down steady, and swiftly ran out sixty yards of line or so. Of the others I had said, "I shan't like this fish, Guthrie, till he's in the net." Of this one I now observed, "I think he's right this time." Guthrie responded, beaming, "Aye, he's grippit it weel."

It was a piece of good fortune that I hooked my friend so near shore that I was landed and free on the bank within five minutes. After running across the strong stream the fish moderated speed, and the winch could be worked. Some eighty yards below was a dangerous turmoil of broken water, foaming off to a shallow. The fish was manifestly a good one, and must be kept from those rocks at all hazards. Once in the hurly-burly of the foam the chances would be all on its side. Not a little disconcerting was it to find that it was making to this place with persevering steadiness. The tackle was tried and good; nothing was likely to give but the mouth of the fish. At one time my heart sank, and I feared I was to be outdone again. Pulling hard, the salmon forced me along the pebbly beach, with every ounce of strain I dared. There it was at last, within five yards of the rough water, and then it paused. Gradually it answered my leading, and with a slowness that became positively exciting, moved upwards, say, thirty yards. I heaved a sigh of relief, and Guthrie breathed like a bellows.

And now the salmon appeared to be struck with a new idea; it turned aside and shot across the river at a high speed for fifty yards. What meant the sudden stoppage? It was not the halt of sulkiness. I knew that well. Not daring to speak my fear I looked at Guthrie, who at once put it into words—"Round a rock." Down-stream and up-stream I cautiously moved, the rod never altering its tension curve. The racing river was cut by the tight line, so that there was a hissing heard above wind and stream. Somehow, though the chances were a million to one against me, I felt that the fish was still held by the hook. Five minutes of this suspense brought a different verdict from Guthrie: "Ah! ye needn't bother; ye'll find the heuk, nae doot, but nae fish."

"I am not so sure of that," I said. "Get the boat down, Guthrie, and we'll go out to him, anyhow." The boat was brought down accordingly, and out we went. The line was winched in cautiously (I might almost say prayerfully), and—well, something inside my waistcoat gave a mighty thump, and I could feel my face whiten. For, behold, the salmon—marvellous to relate—was still on, and as we approached to within a few yards of the rock the uplifted rod cleared the line, and the fish sped up-stream to the sharp music of the reel. Quickly as might be Guthrie brought me to shore, and the remainder of the battle was fought out from the shingle. There was one rush of nearly a hundred yards, then the fish calmed down and answered to the winch, moving down, nevertheless, much too persistently to Scylla and Charybdis.

Confound it, the old peril was coming close again. The good sign was that, as I followed on the bank, I could keep on reeling in line. A sheer towards the rock of offence prompted the thought that the salmon had been under its protection before, and I put on extra strain and kept him this side of it. By this time the fish was getting exhausted, but the distance from the broken water was so lessening that I determined to either mend or end the business by a gift of the butt.

"Go below, Guthrie, and I'll bring him in," was the word, and the old man soon got his opportunity, not to lift it out in the ordinary way, but to clap the net upon it as it struggled on the shallow, and pin it most cleverly to the shingle, hauling it out without accident. It was only done in the nick of time; two yards farther down would have been ruin. Everybody said it was a perfectly shaped specimen of the bright autumn Tweed salmon.

The season, as a whole, that year on Tweed was what, in the mildest form of regret, is termed "disappointing," though our old friend, Henry Ffennell, in his annual statement of large salmon, was able to mention a goodly proportion of heavy fish in the autumn. But that particular back-end was bad during October and November on most of the beats below Kelso. A few days after I had returned to the glories of Windsor House, and had Bream's-buildings as the choicest of handy landscapes, I realised the vast pleasure of learning in "Tweedside's" weekly report from Kelso, which I was reading in a November fog that pervaded the entire office, that Mr. Gilbey had been fortunate in catching a 42-lb. salmon at Carham, his best fish to that date, and, I think, the best Tweed fish of that season. It was taken on a salmon fly bearing the troutsome name of Orange Dun, and it was a fancy pattern worked out as I understood, by Tarn Sligh, one of the veteran gillies of Tweedside. This fly was a very taking harmony in yellow, and Mr. Gilbey was fishing with one of the small sizes on a single gut collar. The salmon was hooked near the Bell Rock, a favourite autumn cast under the right bank down by the woods below the hut. For some time the angler did not realise what was at the end of the line. It kept quietly down, and moved in steam-roller measure up-stream, never taking out more than a yard of line at a time, which, under the good management of the boat, fifteen yards or so in rear of the fish, was always recovered with ease. So the salmon advanced, yard by yard, up to the more streamy cast of the Craig. Mr. Gilbey landed in due course here on the high bank, and then for the first time caught sight of the broad-sided fellow, which the taciturn attendant netted without a mistake. The fish was pronounced by all who saw it to be as beautifully modelled and bright a kipper as autumn ever produced. Such a fish deserved to be caught, recorded, photographed, and cast, and all this was duly done. The plaster cast was a triumphant success, and you seem to see the fish itself in form and colour upon the wall which it honours and adorns.

CHAPTER XI

A SERMON ON VEXATIONS AND CONSOLATIONS

A happy heading for this chapter, as I thought, occurred to me—"Spoiled days." But I retain something of a sense of the ridiculous, and feared that the title might be capable of misconstruction, for the amusing story rose to mind of the village publican who had a spoiled day according to his own declaration. He rode in a dismal mourning coach to his wife's funeral, accompanied by a grown-up daughter, and she insisted upon having the window down. The parent showing signs of uneasiness, the daughter ventured to hope that he had no objection. "Oh! no," the bereaved husband replied, "keep it down if you like, my gal, but you're quite spoiling my day."

My intention will, however, be clear, for every one of us must be acquainted with angling brothers for whom everything seems to go wrong. Nay, a pretty heavy percentage of even the very first rank have their bad days, and believe in them with a species of fatalism that of course helps on the result they dread. Endless are the angler's troubles if he will but devote himself to developing them. The worst victim is the man who does not take things patiently, who is ever turning the tap of impetuosity on at the main, who begins the day with a rush, goes through it in a flutter, and ends it in alternations of dejection and rage.

What a charming man So-and-so is, but what a wet blanket he is to himself and everybody from the common failing. The train is actually moving, and, as usual, like a whirlwind, he is projected in by the guard, panting and irritable. You know perfectly well how it has happened; he got up too late, spluttered over the hot coffee, chivied the cabman all the way, charged through the porters on the platform, and here he is. Naturally he discovers that he left his waterproof in the hansom; he searches in vain for his pipe; he fumes and frets, and swears he is the most unfortunate wretch on earth. The song birds, the flowers, the fields, the clear atmosphere touch him never a whit, and the chances are that he continues through the livelong day as he began. In running his line through at the waterside he will miss one or two rings, and only find it out when the collar has been affixed. The mistake remedied he essays a cast or two, and away goes half of his rod; he neglected to tie the joints together, and attributes the mishap to the tackle makers, who did not always provide patent ready-made fasteners. These blunders, miscalled ill-luck, do not soothe the temper, and they certainly do not assist him to jousness and success.

As a matter of course our friend smacks hard at the first fish which rises, and hails the returning collar, minus point and fly, with a sarcastic grin, as if some evil genius outside himself had done the deed. Henceforth he will be in the mood to invite all mishaps that are possible and probable. In climbing a stile he will tickle the hawthorn hedge with his rod top, swing his suspended landing net into the thorns, and perhaps shake his fly-book out of his pocket in petulant descent from the top bar. If there is a bramble thicket anywhere in the parish, or a tall patch of meadow sweet in the rear, or a convenient gorse clump handy, be sure his flies will find them out. Another man would coolly proceed to extricate them; he pulls and hauls, and swears, carrying away his gear, and is lucky if his rod is left sound. In wading he goes in sooner or later over the tops of his stockings, cracks off his flies through haste in returning the line, and altogether fills his day full of small, unnecessary grievances. That this is possible I know full well. I have done it all myself. But the minor tribulations I had in my mind when I began to write this modest essay were not precisely of this kind, which are the heritage of those habitual unfortunates who are, in a measure, beyond hope of redemption. I had the pleasure of curing one of them, however, by pointing out to him the cause of his chronic irritation, producing haste, and a long train of inevitable ills. Anything in the shape of a burden about his body chafed him; and this being so, I need scarcely add that his equipment was always on the largest scale. The obvious suggestion was that he should hire a boy to carry his great creel, superfluous clothes, spare rod, and landing net. By proving to him that the expenses would be less than the amount of losses and breakages of both tackle and temper, he was induced to take my advice, and he was henceforth a converted character. My theme is, rather than palpably preventable disasters, the small accidents that will happen to the most careful anglers, especially if they put off their preparations to the last moment. Provoking is scarcely the word for the calamity of travelling a long distance by rail and road to realise that you have brought everything, including odds and ends that you will never use, but have left an important factor, say winch and line, behind you. To have brought the winch that does not fit your rod may be got over by binding on with a piece of your line; but the general variety of winch fitting is certainly a common trouble for anglers. Nor is it any good to boast of bringing your handle if you have overlooked the net; nor to take gigantic pains to buy live baits in London only to find that the water has leaked out long before you leave the train in Leicestershire. I have known a fly-fisher wretched for a whole day because he had not brought the bit of indiarubber with which he was in the habit of straightening out his cast; and a roach-fisher refuse to be comforted because his plummet was not.

You cannot, however, control the wind and weather; yet some men seem to be under a climatic curse. Any landowners whose crops require rain have only to invite them down for a day's fishing; there will be rain enough and to spare. No hankerer after an east wind should be without them. It shall breathe southwest balm when they start for the fishing; they will be met at the waterside by a blustering Boreas with out-puffed cheeks. Yesterday the wind would take the fly where wanted; to-morrow it will do the same; to-day it is dead down-stream or in the angler's face. This is no doubt inveterate ill-luck, and the victim is to be commiserated. You can quite believe him when he says that if he takes a fishing for August there will be no water; if for September, perpetual flood; and when, the

week after his return to town, he greets you with a sickly smile and volunteers the information that the day succeeding his departure the river at once got into ply, you deal gently with the young man, for this verily is tribulation major, and it may be your turn to meet it round a corner next year. I suppose there are men in all grades of sport, as in all grades of work, to whom the cards invariably fall awry, and the worst of the case is that there is only one piece of advice to tender—forswear the cards, or grin and bear. The angler ought to hold by the latter clause. The retrieving chances that may happen; the many useful objects turned up even when the philosopher's stone is never reached; the assets to the right if there are deficits to the left—these may be philosophically set off in the general account.

How many acquaintances, are there not, who burden themselves by over much comfort, or, what comes to the same thing from my point of view, with too much fuss and fad as to their impedimenta? Some anglers whom I meet really never appear to be happy unless staggering along like Issachar "couching down between two burdens." Half of the gear is mere ballast, never produced for actual service from one year's end to the other, but always carried with patience most instructive to behold. Not a month since I remonstrated with a comrade upon the unnecessary exertion he was undergoing from the mere weight of his useless baggage. He said he preferred it; he considered that he was not properly equipped without that enormous sack—big as that which the "Pilgrim's Progress" man shuffled off when he scrambled out on the right side of the Slough of Despond. I think he regarded the trip to the river—though we drove comfortably to it, and drove home again the same evening—as a serious expedition into unknown wilds, and was buoyed up throughout with the fancy that he ranked with the eminent explorers who go forth with their lives in their hands.

Once upon a time I habitually made a toil of pleasure in much the same way, scorning assistance, deeming it unworthy of a British sportsman to accept help from boy or man in any shape or form. But the golden days all too soon become the bronze, and maybe iron, and then we naturally pay more attention to trifling comforts and easements than in the happy period of unchastened exuberance. The stage is eventually reached when you will never sling creel or bag to shoulder if another can be found to carry them; never gaff or net a fish unless obliged in your own interests to do so, or in rendering friendly help to a comrade; never bow your shoulders to a load which another will bear; and when, as a matter of course, you will hand over your rod for the keeper to carry as you pass from pool to pool.

But though you may avoid superfluities, and entertain an instinctive horror of effeminate luxuries, there are some things quite necessary. Food comes first. The view of angling taken by comic men in the papers, and satirists out of them, is that eating and drinking are the principal amusement of anglers. The citizen party in a Thames punt on a hot summer day makes it so, very often, no doubt; and hence the caricatures of anglers who get a very small amount of fishing to an intolerable amount of sack. This is of course a cockney view of what, without offence, I will term a cockney proceeding. In the real angling of the ordinary river districts, I find that as many men wholly neglect their food as think too much about it. This, as I know from culpable personal experience, is a fault. It is, however, a greater fault to waste time in a set meal in the middle of a fishing day. Fortunately a kindred spirit will sympathise with us when the hospitable invitation to come up to the house to lunch is declined with thanks; but there are times when the duty has to be done, and it often happens that the summons comes at the precise time when sport is hot and high.

Get a good breakfast before starting; secure an honest dinner at the finish; but beware of heavy eating meanwhile. Keep going steadily with the rod through the livelong day, taking a slight repast as it were on the wing just to keep body and soul from premature separation. By this method you will remain in condition for your work, and have all the chances of sport that the time offers you. Sandwich boxes I have long forsworn, for, after the contents (which are seldom satisfactory) are gone, the awkward metal shell remains bulging out your pockets, or banging about in your basket. Once I tried to fish upon a small silver box filled with meat lozenges. It may have been as per prospectus of the manufacturers that I carried the essence of a flock of Southdowns in the waistcoat pocket, but the sheep after all did not seem to have a satisfactory effect, and a sucked lunch was not at all up to my sense of proportion. Then I tried cold chops, or sausages, carried in a fine white napkin; and very capital they are for the five minutes you allow yourselves on the bridge, or by the fallen log under the hedge, when tired nature suggests rest and refreshment. Afterwards I pinned my faith to a couple of home-made pasties, at the same time adhering to the fine napkin, which comes in very handy for sundry purposes when the fodder has disappeared. To anyone who likes the excitement of a domestic breeze, as a wind up to a fine day's sport, I can recommend nothing better than the steady use of the household serviette for drying the hands after the capture of every fish.

As to drink, that is too delicate a subject. My friend Halford, until he had a fishing box of his own, and could establish "regular meals," carried a flask of cold coffee without milk or sugar, and to this I pretended to attribute his keen and valuable observations upon fish and flies. One day I told him that it was all very well to imagine that his second edition was due to his own genius, or the consummate art of the lithographer; it was simply cold coffee neat that did it! Smoking you may indulge in to any extent while fishing if your habit lies that way, since the wind helps you materially in lessening the weight of the tobacco pouch. To smoke cigars, however, is a sinful waste of good material and of time, and cigarettes are a nuisance. Hence the proverbial love of the angler for the pipe, and the d—n—ble iteration of references to smoking in sporting literature.

Some of us, I fear, will never learn the lesson of care in the matter of clothes and boots. We make a boast of roughing it, of getting wet in the feet, of letting the rain work its will, until one morning we go grunting to our doctor to know what that twinge in the knee-joint or wandering sensation across the shoulders may mean. If you must get wet through, as will occasionally happen, do it manfully and even thoroughly while you are about it, taking due care to keep moving and to change everything at the

earliest moment. The danger need, however, seldom be incurred. For uncertain weather have the waterproofs near; but a suit of really good cloth should be enough for passing showers.

The angling authors of the last generation invariably elaborated sumptuary laws in this respect, enjoining upon you special suits of different colours to tally with particular days. I would not recommend staring white for a chalk stream, but otherwise the colour is a thing of small consequence. A distinctive suit for fishing is money well spent; and the fly-fisher especially requires something more than the commonplace cut of jacket. For years a small paragraph at the bottom of one of the *Field* columns advertised a certain fly-fishing jacket, and I smiled at the notion that such an article could be anything different from the ordinary shooting coat or Norfolk jacket. It was said to have gusset sleeves, a fastening for the wrist, plenty of good pockets for fly books, and it would not work up round the neck in casting. Eventually I became the owner and wearer of one, and can say that in fly-fishing or spinning I never previously knew what real comfort in casting was.

Wading stockings and brogues are always worth using, either for fly-fishing, even if you do not require to wade, or for winter angling amongst the coarse fish. They keep you dry, and you can kneel on the grass or potter about amongst wet osiers, nettles, and rushes with impunity. The best hat for me has been one with a moderately soft and wide brim that may be turned down like a roof, to shoot off the rain behind, or to shelter the eyes from the sun in front. The felt fly-band is a very serviceable affair, but, to avoid taking off the hat, the user of eyed hooks may have a band of felt stitched round the upper part of the left arm. Above all, let the angler wear the best woollen underclothing, and in winter plenty of it.

Finally, brethren, and in conclusion, let me say that when fishing in light marching order one has to dispense with many odds and ends that are in themselves fisherman's comforts, though not precisely essentials. The "priest" wherewith to knock your fish on the head, the machine for weighing him on the spot, the spare boxes of tackle, the second rod, or joints, may be done without. If you bring yourself to study how little you require for a day's outing, it is astonishing how much you will by and by leave behind. We are prone, of course, to make arrangements for a great catch, both in numbers and weights; take a 23-lb. creel for bringing home a brace of pounders, enough tackle to last the season through, and each article on scale as to solidity. Once in a hundred times, and not more, will the result be equal to the preparation. Still, there is a sort of pleasure in being equal to any emergency, though at the cost of personal convenience.

CHAPTER XII

THE SALMON AND THE KODAK

We had waited with exemplary patience for the dropping of the water. There had been a fairly heavy flood during the last week in February, but there would be no trouble with floating ice; that, at least, was a comfort when one remembered the cruel sufferings from exposure of the previous year. The Rowan Tree Pool is, in the early part of the spring season, a sure find for a fish if you can but catch it in the humour. The humour, however, does not last long, and you require to know that pool with the intimacy of personal experience to hit it at the right time; you have to study its countenance, and then, sooner or later, the afternoon will arrive when you say "Thank the stars; she will be in order to-morrow." This year the to-morrow when it did dawn admirably suited the purpose of two friends of mine who were in temporary possession of the Rowan Pool. Cold weather one takes as a matter of course, grumbling not if the wind be moderate and mackintoshes remain unstrapped.

The two points of congratulation were (1) that the pool was in perfect height and colour; and (2) that the light was good. The first condition was satisfactory for Grey, the angler, the second for Brown, the kodakeer. And herein lurks a necessity for explanation. Grey had one evening, at the Fly Fishers' Club, been much impressed with a violent tirade from a member about the generally incorrect way in which the ordinary black and white artist illustrates the fisherman in action, and had listened attentively as a group round the fire argued themselves into the conclusion that there was much more to be done with the photographic snapshot in angling than had ever yet been attempted. He looked about for a man of leisure who was an enthusiast with the camera, and skilful enough to get his living with it, should fate ever drive him to earning his bread and cheese. Such an amateur he at length discovered in Brown, and these were the two who, by nine o'clock in the morning, were at the head of the Rowan Pool; their plans prearranged in every detail; both men in excellent form, head, body, and spirit; and Burdock, the keeper, resigned to the innovation of photography which he sniffingly flouted as a piece of downright tomfoolery.

There was another character in the comedy of the day, a salmon fisher of some repute for skill, but disliked for his selfishness, cynicism, and overbearing assumption of mastership in the theory and practice of fishing. As he was ever laying down the highest standards of sport much was forgiven him. The men who used phantom, prawn, and worm, however much and often they were made to writhe under his sneers, felt that in maintaining the artificial fly as the only lure with which the noble salmon should be tempted, he was on a lofty plane, and, if not unassailable, had better be left there in his vain

glory. They loved him none the more, of course, and spun, prawned, and wormed as before, honestly envying just a little the purist whose fly undoubtedly often justified his claims. His beat was a mile higher up the river than the Rowan Pool, and he is here introduced because on this morning Grey and Brown gave him a lift in their wagonette, and dropped him at the larch plantation so that he might, by the short cut of a woodland path, attain the hut in the middle of his beat. Before climbing over the stile he exhibited the big fly which he had selected as the likely killer for the day, and offered Grey one if he preferred it. Grey, however, had his own fancies, and declined with thanks; there was a mutual chanting of "So long; tight lines," and the purist went off to his hut and the rod which he kept there.

Brown, with his compact paraphernalia, was put across from the lower end of the pool to the right bank. This was necessary for his share of the day's work, which was to take snapshots of his friend operating from the left shore. The fishing part of the Rowan Pool was directly under a rocky cliff opposite, and the position for the kodakeer was a clump of bushes on a small natural platform half-way down. From this elevation he could look into the deep water where the salmon was generally found, and could command the entire pool with his apparatus. Grey's side was an easily-sloping shingle with firm foothold out of the force of the stream, an assuring advantage to a man who had to wade within a foot of his armpits.

"Are you there?" by and by shouted Grey, looking across to the bushy ledge of the cliff. "Yes, and all ready," replied Brown, so well concealed that the angler had to look twice to discover him. It was a full water, and every cast that would send the fly to its place must be close upon thirty yards. Whatever may be pretended to the contrary, this is mighty fine throwing when it is done time after time; and Grey, having fruitlessly fished his pool down twice with different flies, waded ashore.

Had Brown seen sign of a fish? No, he had not. The fly had worked beautifully over the best part of the pool, and fished every inch of the run known to be the lie of the fish. Had Brown taken any good shots? Yes; he had been snapping Grey ever since he entered the water. "Then," said Grey, "I'll fish the pool below, and give you an hour's spell. If you move, do it as quietly as you can." "All right," said the kodakeer; "it is not very cold; I'll have a smoke and a read, and won't move at all unless I get cramped or frozen."

Brown enjoyed his book, suffering no sort of discomfort; he lazily smoked his pipe and thought how much better it was to be listening to the twitter of the birds, watching the clouds of rooks wheeling over the distant wood, and resting in peace, than slaving with an 18-ft. rod and straining every muscle in the effort to dispatch the unheeded fly across the big water to the core of the pool (for fishing purposes) under the cliff. Then, down out of sight went his meerschaum, for beyond the stile appeared the face of the great purist, who looked cautiously around, stepped stealthily over, laid down his rod, walked a little down stream to a point whence he could see the half-visible figure of Grey very clear in the noonday light in the water of the next pool. Then he returned and waded in to fish the Rowan.

"Here's a chance for the Kodak," muttered the witness, shrinking into cover, and scarcely breathing lest his hiding-place should be revealed.

The purist was too intent upon his design of fishing another man's pool once down, without loss of time, to look about him carefully. The coast was so obviously clear. Brown therefore took snapshots, a round dozen, of what followed: (1) A fisherman armed with a 12-ft. spinning rod, wading into the water at the precise bit of shingle previously trodden by Grey; (2) a guilty-looking man, looking up and down stream before making the first cast of a full-sized blue phantom; (3) the act of casting, well done, and dropping the bait in the exact place required; (4) the steady winding in of the line with the rod-point kept low; (5) the phantom and its triangles dangling a yard from the rod-point in mid-air, in pause for a fresh cast; (6) the bend of the rod as a hooked fish set the winch a-scream; (7) the figure of a dripping salmon curved in a fine leap out of water; (8) the retreat of the purist to dry shingle, playing the fish the while with a cool, strong hand; (9) the tailing out of the fish (with a backward view of the fisherman); (10) the slaying of the salmon with a blow from a pebble on the back of the head; (11) attention to tackle and removal of phantom, fish lying in background; (12) disappearance of the purist over the stile, dead fish suspended by the right hand, hanging for a moment on near side as fisherman clambered down the off side of stile.

The three men met later at the rendezvous for the wagonette. Grey and Brown were waiting in a state of suppressed hilarity as the other emerged from the plantation, placidly carrying his salmon by a piece of looped cord.

"Any sport?" he asked. Grey explained that he had had none—not a rise all day. Yet he had fished the Rowan Pool carefully twice down, and the other pool also.

"What did he take?" asked Brown, pointing to the bright little 10-pounder. The purist did not trouble to reply in words; he merely pointed to the fly left in the mouth of the fish.

"My fingers were numbed," he said presently in a casual sort of way; "and, as the gut broke off at the head, I just left it there."

There was a touch of suspicion, not to say alarm, in the look of amazement with which the purist received the shrieks of laughter which simultaneously burst from the other two.

"Pardon me," at length spluttered Brown, "but it is so dashed funny." Then Grey exploded again, and the purist looked from one to the other.

"Well, well, come along," Brown said at last. There was not a word spoken during the drive. The echoes were awakened once, on the brow of the last hill, by the kodakeer, who, without any apparent cause, exploded with laughter and held his sides. "Pardon me," he remarked, "but it really is—Oh, lord, hold me!" (Explosion renewed.)

Before alighting at the porch of the hotel, Brown called a halt as the other two rose to step down from the wagonette. "Let me take a last shot, please! Do you mind holding the fish up for a moment?" asked he. Snap! and the thing was done.

"Thanks awfully," said the operator. "That's my thirteenth shot. Oh, lord, but it *is* so funny." And the welkin rang with what seemed to be the mirth of a lunatic. Then Brown wiped the moisture from his eyes and recovered his breath.

"Shall we wet your salmon inside?" asked Grey, very quietly, and with a seriousness not obviously germane to a festive occasion.

"Certainly, why not?" answered its captor, much puzzled.

The three men, the door being shut by Grey, after the maid had left the room, drank to each other. "You'll take that fly out before you send the salmon away," said Grey suavely.

"Why should I?" curtly answered the culprit, by this time white-faced enough.

"Well," was the reply, "I'll say nothing about your sneaking down and fishing my pool when my back was turned, nor even about your poaching my fish with a big phantom; but we can't have you make it the text of a discourse on the virtues of fly fishing."

"The fact is," added Brown, "I have thirteen snapshots of the whole business, and if they develop as I expect they will, they will make an admirable series under the general title of 'Spinning for Salmon in the Rowan Pool.' I began with you as you waded in, and finished with you holding up the poached fish with the fly in its mouth. As Grey says, we'll forgive you the rest, but can't stand the fly. That means hypocrisy as well as lying."

The purist was wise enough to say never a word. He jerked out and retained the fly, left the salmon on the floor, walked softly out, and had vanished by next day.

CHAPTER XIII

HALFORD AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

The story of Halford's life has been well told by himself in the *Autobiography*, published in 1903, and it would be with a pained amazement that the wide circle of readers who knew him and of him received the shock of his announced death in the daily papers. They will, I am sure, be sadly interested in the brief story of the close of that life under circumstances that were unspeakably pathetic. Mr. Halford was in the habit of escaping our English winter by going to the sunshine of resorts like the Riviera, Egypt, or Algiers, and this year went to Tunis with his only son Ernest, his inseparable companion on all such voyages. They had a good holiday, and Halford was in excellent health, full of life and energy, keenly enjoying the Orientalism of the place, and very busy with his camera.

"Tunis is a remarkably busy, bustling sort of place"—he says in a letter to me dated February 13 from the Majestic Hotel—"very Eastern, with the usual accompanying stinks, and most interesting to us. I have taken a good many photos, but am a bit doubtful about them, and do not know why. But—well, we shall see. They have made Ernest an hon. member of the Lawn Tennis Club (he is now Colonel Halford), so he gets plenty of exercise, and the other members are great sportsmen. Indeed, this is the most manifest development I notice amongst the French of today."

The Halfords left Tunis for home on February 24 in bad weather, and a wretched boat, and F. M. H., always a good sailor, was the only gentleman aboard who could appear at meals. At Marseilles, reached on the 26th, Ernest and his father separated, the former to make a business call at Paris, the latter to finish the voyage to London on the P. and O. *Morea*, which sailed on the 28th, arriving at Gibraltar on March 2 (Monday). Halford had found an old friend, Dr. Nicholson, amongst the *Morea* passengers, and was greatly enjoying his voyage; that day took part in a game of quoits, and cabled from Gibraltar, "Excellent voyage. All well. Best love." After leaving Gibraltar he felt out of sorts, and the ship's doctor and Dr. Nicholson, acting together, found him somewhat feverish. Symptoms of a chill developed, and on Tuesday he was no better, but after a temporary improvement became worse. Pneumonia succeeded, and so rapidly strengthened that on Wednesday morning the patient dictated a message, and in the afternoon the doctors, by wireless telegram, informed his family at home of his condition, and asked them to meet the boat. Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Halford, Dr. C. R. Box, and Mr. Bertie Brown accordingly caught the midnight train to Plymouth, rushed on board a tender that was on the point of starting, and boarded the *Morea* at just before nine o'clock. Mr. Halford was able to recognise

his son and daughter, conversed a little at intervals, but with difficulty, and became alarmingly worse after a slight rally about one o'clock. He was passing away peacefully during the afternoon as the ship came up the Thames, and died in his son's arms as she was entering Tilbury Docks.

No man is perfect; many are perfect in parts; some are almost perfect. But the broad fact faces us that we must not say of any man that he is perfect. There is a word, however, that years ago I applied to my friend when I had learned to know and form a loving estimate of him. He was thorough—thorough in his likes and dislikes, in his work, in his play, in great things, in small things, in his common sense, in the things he knew, in the things he did, in his many merits, in the clear mind that planned no less than the deft hand that executed, in the privacy of the home, and in the brazen bustle of the world of business. That is how I long looked at F. M. Halford. He was just a specimen of a real man, the man you can respect, admire, and trust; and, should you know him well enough, you may add your love without being foolish. I grant you Halford was one of those men who require knowing, but that is another matter. It was my good fortune to be an intimate friend of over thirty years' standing. I was asked to supply the *Field* with this "appreciation"; for me, therefore, it is to justify my high opinion, and to praise him. This I do with all my heart, keeping myself in hand nevertheless the while, and not permitting the dolour of Willesden Cemetery to act in favour of him there laid to his rest.

But a man may be thorough, and at the same time we should not object if he kept his thoroughness all to himself. Halford was not of that kind. He was a delightful companion—generous, big-hearted, amusing, a sayer of good things in a human way, and finely opinionated, which, of course, was not a serious matter when he expected and liked you to be opinionated also. He was a dangerous man to tackle in argument if your knowledge of the subject was rickety. He was emphatically what is termed a well-informed man, for that thoroughness of his stamped his knowledge, and ruled his memory. You might not always agree with him, but could seldom floor him, the ground he stood upon being rock-solid. As both a giver and taker of chaff he was an adept. He had the courage of his opinions, and none wiser than he when it was best to keep opinions an unknown quantity. In travelling or by the waterside he was wonderfully helpful if help was good for you—perhaps, if anything, too helpful, though I cannot conceive a more pardonable fault than that. Aye, Halford was verily a fine fellow.

An important note to register in thinking of Halford is that he was one upon whom fortune smiled. That makes a vast difference probably in the shape a man will assume as he gets over the dividing range and goes down the other side towards the cold river. In this respect, H. had every reason to be grateful for blessings bestowed, and freely said so. He had, of course, his ups and downs, and his part in life's battle; but while still in the prime of life he had, so far as one could see, achieved all that a reasonable man could desire. He could go from a happy home in the West End to his club; as, per wish or mood, could wander on Swiss mountains or by Italian lakes; and, above everything, could have and hold his choice bit of fishing. In his younger days he was a great opera-goer, and never lost his fondness for music; he was an officer in the City Artillery Volunteers, and was thorough in that, and there is a silver cup that notifies his prowess at the rifle butts.

Need it be said that Halford's ante-chamber to paradise was his fisheries? He was not himself a hard fisher, being content with two or three hours in the forenoon (ten to one, as a rule) and the evening rise. It might be wondered how the time could be passed in that case. There need not be wonderment. He was not under the necessity, like so many of us, of crowding a maximum of fishing into a minimum of time. His fishing visits signified taking quarters and fishing the season through, a succession of friends sharing the pleasure. The host would be looking patiently after his water, collecting insects, carrying out experiments, making notes, concerning himself with banks and weeds—filling the days to the full with useful occupation, which, of course, gave a zest to his actual fishing when he took it. Within a fortnight of his death he was to take up his quarters at Dunbridge for the season; all arrangements were made, and Coxon, the faithful keeper, was ready to point out what had been done during the winter. And Coxon was one of the mourners at the Saturday's funeral in the Jewish Cemetery at Willesden.

It will be of interest and useful here to announce that Mr. Ernest Halford, after long consideration of what his father's wish would be, decided to maintain the fishery in all respects as it had been maintained since the beginning of the tenancy. Mr. Halford was immensely popular in the Mottisfont district, and I may mention that they had given a great ovation to his son and grandson on occasions when they attended or presided at the annual dinners to the tenants and workpeople on the fishery. That grandson, Halford always believed, would by and by develop the family fishing traditions. The young gentleman was meanwhile at Clifton College, and had already killed his brace of rainbow trout, which his father had preserved for the collection in the gallery at Pembridge Place; and these, at my last visit to him at home, F. M. H. showed me, beaming with pride. His pride also took the form of setting the head of the firm of Hardy Brothers to the making of a special rod to fit the young Cliftonian's hand.

To the advantage of ample means should be added in happy sequence that Halford had, on the whole, robust health to enjoy his fishing. His regular habits of living, and common sense in food and matters of hygiene kept him in excellent condition. Early rising and early bed-going were his rule at home and abroad. Truly, he was in these matters captain of both soul and body. Then his good fortune shone in his happy home life. After the death of Mrs. Halford a few years ago, it was feared the effect upon her husband would be abiding cause for anxiety. As time went on, however, a new era dawned; the son had married a lady who was, from the first, "puppetty's" best chum; bonnie grandchildren arrived to make much of "puppetty," a charming house was taken for the united home, and there was sunshine again. It was sweet to see the contented grandfather in the midst of it and witness the devotion of the young people to him.

Amongst anglers in the English-speaking world Halford has been long known as the apostle—nay, the Gamaliel of what is called "The Dry Fly School." It is said that he reduced dry-fly fishing to a science. By some he is ranked as the arch-type of the dry-fly purist, by which word, I suppose, is meant the pushing of a theory to an extreme. Certainly of late years devotion to the fly-rod admitted of no allurements in other directions, and henceforth Halford will be generally known, as he has been known since he took rank as master, as a first authority on the one branch of our sport. Yet he reached that position through the love and practice of every kind of fishing—in short, through his enthusiasm as an "all-round angler," as it is the custom to formularise the general practitioner of our sport. Even as a boy-angler, however, he showed his inherent tendency to inquire, and understand, and improve; he worked out the mysteries of the Nottingham style on the Thames, and the betterment of sea fishing tackle with the same ingenuity, perseverance, and success as in after years attended his studies of chalk stream insects, their artificial imitations, and the perfecting of the tackle demanded by the highest class of fly-fishing. Let it not, however, be forgotten that he was never out of sympathy with any class of angler or angling. If he appeared indifferent to forms of angling loved by others, it was simply that he placed his own first. In angling, it was trout and grayling fishing that mattered most. He adopted it as his choice, and clung to it.

People were just getting accustomed to the word "dry-fly" when Halford began his career as a scientific exponent of the art to which he devoted so many years of work and study. This was in the late sixties, and he took trout fever on the pellucid Wandle, at that time a beautiful stream with good store of singularly handsome trout, and a regular company of gentlemen fly-fishers. The dry-fly men were, however, few, for the eyed-hook was not in fashion, and the custom, not only on the Wandle, but on other chalk streams, was to use the finest gut attachments to flies that were dressed for floating.

It was so like Halford to listen with all his ears to the advice of the few who urged the advantage of the dry fly. Anything in the shape of an improvement upon something that existed was like red rag to a bull to him, and he went for the new idea with all his heart. He also went for the line which was the standard of perfection to our forefathers, and I must confess that the love of the familiar silk and hair line, with which we of the old guard learned how to cast a fly, abides with me to this day, and with it I, for one, can associate the hair cast, and a certain ancient pony up in Yorkshire who was famous for his never-failing tail supply of the best white strands, which were considered indispensable by the fishers of all Wharfedale. Halford, however, objected to the line, which certainly was given to waterlogging and sagging at inconvenient times, and eagerly he took up the dressing of modern lines. He had a hand in all the developments of the process, and only declared himself satisfied when the Hawksley line was perfected, leaving others to this day who are aiming at still more betterment.

How Halford accumulated his experience, building up a fabric so to speak, brick by brick, is told in the *Autobiography* and the other books written by him; and I may, in passing, suggest that in reading Halford in these volumes you must always read very carefully between the lines. You never know when you will find a pearl. The apparently prosaic statement often contains a valuable lesson, and what seems to be a sentence merely recording the capture of a trout of given inches and ounces will be found to have been written with the object of sustaining an argument or enforcing a truth.

The story in the *Autobiography* of the fishing on the Wandle in those early years is an instance in point. It is quite a short narrative destitute of embroidery, and seemingly a casual introduction to what shall come after, but it is in reality a revelation of the practical methods that governed him from first to last, and which I venture to sum up in one word "thorough." There is a paragraph telling how he overcame a difficulty in circumventing a certain trout that lay about the mouth of a culvert, and habitually flouted the Wandle rods. Halford made it a problem and solved it at the opening of his second Wandle season. He studied the position, obtained the necessary permission to put white paint on a patch of branches, have them cut down during the winter, and next season went down with his plan of campaign in his head. Of course, it succeeded. On the face of it you here have just an ordinary incident with nothing much in it. But it emphasises the value of the horizontal cast and something of its secret, while the kernel of the nut is the fact that it illustrates the efficiency of using the wrist and not the length of the arm in casting.

You will again and again find Halford's wisdom as if carelessly thrown down upon a bald place. Some of the critics in the daily press were fond of saying of his books, "Yes, yes: this is all very good no doubt, but it does look as if page after page is simply a monotonous recital of catching trout that are very much alike by processes that have a strong family likeness." A careless surveyor of the page perhaps would think in this way, and never for the life of him perceive the point sought to be made by the writer of the book.

Halford was an angler from his youth upwards, and himself tells us that by his family he was considered "fishing mad," which, as so many of my readers may remember, is the orthodox manner in which the young enthusiast is classified by the unbelievers of his family. He fished often and in various places as a youth, but it was not till he became a member of the Houghton Club water on the Test that he plunged into his life-work for anglers. The date may be given as 1877, and the fire was kindled by being on the river one April day, and witnessing one of those marvellous rises of grannom that might once be relied upon every season on the Test. Many of us who still linger have seen this phenomenon, only equalled by the hatch of Mayfly in the Kennet Valley twenty years ago. Just as clouds of Mayfly would greet you on the railway platforms between Reading and Hungerford, flying into the open windows, clinging to the lamp-posts and seats, so at Houghton and Stockbridge the shucks of the grannom would drift into eddies and collect almost as solid as a weed-bed. Such things are not to be seen now, and have not been seen for years.

From the swaddling clothes of the risen grannom, cast thus upon the surface of the water by the insect made perfect, Halford turned to the artificial imitations then in use. They were of importance in those days, for the grannom was an institution much regarded, and the grannom season was held in high esteem. Anglers packed their kit and hurried away when the grannom was signalled up. There were as many patterns of the artificial grannom as there are to-day of the March brown, and it was because Halford found them of varying forms and colourings, and not a really good imitation of the natural fly amongst them all, that he resolved to learn how to dress a fly for himself. His stores of patience were heavily taxed in the preliminary stages, and the victory came only after a long battle with difficulties. The standard volumes he produced on the subject of dressing, and the kindred subject of the entomological side of it, are conclusive evidence of what came of it all. "Halford as a fly-dresser," however, is a topic too big to handle in a chapter which merely aims at rambling recollections of him by the waterside, and indeed it can only be dealt with by a master in the art of fly-dressing.

In his early days at Houghton, Halford went to John Hammond's shop in Winchester just before the opening of the 1879 fishing season to buy flies, and there met, and was introduced by the rubicund John to, a tall, not to say gaunt, gentleman, who was the most famous of the Hampshire trout fishers, none other than Marryat himself. This was the beginning of a close, life-long friendship between the two men. Halford was at all times most grateful to any helper, and never failed freely to acknowledge assistance received. Whether he took advice proffered or not was another matter; he sometimes did it all the same, but he was always grateful. Words would fail to describe his appreciation of such co-workers as Marryat at the beginning, and Williamson at the end of the labours which are embodied in the series of books which preceded the *Autobiography*. They were co-workers in everything; hard workers, too. I have heard men lightly joke about these worthies going about the meadows with a bug-net and lifting individual ephemerals from the surface of the stream. Let those laugh that win. It meant collecting hundreds of tiny insects, selecting the fittest, preparing, preserving, and mounting them. It meant the endless autopsy of fish and the patient searching of their entrails. To stand by while Halford and Marryat with their scissors, forceps, and whatnot laid out the contents of a trout's stomach, and bent low in separating and identifying the items, putting what were worthy of it under a microscope, and proceeding all the while as if the round world offered no other pursuit half so worthy of concentrated attention, was most fascinating. Many a time was I a spectator—I fear sometimes an irreverent one—of this ritual, but always privileged and welcome; always, of course, sympathetic, and always in a way envious of the qualities of mind and extraordinary knowledge which made the whole work a labour of love to them.

It so fell out that two days after the meeting in John Hammond's shop the parties met at Houghton, and the first of many foregatherings took place that day in the well-remembered Sheep-bridge hut—Marryat, Francis, Carlisle ("South-West"), and Halford. Halford had rooms in the neighbourhood, and, in his own words, there this historical quartette would "hold triangular fishing colloquies," "South-West" having his home up the river at Stockport. Francis was the first of the trio to fall out, his last casts being on his beloved Sheep-bridge shallow. Halford's quarters were now at the mill at Houghton, and it was my privilege to take Francis Francis's vacant place there, as also in another place.

What ambrosial nights we had in the homely millhouse after untiring days with our rods! It was there that I insisted upon my host becoming a contributor to the *Field*, and he required considerable persuasion. Indeed, the suggestion roused him into one of his dogmatic disputations, and he held on tenaciously, till, taking up my bedroom candle, I said, "Well, I'm off to bed. You've got my opinion and my advice, and, if you don't write that article you are a so-and-so. Good night, old chap, sleep on it." Next morning I was taking my ante-breakfast pipe on a cartwheel in the shed outside, and listening to the diapason of the mill, when Halford came out. "All right, sonny," he said, "I'll try it, but candidly I ha'e ma doots." This was how the first "Detached Badger" article came to appear in the *Field*. Walsh, the famous "Stonehenge," was editor of the paper then, and he stuck for a while at the pseudonym which Halford chose. But he was the best fellow in the world, and very soon good-humouredly gave in and left it to me. Walsh, nevertheless, would always make merry over that signature, and used with a twinkle of his eye to ask me whether my friend the Badger was quite well.

And what a delightful fishing companion the Badger was! Perhaps for the first two years at Houghton the pleasure was just a little tempered with one insignificant drawback. I had not then been long a dry-fly practitioner, and was terribly ashamed for H. to watch me fishing. 'Tis thirty years back, yet I acutely remember my nervousness on that point. Having got his brace or so of fish, and finished his studies of water, rise of fly, weeds and weather, and neatly (and oh! so orderly and accurately!) made his entries in his little notebook, he loved to play gillie to his friend for hours together, criticise his style of fishing, and give advice; naturally, after a time, if you are nervous, you are certain of one thing only: that you are the king of asses, and had better imitate the immortal colonel who hurled his book of salmon flies into the pool shouting "Here, take the bally lot." The droll thing was that Halford never dreamed that his chum was put out by his good intentions, or that the victim's feeble smiles were but a mask for nerve-flutters.

One hot day I was over-tired and nakedly accomplished everything that was wrong; the backward cast caught buttercups and daisies, the forward throw fouled the sedges, the underhand cut landed line and cast in a heap on the water, the fish was put down, the whole shallow scared. Halford stood behind amiably commenting upon the bungling operations, and then I uprose from a painful knee and delivered myself of remarks. Well; yes, I let myself go, and let *him* "have it." The amazement of Halford; his contrition; the colour that spread over his countenance (you will remember how prettily he could blush with that complexion of his, delicate as a woman in his last days); these sufficiently told me that he had not the ghost of an idea of the perturbation that had been seething in me. It took him the rest of

the week to cease regretting that he had been so unobservant, and never again during the remaining eight-and-twenty years that we fished together at different times and in divers places did he once depart from his resolve "never to do so no more." During our long and happy acquaintance that was the only cloud flitting over the sunshine of our friendship, and it was one of my making.

After Houghton there was a farmhouse at Headbourne Worthy, and a season's fishing in the Itchen, and later Halford fished a good deal below Winchester, where Cooke, Daniels, and Williamson had private waters. But after Houghton the most notable preserve to be mentioned was the Ramsbury water on the Kennet. The inspiration of "Making a Fishery" came from that, for the four friends who leased the water—Basil Field, Orchardson, R.A., N. Lloyd, and Halford—earnestly addressed themselves to the reformation of a fishery that had become depreciated. They spent much money, and carried out operations with a lavish hand for four seasons. The story has been fully narrated by Halford, and the conclusion (p. 217, *Autobiography*) is in these words:—"We had perhaps been extravagant in our expenditure, and also over-sanguine as to the probable result. The river when we took possession swarmed with pike and dace, and had a few trout in the lower part, and in the upper was fairly stocked. When we gave it up the pike had been practically exterminated, and every yard of the river was fully stocked with trout of strains far superior to the indigenous slimy, yellow *Salmo fario* of the Kennet."

The plain fact was that at the end of four years four of the best of our dry-fly fishers gave up a water of which they had become very fond because the trout did not rise at the little floating fly that appeared, and the sport had decreased to a marked degree. A fishery that gave poor and diminishing results, even with the Mayfly, sedge, and Welshman's button, was not suitable for dry-fly experts, and the Ramsbury experiment was abandoned. The moral has yet to be drawn, and I have not yet seen anyone grapple at close quarters with the question of cause and effect with the Ramsbury experiment as a test. "Making a Fishery" sets down in detail what was done; the *Autobiography* tells what came of it. Being one of those who has not faltered in the belief that the clearing out of coarse fish, the introduction of new strains of trout, and the artificial feeding of fish may be overdone, I used to discuss the matter with Halford, but he did not agree with me.

Having known the Ramsbury water before the reformation was undertaken, I can testify that I seldom at any time saw a good rise of duns upon it, and that a basket of trout more or less was, notwithstanding, a reasonable certainty there under ordinarily favourable circumstances, spite of pike and dace. I have with the wet fly, on days when no floating fly was coming down, caught my two or three brace of trout with some such pattern as Red Spinner, Governor, Alder, or Coachman for the evening; indeed, if I remember correctly, it was on a six-brace day with the "Red Spinner" on this water that, enamoured of that artificial, I annexed its name for a series of articles contributed in 1874 to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and have held by it ever since. Foli, the opera-singer, once caught three half-pounders at a cast, and the keeper netted them all, on this fishery.

One evening we met at Ramsbury, after an afternoon without sign of fly or rising trout. Halford and Basil Field were there, and we stood and bewailed the absence of duns and lack of sport. We loitered there with our rods spiked, and smoked sadly. I then, and not for the first time, repeated the tale of my former experiences, and at last begged Halford not to be shocked, not to think me an unforgivable brute, but would he give me free permission to try the wet fly in the old way, and without prejudice. He at first laughingly protested, but saying he would ne'er consent, consented. I was to do my best or worst. The difficulty was to find a fly that could be fished wet, and in the end a Red Spinner on a No. 1 hook was forthcoming. I thereupon followed the old plan, except that there was one instead of two flies, and caught a brace of three-quarter pounders before we had moved fifty yards down the meadow. They were the only trout taken that day.

CHAPTER XIV

CASUAL VISITS TO NORWAY

It must be confessed that there is something really casual in the use of such a word to head these sketches of my angling visits to Norway, and the excuse is that it is appropriate as a keynote. The punishment in a word fits the crime. Those visits, between 1889 and 1905 were only occasional, a makeshift. The proper way to fish Norway is to spend the fishing season there, living amongst the people and the rivers. The casual visitor would always envy him who lived in the Norwegian cottage fragrant with its deal boards into which he loved to stick his flies when they had to be dried, or retouched with varnish or whipping, and where somewhere outside he could keep his rods in security and order when they were put together say in June, and kept ready till they were packed up for the voyage home when the season was over.

The fascination of Norway grew to be very strong amongst anglers and tourists by the sixties of the last century, and continued to grow until all the conditions were violently upset by the catastrophe of the reign of the devil engineered by Germany. The fascination will not be forgotten with the return of peace. It will lay hold of us again, and for the same reasons as before. The ordinary traveller will as before find in the scenery and ways of the people the old fascination of contrast.

It might, however, be remarked that the fascination of Norway to the angler somewhat changed as time proceeded into the nineteenth century. Early in the century it was known to the few as the paradise of the salmon fisherman. It remained without any great change for something like a generation, and, like Scotland and Ireland in a lesser degree, was not overrun. In those days only the rich could afford the time and money which travel and sport without railways demanded. The railways came, and with them a wonderful transformation of the world's habit and custom. The growth of the Press in journalism and literature ranged abreast of improved facilities for going afar, and the choice preserves of the angler were, all in the order of things, invaded.

Part of the fascination of Norway to the angler fifty years ago was the cheapness of it. The man who talked to his friends of "my river in Norway" paid but a few pounds a year for it; as the native farmer had not yet been exploited, he retained the simple notions of his class, and was mostly amused that the Englishman should take such trouble about the salmon, which were of such small account to him. It is common knowledge that this desirable state of things is past history, and there is no need to waste words, or pipe laments, or (to descend to homely metaphor) cry over spilt milk.

The change came home to me on deck one night in the North Sea with striking insistence. We were returning from fishing in Norway, and no one, after a particularly bad season of "no water," seemed inclined to be enthusiastic about the fascination of Norway; one sorrowful gentleman, however, told me in hushed tones that his seven weeks on a hired river had cost him 300 pounds, and for that and all his skill and toil he had been rewarded with two salmon, three grilse, and one sea trout. That, of course, was the extreme of ill-fortune, and might occur to anyone anywhere. The truth is there are still fine chances for salmon in Norway, and excellent chances for trout if you have the gift of searching for rivers and lakes in remote districts. The fascinations of the characteristic scenery, the comparatively unspoiled people, and the rich legendary past remain.

It is quite possible that the distance between Great Britain and Norway is somewhat in the direction of fascination. If you go there for a fishing holiday you are entitled to talk about seafaring matters. It is not a mere crossing; it is a voyage, and I have known men get a F.R.G.S. on the strength of it. On my first visit it did strike me on my return that five days to reach your river and five to return, was paying a fair price, apart from the fares (which were indeed reasonable enough), for ten days' clear fishing, and I would suggest to the reader to make his stay on the fishing ground as long as he possibly can, so that the journey may seem worth while. Justice cannot be done to Norway, its fish, or yourself under a month. There is not much to choose between the two routes, the one from Hull, the other from Newcastle, but care must be taken to time the arrival at the chief ports to suit the smaller steamers that traverse the fiords. The North Sea passage has its caprices of weather, but it is not very protracted. If you leave port on Saturday night, by breakfast time on Monday you are threading between the rocks that introduce you to Stavanger. That same night you are (wind and weather permitting) at Bergen, and thence next day you are going up the beautiful fiords to the river of your choice amidst surroundings that are nowadays the property of the picture postcard.

In the short Norwegian summer great variations in weather must be expected, and in the valleys I have experienced downpours of rain and spells of heat equal to what I knew in the tropics. But as a rule the angler has little to complain of. The warmer the air and the brighter the sun the better in reason for the glacier-fed rivers, but let no one wish for such floods as are caused by heavy rain in association with warm winds. Out of my four visits one only was seriously marred by wet weather, and that was nothing like so provoking as another year when there was no rain, and yet no generous contributions to the rivers from glacier or mountain. Even in July the rain is occasionally emphasised by bitterly cold wind, and should your place that day be in a boat there is little pleasure. An ordinary mackintosh is useless, and hours of casting in solid oilskin and sou'-wester become irksome what time the clouds press heavily down upon you and the rugged mountains frown right and left.

The one consolation rendered imperative under such circumstances by poetic justice is a continual carolling from the suddenly agitated winch. Fishermen forget this sentiment when they denounce the clamour of the check and lay all their money on the silent reel. After an hour of swish, swish, without touch from a fish, the scream of a winch is like hymns in the night. However, let that pass. The point is you must be prepared for heat and cold, wet and dry. I remember one morning when, going out of our snug farmhouse in the valley to reconnoitre, I found three or four poor cottagers cutting down their wretched oats and snipping off their 3-in. growth of hay in a cruel north wind, with the mountain tops white with new snow. A week previously we had been sweltering in moist heat, and it was the only time I ever saw a mosquito in Norway.

The right-minded salmon fisher will always give first place to casting from the bank, with or without waders. On some rivers such casting is from rocks or boulders, and the work here is of the hardest, since it means severe scrambling and slipping to pass from pool to pool. It is, besides, a hazardous foothold that you get now and then. The remembrance of half an hour in such a position has given me the shivers many a time since. There tumbled over stupendous rocks upheaving masses of pure white foam, true type of the great foss of the Norwegian river in all its thunder and impetuous onrush. They poured into a rock-hollowed basin of churning foam and smoking spray. It was a turbulent oval pool, roaring and racing on either side, and narrowing somewhat at the tail, where it leaped a barrier of boulders and became a succession of rapids. The middle of this pool was, however, comparatively tranquil, very deep, and more like an eddy than a stream. This was the lie of the salmon, and there was said to be always one there. To fish this maelstrom you waded across a platform of shallow paved with slippery boulders bushel basket size, and stood in rough water about a foot deep on a narrow ledge of rock protruding a yard or so into the pool. It was deep enough beneath to drown an elephant; the din of that roaring foss and the swirl of the waters bordered on vertigo and deafness. But

there it was to take or leave.

Taken with good heart, after a thorough testing of tackle (the motto being "Hold on for dear life"), the big Butcher failed to attract, and I floundered ashore and sat on a rock before trying again with a Wilkinson. That trial succeeded, for the line was rushed out and across some twenty yards. The butt of the rod was then sternly presented, and thereafter no line of more length than five yards could be allowed. Every muscle strained, I literally leaned back solidly against the bent rod for a full quarter of an hour, the fish below meantime moving in circles or sulking. The gaffing was most cleverly done by the good man who had never left my side, and I staggered out, backed on to a mossy patch, and sank to ground exhausted and panting. That capture stands out as my most thrilling episode in Norway.

The more frequent occurrence is a foreshore of shingle, much or little according to the volume of water, and here wading trousers are indispensable, and I dare venture to say they are to the majority of anglers wholly delightful. In waders somehow you feel very good. The opportunities for wading on many of the large rivers are, however, limited, the boat being a necessity for both salmon and sea trout. It is the only way of casting over the fish. The boats are often too skittish for comfort, though they are never so slight as the Canadian canoe. You step ashore to finish conclusions with your fish, and when your gaffsman is a village worthy who leaves his ordinary occupations to gillie the stranger, accidents are not uncommon. Does one ever forget the swiping at the cast instead of at the salmon by the honest fellow who so much tries to please you, or the losses caused by sheer inexperience or natural stupidity?

The finest sea trout of my life ought to have been lost to me by this sort of blundering. I had, as I thought, drilled the worthy cobbler at least into the duty of keeping cool and combining vigour with deliberation. I was casting from a grassy bank overhung with alders, and the fish was well hooked on a Bulldog salmon fly. He ran hard and far down-stream, but was checked in time and reeled slowly up. After a quarter of an hour's play he was under the rod point, Johan all the while dancing with the excitement of the keen sportsman. I kept him off till the fish was spent and feebly gyrating at my feet. Then I gave the sign, and he swooped at him with a ferocious stroke, falling backward in the rebound. Just one word I uttered (spell it with three, not four, letters), and implored him to be calm. Then he hit the fish on the head with the back of the gaff. In the silence of despair I resigned myself as he smote again; he actually now gaffed the fish, but seemed too paralysed to lift him up the low bank. However, I dropped the rod and snatched the gaff out of his hands, to discover that the strangest thing in my experience had happened. The fish was gaffed clean through the upper lip. The point of the gaff lay side by side with my fly, the only difference being that the former was clean through and the latter nicely embedded in the mouth. It was a sea trout a fraction over 13 lb.

An unkind fate declines to give me the month of August in its entirety for a holiday; and the best I can do is to catch the steamer on Saturday night, August 19. Salmon, so late as this, are not always to be reckoned upon, and the best part of the sea trout run might be over before I reach my destination. Certain data with the talisman "Brevkort Gra Norge" had come to hand during that tropical fortnight under which London experienced a wondrous spell of melting moments. They were cheery messages of good sport and rosy prospects upon the salmon and sea trout rivers of Norway, all sound material for hopeful musing in the pleasant run from Hull to the Norwegian coast.

The visit on which I invite the reader to share my introduction to the country was very memorable. Five days to reach your fishing ground, as I said before, represent a fair price, in labour and time, for, at the outside, ten clear fishing days. We leave Hull at ten o'clock on Saturday night. After a sweltering day the sky is wonderfully brilliant with stars, the air undisturbed by even the faintest zephyr. The minutest of the myriad lights that glow where there are wharves and shipping are abnormally clear: and the dingy docks, in that atmosphere, under the lamps of the streets and houses, give somewhat Venetian effects. Outside is a summer sea, and the whole passage, in a ship which, if not large, is wholesome and comfortable, and officered by people who are never weary of ministering to your wishes, is pleasant.

On Monday morning at breakfast time you are passing through the three hundred and odd rocks, each having its own name, bestudding the entrance to Stavanger. Two hours' discharge of cargo gives the opportunity of running ashore, laying in a stock of Norwegian coins, and seeing the cathedral and the few other sights of the place. In the afternoon, when the Domino is fairly on her northern course, and when the fiord landscapes should be a delight, we are in a gale, with incessant rain. At eleven o'clock on Monday night we quietly come alongside at the Bergen wharfage, but the rain keeps on. At eight on Tuesday morning we are on board one of the smaller type of fiord steamers, with three rod boxes amongst the luggage, some battens piled on deck, and a moderate complement of passengers.

Here, then, is our introduction to famous Norway, which seems not to be in too kindly a mood. After the heat of London the gale blows very cold, and the rain seems too effectually iced. The weather is, it seems, phenomenally bad even for the time of year, and all this day, and all the next alas! the voyage, in and out of the fiords, with sundry stoppages in bays where the patient farmer makes patches of green on a stubborn soil, and the hardy, sober-sided fishermen toil for scant living, is done at disadvantage for those who would fain have the masses of rocky borderings clear against the sky. The mountains are shrouded in mist and capped with clouds, and during Tuesday night the gale howls, and the storms of rain volley against the windows of the cosy little smoke house on deck. Wednesday is an improvement in that the gale has blown itself out. But the rain it rains on, though now in a soft drizzle instead of driving sheets. The sides of precipitous mountain crags are silvered with cascades, and as we penetrate further into the fiord the scenery develops grandly, and the old snow patches on the dark and lofty summits and picturesque saddles look startlingly white.

Voyaging up the coast and on the Norwegian fiords is delightful indeed in fair weather. As a rule there is neither pitching nor rolling, but it would be rash, nevertheless, to suppose that it is always like boating on a river. Our little steamer for the best part of one day and night, as a matter of fact, pitches and rolls enough to save some of the passengers the expenses of the table. As the ticket only means passage money, and the traveller is charged, as in an hotel, for what he eats and drinks, he, at any rate, is not tormented by the thought that he has paid for that which he has not received. Still, it is not often that the fiords are in a ferment of waves under a heavy gale, and the worst that happens is a temporary deviation from the general smoothness when the course lies where there is open sea on one side. The voyage northwards from Stavanger, where the Hull boats first touch, is mostly between islands, and in continuous shelter. Sometimes the narrows are not wider than the Thames at Oxford; then you steam out into what seems to be a land-locked expanse of water, with precipitous mountain rocks ahead. By and by you swerve to right or left, and a totally different picture is presented. And so it is, hour after hour, and day after day. For many a league north of Bergen the mountains and island rocks are bare of vegetation—gloomy masses of grey and brown that frown upon the waters in cloud, and cannot be glad even in sunshine. Some of them are like gigantic wildernesses of upheaved pudding stone. Then, as the voyage progresses, the hillsides put on greenery, sombre when it is pine, cheerful when the hangings are supplied by the silver birch, and bright ever when the emerald patches bear testimony to the industry of the farmer, winning his scanty harvests against heavy odds. The calling places are numerous, but often consist of some half a dozen houses of the usual weatherboard, red and white pattern.

The hour is nevertheless welcome when you espy the sun-browned face of a brother angler, surmounted by a cap in which the flies cast upon the pools during the day are regaining a dry plumage, turned towards the vessel bearing you to the homely wharfage of the fiord station which for the time being is your destination. The rod box is no unfamiliar item of luggage in this country, and it is borne ashore by men who understand what it is, and who like to handle it. Norwegians have a deep respect for the English gentleman who fishes their salmon rivers, and when he has arrived at the same place many years in succession he is most heartily welcomed by natives of both sexes, who while he remains will devote themselves to his interests, in their own way—which has to be understood, no doubt, but which is on the whole of a character that makes the respect mutual. After five days' travel by land, sea, and fiord, the Norwegian hotel seems a veritable home, and you are quite ready to be predisposed in favour of bed and board. It is not true that first impressions are lasting, but they certainly go a long way; and that first *tête-à-tête* dinner with your host must needs be a merry one. He probably is not so full of fishing as you are, however keen he may be, for his rods have been for weeks on the pegs under the little roof built for them on the side of the house. Any wayfarer might take them, but they are safe enough, with reels and lines attached, in this country, where the honesty of the people is proverbial.

Conversation now, and at breakfast in the morning, reveals a temporary check in sport. About a week since there was a big storm, during which the thunder rolled amongst the mountains, and the lightning flashed upon the face of the fiords. Then followed three days of warm winds, and these did what heavy rains do at home. The river coming down in rolling flood through the melting of the glacier at the head of the valley, the migratory fish had seized the opportunity, to them no doubt a welcome chance, and pushed up to the higher reaches and even into the lake. But this particular river can wait, as an excursion is arranged for my first day to another river in a branch fiord, some eight miles distant. A little local steamer picks us up at nine in the morning, and my host, to whom I shall henceforth refer as G. P. F. (short for Guide, Philosopher, and Friend), does not appear in his war paint. He pretends that he wants an idle day, but he leaves his rod at home simply that I may take the cream of what sport is going; hence, by and by, when the owner of the river presses him to take his rod, he laughingly declines, urging that he never likes to break other men's tackle.

The wonderfully pure atmosphere deceives you so much in Norway as to distances, that it is best to give up guessing. The fine summit of dark mountain, mottled with snow, lying in the rear of the nearer range, at the head of the charming little fiord up which we steer this morning in water smooth as a mirror, and glaring in a bright sun, seems to me for instance, entitled to, say, a rank of 2,000 ft.: but I learn on landing that it is over 6,000 ft., and a notable sentinel on the outskirts of a most notable glacier and snowfield. The shores of the fiord are cultivated to an unusual distance up the mountain side, and after the rain and mist of previous days, this grand landscape is my real introduction to the characteristic scenery of the better kind of Norwegian fiord. In truth it is all most beautiful.

The English gentleman who owns the river lives in a house near its banks, and the ladies of his family are spending the season with him, delighted with the experience, and the daughters taking their share in the rod-work performed. The house is a type of the Norwegian fishing quarters where life cannot be described as discomfort, much less "roughing it." It is a pretty little villa, brightened by the refining influences of cultured womanhood, and a summer inside its wooden walls cannot surely be a hardship to anyone. One of the young ladies to whom I am introduced is made to blush by the paternal statement that three days previously she has slain a 28-lb. salmon, after two hours' battle, with a 15-ft. grilse rod.

But a man in his waders, eager for action after months of piscatorial abstinence, pants for the river and its chances. At present there are none of the latter. The sun is bright upon the pools, and we take a stroll by the stream that I may comprehend its points as an example of a Norwegian river of the smaller size. It differs from other types, hereafter to be described, but, like all of them, its headwaters are a lake, and it is fed by a glacier. The salmon, however, are prevented from reaching the lake by a foss, or waterfall, about a mile and a half from the mouth: the fishing is therefore limited to a few pools. It is, however, a real "sporting" river by reason of the turbulence of many of the runs for which the fish

generally make a direct dash, and have to be followed and contended with in roaring rapids, what time the angler makes the best running he may amid stones, brooks, and with many a bush between him and the river.

It is the particular desire of the gentlemen who are looking on that I should hook a salmon that will at once corroborate this theory by a vigorous object lesson; equally sincere am I in my supplication that I am not thus forced to make play for the Philistines. The chances are as hopeless as they can be. But a slight cloud overcasts the sun by and by, and I verily find myself well fastened in a salmon, with that terrible threat of rushing foam at the tail of the pool; I make up my mind to do the best, and mentally mark the point, near a footbridge across a runnel, where I must probably come to grief. The salmon, however, is no more inclined to give amusement to the spectators than I am. He cruises about in a sullen humour, and acts as if he is rather anxious than otherwise to come to the gaff. There is no difficulty, in short, in applying the familiar time principle of a pound a minute, and without a serious attempt to try escape per rapids, he comes to land, a fish of 16 lb., that has been some time in the fresh water.

As I have not yet seen the fiord end of the river, we cross down from the other side, and our host of the day kindly points me to scenes of exciting adventure, in which the difficulties of killing a hooked fish virtually furnish sport which amounts to catching twice over. He presses me to try a somewhat shallow and level run where sea trout love to lie, and offers me his rod (mine being left behind) for the purpose. About the twelfth cast the reel sings a sweet anthem, and I have a delightful quarter of an hour with an unconquerable fish that leaps again and again in the air, but that has to give in at last, and lie beside the salmon eventually, as handsome a fresh-run sea trout of 9 lb. as mortal eye ever feasted upon.

The Norwegian angler, as I soon discover, has to regard the sun not precisely as would a worshipper. It has so fatal an effect upon the pools that he gets into the habit of laying aside his rod, and waiting, book in hand, pipe in mouth, excursionising in the land of Nod, or practising any other pursuit that may occur to him for filling up the time. In the southern streams that are not affected by the melting of glaciers, and that have a habit of quickly running out to a no-sport level when the winter snows have disappeared (confining the fishing often to about one calendar month), the cloudless days, glorious though they are to the tourist, are a dire affliction to him. Such a river as this which gives me friendly welcome to the Norway fish is generally in fair volume, and I see it tinted with a recent rise of some feet. In a grey light, and from the water level, it seems to have a milky discolour that bodes ill; but get upon one of the knolls when the sun shines, and you have an exquisite blue, or rather variety of blues, according to the depth of the water, or reflection from the changing lights. There is a sweet silence in all this out-of-the-world valley, and you can always lift your eyes to the eternal hills that look so near, yet are so far, and smile at the thought of how very small you are. The head gillie here is a Norsker, who makes nothing of dashing into a whirlpool to gaff a salmon, and he once followed a fish to whom the rod had been cast under a bridge where the torrent madly swirled, came out safe on the other side, and triumphantly killed in the open. My friend had many a story to tell of his smartness and knowledge, born of a true love of sport. He once hooked a salmon at dusk, the man standing by with the gaff. With one impetuous rush the fish raced down the pool, through a long rapid and round a promontory, taking out line until little was left. The angler held on grimly in the dark, and the man, after grave cogitation, struck a match, leisurely made himself acquainted with the angle of the line, and without a word moved away. Possessed by an afterthought he, however, returned, struck another light, and examined the quantity of line left upon the winch. Then he walked off, and was heard climbing rocks and forcing his way through the alders. After a time the line slackened and my friend reeled up; but the fish was safe enough on the grass a long distance round the promontory. The man had made his observations (literally throwing a light upon the subject), concluded therefrom behind what particular rock the salmon was taking refuge, groped and waded his way to the spot, and gaffed the fish at the first shot. Such an attendant, who knows every stone, so to speak, in the river, is invaluable.

CHAPTER XV

CASTING FROM ROCKS AND BOATS

The reader of these sketchy studies of fishing in Norway has been fairly warned already not to expect exciting records of slaughter amongst salmon. Of course, no angler would be at a loss to explain away his poor bags; his excuses are proverbial, they are an old joke, they have long been a proverb. When people hear of unfavourable weather, too much sun, rain, wind, or too little, they very sensibly smile. I smile too, whenever, as so often happens, the necessity of offering such pleas is emphasised by a discreet silence. The fisherman who knows will be able, for himself, to read that the fates were very much against us; and I would again remind him that my object is to provide him with some knowledge that will be useful when the good time of casual visits to Norway returns, and he sails across to make one for himself.

To a student of geology anxious to acquire knowledge on the practical methods of Mr. Squeers, or to the athlete who loves to skip like a goat from crag to crag, I fearlessly recommend No. 8 beat of the

Mandal river. He may take choice of rocks of every sort and size. The convulsion of nature that transformed this peaceful valley of Southern Norway did it with a will that left stupendous evidence of thoroughness through all the ages. There are rocks more or less along all the higher portions of the river, but in our section we had them in unquestioned abundance. Sometimes they acted as frowning walls for the stream, running deep and dark through narrow gorges; elsewhere they took the form of great round-headed boulders, varying in size from a coalscuttle to a dwelling-house. At other times they were strewn about miscellaneously, varying in size, angular, and abounding in traps for the unwary; at a distance they might look innocent as shingle, but the going when you once began to tread amongst them was most fatiguing, and even dangerous.

Rocks are very well in their place, and as Norway is mostly rock they give a distinctive character to the country. Peeping out, weather stained, on the pine-clad mountain sides, they claim your admiration; as a foothold for casting your fly or battling with a fish they are apt to be a severe trial to the muscles, and in any shape or degree they are an ever-present source of danger to rod or tackle. Had the water during our stay in the country attained full proportions I must have put up my best salmon rod. But I had too much respect for my favourite steel centre split cane to leave any of its dainty varnish upon the South Norway granite. The smaller greenheart, therefore, for the third time gallantly survived its month on a Norway river; but those rocks have literally chipped the shine from every joint, leaving, I believe and hope, its constitution, nevertheless, quite sound.

The higher reaches of our beat, as I have intimated, were a succession of gorges or rapids; but whether precipitate wall, which rendered it out of the question to fish the water, or comparatively open boulder-land, you must always look down into it from the excellently kept road which mostly followed the course of the stream. There were no footpaths or tracks down to the water, but an adventurous person might let himself down from crag to crag, and have his rod lowered to him from above. This part of the Mandal I tried twice, but "Sarcelle," who had been accustomed to some such exercise in the mountains of Italy, tried it later with much perseverance, when the white foaming water of the rapids had become moderate pools of dark water.

We were often told that they always held salmon, and when the river is in ordinary volume probably they do so. Very exciting it is to hook a fish in one of these cauldrons, for the salmon must be held by main force, and prevented from rushing into the rapid below. With the strongest tackle, and a firm hold for the hook, it is amazing what a strain you can put upon rod and fish when the playing must be confined within a space of 100 yards by 50 yards. As a matter of fact, we did badly in these rapids; the beat above had the advantage of a number of long resting pools, and the fish apparently ran past us with scarcely a halt. They seemed to know that the river was dropping; instinct told them what the inhabitants were told by memory and eyesight, namely, that so low a river had been seen but once before in this generation; and they said, "Let us hasten until the rapids be passed; in beat No. 9, lo, we may rest from our labours, and, free from anxiety as to the future, perchance lie at ease in the tranquil flow of the pools, and push on to the lake at our leisure."

Whereat the anglers of No. 9 rejoiced, for they had lovely wading ground, with probably a minimum of rock trouble, and so killed fish day by day. The rapids and passes to which I have been referring as constituting the upper length of our beat were, I may add, not continuous, but had to be approached by repeated climbs up to the road level and a descent at some point farther on. The rocks hereabouts, too, were wonderfully sharp-edged as compared with others which had been fashioned and polished by the action of water, and there was a general idea of Titanic splintering up that was not a little impressive.

One pool of the highest repute for salmon in a fair height of water was walled by lofty rocks on the village side, but was fishable from shore on the other. This could only be attained by crossing the river either above or below in a boat, and walking or stumbling to the head of the pool over an acreage of scattered rocks. From the elevation of the road this seemed an easy task, for distance toned down the obstacles so that they appeared scarcely more formidable than pebbles. At close quarters they, however, proved the most fatiguing of all; they were too high for lightly stepping over, and too far apart for unbroken progress, so that for a quarter of an hour you were letting yourself down and hoisting yourself up these countless hindrances. The stones along the edge of the pool were a trifle smaller, but it was never safe to take a step without looking at your ground.

You soon get into the way of such a condition of affairs; you learn that, however the torrent may swirl or roar, you must keep your eye on your foothold, since a small error may plunge you into the current. It is essential, of course, to take advantage of every boulder that affords even an extra foot of command over the pool. The pool in question could only be properly fished by keeping the rod at right angles over the stream, which could be beautifully worked at the edge or centre by the rod-top pointing a little upwards. But to do this you had often to stand on a boulder-perch in the water not larger than your brogue.

Strangely enough I was always in dread of hooking a salmon in this pool, though in truth we never caught or saw one in it. I had arranged beforehand with Ole to lend me the support of his strong arm if I had some day to follow a fish down from boulder to boulder, and I am not ashamed to confess that on many occasions both Ole, the gaffer, and Knut, the boatman, rendered me assistance of this kind; they hauled me up, and lowered me down, and kept me from falling when I was engaged in a fight with a fish.

So far as the pool under consideration went this emergency did not arise; it yielded me nothing but tired limbs, and a few precepts which may be useful to brother anglers who cast from rocks, as, for example: In moving about, keep your eye on the stones; if you support yourself with the gaff handle,

make sure that the end of it is not jammed in a crevice; keep going when stepping from boulder to boulder, as the swing of regular advance is a greater help than occasional pauses; do not put down your rod save when actually necessary, if you would do a friend's duty to it and your winch; keep on examining the point of your hook; do not be afraid of sliding down a rock that cannot be otherwise travelled over, for in these days of science the reseating of breeks is not impossible, and any casual personal disfigurement that may ensue is not likely to be obtruded upon the notice of even personal friends.

The nearest bit of fishing to our honest farmhouse gave us a charming landscape, and it was not reached without some little difficulty. Just above the village the rapids and fosses were finished by a broad pool pouring over a fall, and creating the particular pool about which something has been said. Then the river opened out to a lake-like area from three to four hundred yards either way; the stream then took a sudden turn at the lower end, charging direct upon a long line of smooth, lofty, round-headed rocks, sloping considerably more than the roof of an ordinary house. They would be of an average of 30 ft. above the water. The river, after babbling over its expanse of shallows, swerved sharply and coursed along at their feet in a kind of gut, which was said to give the best low water holding ground in that part of the river.

In the early part of July the view from The Rocks, as we called them in special distinction, was most enchanting. The whole expanse was full like a lake, only a single spit cumbered with logs showing above water. One of our three boats was fastened ashore to a line of booms fixed to direct the course of the timber, which was already beginning to come down in force, and it was always possible to pull across to a convenient corner of The Rocks, and save ourselves a considerable journey by land. As time went on the brimming lake disappeared; little white heads of stones would appear one morning, and thereafter enlarge day by day until they emerged as innumerable upstanding boulders. The boat was now no longer available, for the water was so shallow that it was blocked effectually at the outset. The stream, of course, charged down upon The Rocks in gathering strength, and for the first fortnight we were always sure of a grilse or two. At first The Rocks had to be fished by standing on their open crowns, and although one was in constant fear of scaring the fish by showing on such an eminence, no great harm seemed to be done, probably because there was a background of pine trees in the forest behind. As time advanced little ledges on the rock slopes were left dry by the water, and it was possible to slide down to them on all fours and fish the run with the rocks behind us, necessitating left-handed casting, but giving perfect command of about 60 yards of stream, which was for a while sure holding ground, since it was deepest at the foot of the rocks.

"Sarcelle" had his first experience of a fish on the Mandal river from this place, and it was rather unfortunate. If I remember rightly, it was Sunday evening, and in a shame-faced sort of way we had gone out at seven o'clock to fish. The grilse were then running, and, as they are here to-day and gone to-morrow, and I had already discovered that they did not linger long in our parts, it was almost a duty not to allow a day to pass without an attempt. "Sarcelle" had adventured upon a Mayfly cast with a fly of sea trout size as dropper, and in point of fact a sea trout fly at the end. I was sitting down filling a pipe when he made his first cast, more by way of wetting his line than anything else, and "I've got him" brought me to my feet, only in time to see a grilse bend the rod and then break away. At the next cast a salmon came, took one of the small flies, made a thrilling run, and then snapped the collar.

Even after this mishap "Sarcelle" killed his grilse and lent me his rod to try for another. We had an example that evening of the way in which fish are made shy. "Sarcelle" had the first turn down the pool, and, besides losing two and catching one, he rose several others, three or four of them showing away on shallow water that was rippling merrily, but that was quite out of the orthodox limits of the run. I had the second turn down, rose two, hooked one, and killed one. "Sarcelle" had the third handling of the rod, and killed one fish without moving any of the others. The place that evening seemed to be alive with grilse, and there was an undoubted salmon that had escaped below. It was too late, however, to give the pool the necessary rest and fish it down again; but we were up early in the morning, to find that our grilse during the night had left the country.

After a fortnight's miscellaneous sport from The Rocks, during which the grilse proved themselves to be as game as fish could be, frequently running down into the rough water a hundred yards before we could get on terms with them, we began to discover that even in this essentially good place the water was too thin. If the grilse were running at all, they no longer stopped in the old haunts; but the neck of the lower pool gave us fish occasionally. But during the last three days what had been here dark, deep water became a rough stream, which clearly revealed the yellow boulders at the bottom. On our very last morning "Sarcelle," who had been disappointed throughout in not getting a good salmon, determined to make a final attempt from The Rocks where he had made his first. I had packed up on the previous night, and was ready for breakfast at eight o'clock, with all my goods stowed away on the carriage, when he triumphantly appeared with an 8-lb. salmon and a 5-lb. grilse. He had caught them in this newly formed rapid, the salmon being close by the side.

The Rocks, however, were troublesome when they were slippery, but there were little niches and crevices on their shoulders and sides, from which grew flowering ling and tiny seedling pines, by the aid of which we could manage to insert the edge of a boot sole somewhere and hold on. "Sarcelle" one evening had hooked a capital fish in pretty strong water, and had to follow it as best he could over The Rocks. Generally very sure-footed, on this occasion he tumbled on his back, keeping the rod all the time in his hands, but of course making a slack line. The fish was still on when he regained his feet and tightened up, but the relaxation had been fatal, and the grilse presently escaped.

The Rocks, as I have said, were our favourite spot. When the water became too low for ferrying

across in the boat we had to walk about half a mile down the dusty road, then diverge across a bit of marsh, into the moss of which the foot sank as in velvet-pile; then ascend a forest path, carpeted with pine needles that made the walking most slippery; then traverse a bit of high plantation, and then walk or slide down a steep, slippery, winding ascent to The Rocks themselves. In the hot weather we generally arrived at our starting point in a bath of perspiration, and began our fishing from a low platform, with a great rock concealing us from the fish. This, however, was not the favourite lie for the migrants, though it was the spot where "Sarcelle" lost his salmon and grilse. I have already stated that The Rocks formed a practically straight line right across the valley. Sitting on the highest point, which would be fifty yards above the stream, there was outspread to our eyes an exquisite panorama of typical South Norway scenery; that is to say, there were pleasing evidences of cultivation everywhere. Here, instead of having to get their bits of grass with small reaping hooks, and send their baskets of hay by wire down from the mountain tops, the farmers enjoyed fair breadths of pasture and grain crop, so much so that mowing machines could be used. The verdure of these bottoms and easy slopes at the foot of the hills was delicious, with mountains all round, dark with pine, relieved with occasional rock and patches of silver birch and other deciduous foliage.

It was a glorious amphitheatre with environment of picturesque mountains, and within these towering ramparts reposed the little village of Lovdal, the prominent object in which was the church, with its pure white walls, gables, plain grey spire and red roof, standing on a little eminence in the middle distance. Then came a patch of greenery formed by the apple trees of our most comfortable farmhouse. Around it clustered the red-roofed wooden houses of the neighbours, and there were two or three flagstuffs always conspicuous in the clear air. On my arrival they had hoisted the Union Jack on our flagstaff, and there was generally either the Norwegian or English flag to be seen flying. The farthest point of mountain would be, perhaps, a couple of miles distant as we looked straight up from The Rocks.

It was my fortune to behold this entrancing scene considerably transformed during my month's stay. At first the immediate landscape was beautified by wild flowers; the blue of the harebells was exquisitely set off by masses of golden St. John's wort, and on our walk to The Rocks we would trample down meadow-sweet, marsh mallow, bird's foot trefoil, and potentilla. There was one little detail of the picture that was quite remarkable; it was a bright composition of harebells, with the red-brown of ripening grass, and a patch of Prussian blue representing a crop of oats immediately behind. By and by the haymakers came, and down went the harebells, and in course of time the Prussian blue became yellow straw. One Sunday evening impresses itself upon my memory especially. The bells were tinkling as the cows came down from the mountains, and the voices of the women and children were heard afar in the clear air; down the valley came the music of a military band in the encampment, and the sun disappearing over the mountains brought out the colours of the pines and birches in an indescribably vivid manner, and everything seemed luminous beyond conception.

But what impressed itself most upon me were the odours brought down to me on my rocky seat by the soft wind. For quite half an hour there were regular alternations of the fragrance of pine and new-mown hay. I had often read of scents borne by zephyrs, but never so thoroughly realised the sensation of air filled with them. The Rocks, I may add, were at places hoary with age, curiously stained by the weather, patched with mosses and ling, and rearwards was the wood with all manner of shrubs and diversity of forest trees, amongst which I noticed elm, oak, and cedar, and a complete undergrowth of bilberry and other berries, which we could pluck and eat at any hour of the day, and diversify such dessert with wild strawberries and raspberries by a little search. The whole scene from The Rocks was one of peace and tranquil prosperity, and one's heart was always warming towards the kindly people, whose friendship we had quickly gained. During our stay we cast and caught from many rocks, but none gave us so characteristic and beautiful a picture in sunshine and in shade as these to which we gave the distinctive name.

The majority of anglers probably agree that fishing from a boat must, under the best of circumstances, be ranked amongst the necessary evils of an angler's life. The ideal salmon pool is one that can be waded, and the stream where the salmon lie commanded from head to tail with precision, without danger or unnecessary exertion to the wader. The foothold for the man should be shingle or stones presenting a fairly even bottom, sloping gradually from the edge, and enabling the fisherman to operate comfortably with the water at his hips. Should he have to venture deeper, the necessity of keeping the winch above water requires a special strain upon the muscles, and this in time becomes fatiguing. There is always, however, compensation in hooking a salmon in this position, in which you have to hold your rod well up what time you retire slowly to the *terra firma* that is above water, carrying on the action as you go.

A long pool of sufficient briskness to keep the fly in lively and regular motion, a pool with varying depths and a sharp shallow at the tail, a pool that will, let us say, take not less than half an hour to fish down carefully, is what we should all perhaps choose if we could do so; but even where the bottom is rough, and the angler, if he would escape peril, must move with wary steps, where the stream is so out of reach that it can only be properly worked in parts, and then with difficulty—even this is better than fishing from a boat. I know of nothing more delightful than wading such a pool at just the depth and force of water which allows you to sit on it. Those who have not indulged in this sensation may laugh at the idea of sitting on running water, but it is quite possible, and many a time have I enjoyed this

utilisation of a current strong enough to support you as a seat.

The principal fishing must after all be from a boat. It must not be supposed that the frail craft in Norway are to be compared with those models of boats for casting which you have on Tweed or Tay. The Norwegian boats have to be used upon water that is often both shallow and swift, and must be dragged from place to place. It is not comfortable to cast from such boats in a standing position. You cast sitting, very much cramped, on the first thwart, with your back to the oarsman. After a little practice you can get out quite as much line as you require, and for myself I retained my seat in playing a fish. There is no need to enumerate the drawbacks of casting from a boat; suffice to say that there are always enough to prevent you from becoming attached to the practice, save as an occasional change. I say nothing of harling, which is a different matter; you can lounge at your ease in the stern of the boat, with a book in your hand, and trail on until the winch gives you warning that a fish has hooked itself.

Casting from a boat is much more trying than casting in other ways. When on foot you are tired of fishing, you can choose your resting place and sit down; but in a boat you are cramped and confined all the time, with only the muscles of arms and shoulders engaged. One forgets all this, of course, when there is sport, and I often smile on remembering the amused expression which used to steal over the faces of my men when they first beheld the little formulas which I always observe, be the fun fast or slow. I can best explain this by recalling one particular evening on the Mandal river. It was the one occasion when I deemed it necessary to take out a mackintosh. With the exception of a thunderstorm in the early part of July, the downpour as to which was during the night, the days had been of strong and unbroken sunshine; but in the middle of the month there came a close, cloudy day when the flies were exceedingly troublesome, and the only mosquitoes that were annoying during our stay came out in full trumpeting for an hour or two. There was a favourite pool, very long and lively, which we called Olaf's Garden, that served me very well, and one morning, in bright sunshine, in the course of a half-hour I caught three fish weighing 15 lb.

On this day it began to dawn upon me that the water had become too low for a grilse to remain here any length of time. Higher up was a favourite reach of mine, named Pot Pool, and after fishing Olaf's Garden and another reach, finding only a couple of grilse, I moved elsewhere, and in the evening discovered that the fish appeared to be resting in Pot Pool. A gentleman who formerly leased the Mandal river had recommended me to try some of the delicate flies dressed by Haynes, of Cork, and with one of these (the Orange Grouse), at starting, between seven and eight, I killed a grilse of 5 lb. The pool was then fished down leisurely, with no other result. Returning to the head, a long rest was called, and, as I suspected there might be salmon, I changed the fly to a fair-sized Durham Ranger. My gaffer, Ole, had done me the honour in the forenoon of losing an 18-lb. or 20-lb. fish in another pool, and though his custom was to sit on a rock and sing a hymn while Knut was working at the oars, this evening, while I was fishing the pool, the memory of his afternoon mishap kept him dolefully silent. I had directed him to a little rocky cove for service in case I should have the fortune to bring in a fish, as fruit meet to his repentance. My custom is to fish a pool very patiently and thoroughly. It is true that not more than half a dozen times in my life have I ever hooked a salmon other than when the line was straight down the stream, but by keeping the boat in the right course, and handling the rod to suit it, there are several possibilities of presenting the fly on an even keel.

The swish, swish of the casting becomes decidedly monotonous as the boat drops downward inch by inch. You lose yourself in dreamy reveries, casting at length quite mechanically. The fly goes out to its appointed place, sweeps round with the stream, and with a kind of involuntary sigh the line is recovered, and the cast repeated. It becomes machine action at last. On this evening I had impressed upon Knut the desirability of being very slow indeed, and he was working well. The stream was strong without rage, there was a dull curtain of slate-grey overhead, and a light breeze was blowing in your teeth, but not enough to make casting twenty-five yards of line a hardship. For a time your thoughts centre upon the working of the fly. You wonder whether a salmon has noticed it and is following it craftily round; if so, will he take it? Or is it possible that after all you are not in the exact lie of the salmon?

The water, you see, has not yet become, as it will (and does) in a few days, clear enough for you to know that the entire bed of the river consists of huge boulders, with manifold guts and hollows, all lovely abiding places for any well-disposed fish. You speculate on what you shall do if you do hook a salmon at this or that particular point. You scan the shore, mark the likeliest spot for landing, and mentally go through the whole programme to its happy ending. You think what a splendid thing it would be if you could get four, five, six, a dozen salmon in as many casts, and how much better the bottom of the boat would look if, instead of two or three comely grilse, it showed the biggest salmon ever known in these parts. But no, nothing disturbs the monotony. Swish, swish, swish! Gradually you forget all about salmon and sport, and are thinking, maybe, of kith and kin across the North Sea, or of sins of omission and commission. All at once you are startled by that inspiring cry of the winch which some faddy people pretend to think a nuisance. It is to the angler what the trumpet is to the war horse.

This was precisely what happened to me on the evening of which I write. The bent grilse rod described an arc that only a salmon could make. He went straight down, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty yards without a possibility of check, even if one were so foolish as to wish to stop a strongly running fish. At the first slackening of speed, however, it is always wise to put on a little pressure, and cautiously begin with the winch. After such a run a salmon will generally respond to the slow winding in of the line, and, although after he has advanced ten or fifteen yards he may make another spurt, you have him more under control than in the first burst. A taut line, a bending rod never for a moment allowed to unbend, and a firm yet sympathetic finger and thumb at the winch handle are enough. Just keep cool, you and your man. Knut, I may say, had to learn his management of a boat for fishing purposes from me, and,

therefore, knew the importance of being ready on the instant to pull ashore, when and how he was ordered in a crisis. On this occasion we had fixed upon our landing place, and Knut had already received orders to pull steadily towards it if I hooked a fish. In his excitement he put on the pace a little too much, a source of danger met by letting the line ease the position.

The salmon was incessant in short, sharp rushes, but, in course of time, we were out of the stream into easy water, although the fish had returned half a dozen times before he relinquished the advantage of the current. He became convinced, however, that resistance was vain, and stubbornly allowed himself to be towed on and on to land. Ole, eagerly waiting in the cove, gaff in hand, was now determined to mend his damaged reputation, and listened with humble attention to my injunction to take it easy, and not to hit till he was quite sure. He was standing on a small slab of rock that protruded into the water, and, unfortunately, there was nothing but lofty rocks behind us. What one likes is a nice beach or field upon which one can step backwards, conducting the salmon safely and easily into the net. There was no possibility of this now; indeed, we were forced to change our tactics in a hurry. The salmon at the finish came in more quickly than I wished, and was virtually under the point of the rod. With a couple of inexperienced men I feared a smash if I attempted to land at such a place. Salmon at close quarters often prove troublesome. This one was several times brought near enough for a skilled gaffer to strike him as he swam slowly along parallel with the boat, but this would have been too much to expect from a learner. I had, therefore, to keep to the boat, and not only to bring the fish in, but to guide it past me to the ledge below. The fish, however, as I knew, was firmly hooked; it was merely a question of time, and, as a fact, Ole very cleverly gaffed a clean-run salmon of 13 lb. That day, besides the salmon caught and another lost, I had grilse of 5 1/4 lb., 3 1/4 lb., 4 1/2 lb., and 3 lb.

It was my good fortune to have Pot Pool again for the evening. Again it was dull, with an incipient drizzle as we started out at six o'clock. The fish were now rising, at any rate, in my pool. At the very entrance to it, which was, in fact, the connecting run from The Rocks, I killed, after a fussy tussle and plenty of leaping out of the water, a grilse of 4 lb.; and we had barely rowed out into the stream when a fish of 6 lb. or 7 lb. leaped head and tail out of the water at my fly without touching it. The overcast character of the evening suggested to me the use of a Bulldog, and we were now enabled to practise the formulas at which Ole and Knut at first appeared so much amused. On hooking a fish I keep my seat, and direct the course of the boat to a suitable landing place. The craft must be pulled partly ashore, if feasible, before I attempt to move. Then I rise and back gently to the bow of the boat, where Ole is in readiness to lend me a hand as I step out, sometimes no easy thing to do if I have to land on a high, slippery rock. Delightful it is to have the fish fighting all the time as only a grilse will. Your salmon often moves sullenly, and will cruise slowly about with a dull, heavy strain that is most comforting to an experienced man, who feels certain that the fish is well hooked; but this is not wildly exciting.

Your grilse is here, there, and everywhere. There is no slackening for him. He is a dashing light dragoon ever at the charge, determined to do the thing with spirit if it is to be done at all. At first I have no doubt I lost more grilse by giving them too much law. The longer the fish is on, the looser becomes the hold, and I have always found it better with fish of 5 lb. or 6 lb. to play them to the top of the water, and then run them in without another check. Occasionally you may lose a fish this way, but in the long run you gain, and after a little practice you will get into the trick of bringing the grilse on his side submissively into the net. The butt, however, must be applied at the proper moment, and when the proper stage of exhaustion is reached can be told only by experience. To return, however, to the formulas. The fish, being in the net and landed, is handled by myself only; the eager, sportsmanlike instinct of your man will have to be repressed, his first idea being to seize it and knock it on the head with a stone. I have sufficient respect for either salmon or grilse to finish them with the orthodox priest, and that also is a function I like to perform myself. Then comes the extraction of the hook, always an interesting, because instructive, formula for the angler. Next follows the satisfaction of weighing the game with a spring balance, and then seeing that it is deposited in the boat with a covering of ling or alder leaves as a protection against flies or sun.

Returning now to my evening, I may explain that Ole was absent on leave, and that Knut, who was a most intelligent young fellow and the schoolmaster of the village, was anxious to use the gaff or net as the case may be. Having caught a 3 1/2-lb. grilse on a small Butcher, I fished down Pot Pool very leisurely without a touch. After a fair interval I removed the small fly and elected to take my chance thereafter with a Jock Scott of larger size. It was now about eight o'clock, and we went down the pool again, having a brief run with probably a grilse, which held fast only a moment or two; then I was becoming conscious again of the monotony of fruitless casting when there was a splendid spin of the winch. This, I confess, was of such a nature that I rose at once and determined to take my reward or punishment, as it might happen, standing. It was an undoubted salmon, for fifty yards down out of the water he came, the winch, curiously enough, screaming all the time, and never ceasing when he fell in with a loud splash and resumed his run. I had about 115 yards of line on my winch, and I noticed, just as the fish moderated his express speed, that there could not have been ten yards left.

He was fighting all the time. Knut, fortunately, understood my directions to follow him down instead of pulling up-stream and a little across, as he usually did, and I was able at least to winch in three-parts of the line before the next rush, which was equally formidable, but not so long. I think I never had a salmon fight as this one did. He, at any rate, was not one of the sulky kind, and it was quite on the cards that I had one of the twenty or thirty pounders for which the angler is always longing. By and by we landed on a rock—or rather two rocks—Knut on a flat bit of crag and I on the round head of a small boulder. The fish had so tired himself in his shoots and fights out in the stream that he gave little trouble in the slack water, but refused for a long time to be brought up anywhere near the surface. When he did yield he came in the most lamb-like way, and Knut had the pleasure of using the

gaff for the first time. He hit the fish fair and well, and, marvel of marvels, it was to an ounce the weight of the fish killed in the same pool in the previous evening, viz. 13 lb.

Having now a good salmon, for this water, in the boat, and a grilse or two, and it being nine o'clock, overcast, and with a dark bit of the forest to walk through to the road, I signified my intention of going home; but Knut's blue eyes opened wide in surprise and pleading, and he besought me to have one more trial. As the young fellow had been working hard for three hours, and this was uncommonly good of him, I consented, and, keeping on the same fly, we began half-way up the pool, my intention being only to fish the tail end. At the fifth cast, and on a portion of the stream which I had fished over without disturbance twice the same evening, up came another salmon, which fastened and went off at the same fierce pace as the other. He stripped off the line several times, gave me a splendid quarter of an hour's sport, and there we were, the dangers of the stream left behind, the fish quietly circling in easy courses in the slack water, Knut ready with his gaff on his little platform, and I, cocksure of the fish, standing on the round rock. To the left was water that in the dusk seemed to be deep and black, and as all along this side the water was deep close in, I concluded that all was safe. The fish was coming quietly in, and was not two yards from the gaff, when it made a sudden dart to the left into this dark water close to the rocks, and in a very short time I realised that he had hung himself up.

Getting as quickly as possible into the boat again, we moved slowly out to the impediment, in the hope of its being nothing more than a rock which could be cleared; but on looking down I saw that the bottom had been a regular trap for sunken logs, and as I looked down into the water I saw the fish, a silvery, clean-run fellow of about 8 lb., fighting his hardest at the end of the line, which sawed and sawed until it parted. I recovered most of the cast, but the fish had got away with my bonny Jock Scott and the last strand. This was very sickening, for we might have had a nice bag to take home; but it was not to be, and in somewhat subdued spirits we fastened up the boat, got our baggage together, and walked homeward. Still, it was a typical experience of casting from a boat, and Knut and myself had the pleasure of carrying home in the net, I holding the handle and he the rim, a salmon of 13 lb., and grilse of 4 lb., 3 1/2 lb., and 3 lb.

This, I may say, was the day when I hooked and played fifteen fish, of which only five were caught. I dreamed about that fraudulent dark water and its hidden logs, and in the searching sunlight of the next day went over to examine. It was most artful of the salmon to take the course he did, for I found that he had run under what was virtually a spar of about 10 ft. long, with each end resting on a rock; below it was a nice little interval of 18 in. of water, under which a salmon could run.

CHAPTER XVI

SOME CONTRARIES OF WEATHER AND SPORT

At my first visit to Norway in 1899 I was greeted with days of roasting heat, with roaming thunder growling incessantly in the mountains. The angler fresh from England, out of training with his salmon rod, and with the precarious rocks and boulders for foothold, gradually discards his clothing; the coat is shed first, then probably the collar and scarf, then the waistcoat. Some underclothing goes next. In two days the heat sufficed to stick together in hopeless amalgamation all the postage stamps in my purse, and I have at last discovered that the haberdashery goods warranted fast colours, and paid for as such, leave confused rainbow hues upon every vestige of attire after a good Norwegian sweat.

All this will signify to the initiated that fishing during the six middle hours of the day is out of the question. It is not the case that salmon will never take in glaring sunshine, but it is the exception rather than the rule, and the game is decidedly not worth the frizzle. It means, moreover, that the rivers are low, and it may be stated that they have been so all the season so far, and that there can be no really good sport until there is a change. To be sure, even a single thunderstorm does help a little, but in my case it has wrought harm; the rolling of thunder in the hills day after day, and the surcharged atmosphere have had an undoubted influence in sulkifying the fish, and there is a worse thing than that.

This worse thing is the modest pine log of commerce. Driving, last Sunday, from Christiansand over the hills and down into the Mandal Valley, a distance of twenty-eight miles through most beautifully typical South Norway scenery, in which, with the towering mountains of rock timbered with dark sentinels to the very skyline, alternate verdant, peaceful, prosperous, valleys glowing with wild flowers, in which the bonny harebell is more assertive by the waysides, I was much interested in the cut timber strewn the half-dried river bed whose course we followed. The logs are of no great size, mere sticks of pine, averaging a foot diameter and in lengths varying between twelve and forty feet. It was obvious that these spars, like the anglers, were waiting for a spate. How nice it would be for the hardy, honest natives engaged in this all-important lumber industry if these prepared sticks, each well ear-marked for recognition leagues perchance down-stream, were swept offhand to market.

My sentiments changed somewhat yesterday and the two previous days. I may explain that there was a violent thunderstorm on Monday night, and the Mandal river, a noble type of the rocky Norwegian salmon stream, rose, perhaps, a couple of feet in the wider portions, and considerably more

where the bed contracted. Even such an addition to the volume of water gave these logs a friendly lift, and brought them tumbling and grinding along in hundreds without the aid of man; but on Thursday they appeared in endless battalions, for by this time the timbermen had been ordered out in force to give a friendly shove to the masses that had jammed in some eddy or rocky corner. It is astonishing what a mere touch will effect. With my pocket gaff last evening I lightly nudged a floating spar in the ribs, and he set off right heartily, very gently, yet firmly, cannoned without temper against a neighbour, and in less than five minutes a block of perhaps 150 logs had started off, scattering irregularly over the stream, and making a noise like distant thunder as they charged over the boulders of the rapids below.

There are circumstances, I have been told, under which salmon will rise as well as at other times while logs are drifting, but our best pools here are even-flowing and stately, reminding one often of the Tweed between Kelso and Coldstream. The logs in such water are bad for fish. The testimony of the local men is that the pools, from the piscatorial point of view, are always unsettled while the logs are descending in quantities, and that it is a rare thing at such times to induce a salmon to take a fly. Moreover, with a thunderstorm spate of this nature, and the operations of gangs of lumbermen hastening to set the stranded stock on its way to port, the water is rendered very dirty; in a word, until the muck has passed, and the river settled, the angler's chances are poor indeed.

The danger to the angler's gear, and any fish he hooks, when he finds himself amongst the logs, is well known. The tenant of the beat above ours lost two or three good salmon in one day by collisions of this nature. Down at Lovdal we fish mostly from one of the somewhat crank boats of the country, and my first salmon was hooked from the stern of one of them, at the moment when a score of logs that had been gyrating in an aimless sort of way in a great dark backwater must needs hustle one another in company into a corner where they were suddenly caught by a strong undercurrent, and almost hauled out into the current, unnoticed by my boatman. For myself I was engaged with a hooked fish, and fortunately for me he was not large. The man had all he could do to fend off the spars with his oars, and at that critical moment, when the fish is either turned or allowed a new lease of life, we had the honour of notice to quit from a spar on either side. Mr. Salmon, without a fin-flick of apology, taking a mean advantage, darted under the stick to the right, and at express speed made across stream. One does not, however, use Hercules gut for nothing; the log was travelling swiftly, and I ventured to clap my rod-top down to and under the surface, thus saving my tackle, and being presently able to land and gaff my 10-lb. fresh-run salmon without risk or hurry. This fish, I may add, rose in the fiercest of sunshine in the forenoon, and some logs were coming down, but only one here and there.

The river in fact had only then begun to rise briskly, and on Wednesday, when the lumbermen were hard at work above, three salmon, one of them a certain twenty pounder, fluttered up at the fly. They did not mean business though. That pool I fished, with change of pattern and abundant intervals, until I was not merely fit but ready to drop, and rose two of the fish a second time. On Thursday the river was so out of order that I left the salmon rod in its rack in the barn and drove up to Manflo lake, arriving there in time to see the effects of an apparently innocent occurrence of thunder and lightning. There was no storm or overcasting of the heavens, only a single discharge from one wandering cloud, yet it fired the forests in two places, and we saw the columns of white smoke of the conflagration. With thunder all around the hills it did not seem promising for the trout; still we had driven eight miles to try them, and were there for the purpose, so we unmoored the boat and began. The trout were small and of two varieties—a dark, heavily-blotched, lanky fish, with coarse head, and a shapely golden fellow, thickly studded in every part with small black spots. I used merely one cast—Zulu, red and teal, March brown with silver ribbing—and in two hours I had caught forty-one trout weighing 13 lb. In salmon fishing here one catches brown trout every day; your salmon fly may be large, medium, or small, it is all the same to these voracious fario, which never appear to be more than half a pound. One has the consolation always in Norway of knowing that what one catches need never be wasted. There is something quite touching in the gratitude which the poor villager evinces in return for a present of two little trout.

An instance may be mentioned of apparent service to the salmon angler by the trout which, as a rule, are execrated as an intolerable nuisance. After you have succeeded in working your fly some thirty yards below, and can feel it swimming on an even keel at the end of a straightly-extended line, the supreme moment of expectation has arrived; to have the situation thus achieved by labour ruined by the impudence of a trout 9 in. or 10 in. long is warranty, if ever, for speaking out. My example is of such a nuisance to which I owe a grilse. At any rate, that is my theory. Two salmon and five grilse were at that time my total for odd hours of fishing during part of the week, and I had fished with the Durham Ranger and Butcher (No. 4). One evening, putting off for another drift down the pool, I bethought me of a set of his favourite turkey wings specially dressed for this expedition by my friend Wright, of Annan, and resolved to fulfil my promise of giving them a trial without further delay. The name of the fly of my first choice is, I believe, the Border Fancy; the brown turkey wing showed well in the water, and the irregular mingling of lemon, red, and black of the pig's wool, relieved by a band of silver twist, made altogether a very attractive lure. The boat was crossing diagonally to our course, and I was leisurely getting out line, when a trout plucked at the fly. I saw him, as it were, knocked aside rudely, and shall always believe that it was intentionally done by the grilse, which immediately fastened to the fly, and was duly netted on shore. Within twenty minutes the same fly rose and landed me a salmon. I rechristened this fly the Wullie, and determined after that evening's work was done to preserve it for copying. King log, however, interfered with my well-meant intentions. A stick of pine by and by feloniously shot round a corner of rock unawares, and ere I could recover the cast the fly was embedded in the butt of it, and there was a quick smash. In what remote part of the earth will the Wullie be next found—or will it become the adornment of a permanent waterlog without leaving the river of its birthplace?

The fish which I have caught to this date, fishing about twenty hours during the whole week (including Sunday night, when, after my sea journey and long carriage drive from Christiansand, I went out at eight o'clock, caught seven trout, and afterwards read a chapter of *Shandon Bells* under an apple-tree at half-past ten at night in good daylight) have been curiously uniform in weights. The salmon were 10 1/2 lb., 10 1/4 lb., and 10 lb.; the grilse 3 1/2 lb., 3 1/4 lb., 3 lb., 3 1/2 lb., and 3 lb.

As a contrast to these hot days, let us arrive at the doings of a wet week, of which most travellers in the country get more or less experience.

When you read in your guide-book "The climate of the west coast is usually mild, being influenced by the Atlantic and the Gulf Stream, which impinges upon it," you will, having the ordinary experiences of this vale of tears, not omit the mackintoshes from your baggage. It may be, as is set forth a little farther down, that July and August are the best months for this part of Norway; but there is never any trusting that Atlantic and Gulf Stream. Yet here we are at the end of a solid week of rain, with every promise of more to follow. This morning the rushing sound which greeted my waking moments was, nevertheless, different from that of previous mornings. It was merely the steady but strong flow of the river, not fifty yards from my bedroom window, speeding from the wooden bridge to the mouth at the fiord, half a mile below. Previously there had been variations upon this unceasing monotone, and they were caused by the rain pattering upon the leaves of an old ash outside, upon the shrubs and trees of the little orchard, and at times upon the veranda and even window panes.

There is no mistake about rain in Norway when it is in earnest, and a week of it is more than enough. It is true the nights have not this time been so wet as the days, but what consolation is that when the effect is to keep the river in perpetual flood? No; there is a vast difference between three and seven days, on a salmon river. The lesser infliction moves the fish and improves sport. In the days that are left you may find ample compensation in superior bags. Now there have been seven days' downpour, the river getting worse every day, and leaving a tolerable certainty of three days' additional patience for running down and clearing. But that is not the worst. I have said that there was a difference this morning when I got up and looked out. The sandy paths were dry, showing that there had been no fresh rain in the night. Moreover, the hillsides were open to view, the silver rills that veined the rugged steeps were dwindling, there was a blue sky, and great ranges of wooded or desolate mountains were in clearly cut outline—the first time since the wet period set in. Over the shoulder of the huge pyramid to the east there was actual sunshine, and the fleecy clouds were high. So at last there was to be an end to our mourning; verily so, since the wind had at last veered from south to north-west. Yet at this very moment, and it is still an hour short of noon, a heavy storm is making uproar without, the rain is descending in torrents, and there is the added discomfort of a shiver-breeding atmosphere. At any rate, we are under cover, and need not issue forth unless we choose. This is better than what must have been the fate of poor S., who went to the fjelds just before the break of fine weather to shoot ryper. He has been literally up in the clouds, and the birds will have been lying so low as to give points to "Brer rabbit." Condemned to the solitude of a rude saeter, a hut in the most primitive sense of the term, he must have furnished a capital example of the English gentleman who forsakes the seductions of a London season and the luxuries of a Piccadilly club for the sake of sport.

To be sure, in our case, this reverse is only part of fisherman's luck, and we may be—and no doubt are—thankful that there was a fair fortnight, to begin with, placed on the right side of the account. Sport was, for various reasons, not by any means up to par, but we can, on this miserable Sabbath day, in our comfortable hotel by the strong, highly coloured river, count up a total of a trifle over 500 lb. to our two rods in little more than a fortnight. These were mostly sea trout, but of a lower average weight than is usual at this period of the season, the run of heavy fish—anything from 6 lb. to 16 lb.—having apparently taken place in July instead of August. The rule on this river is first a run of big sea trout, then a run of smaller size, and, lastly, a small run of bull trout, with occasional salmon throughout. H. has had the best of the bag, but a few salmon and grilse on another river gives me 244 lb. as my share.

My prettiest experience in the wet week was interesting. The river was big and dirty, the rain most hearty. The prospects were so poor that H. stuck to Anthony Trollope in the veranda. A thin piece of water on the lower beat to my mind offered a remote chance for a sea trout, and I was rowed down in a particular direct rainfall to it. The boatman shook his head at the small Bulldog I put on; he would have preferred a darker fly, salmon size. In a rough tumble of water over small boulders, which were not a foot beneath the foam-headed waves, a fish fastened, and the spin of the reel was shrill above the tumult of the waters. The grilse rod was tested severely, as in truth were my arms for a few minutes. The fish rushed forty yards down stream at express speed, then dodged and fought right and left. By and by the clever boatman got the boat through every variety of strong water to a landing place, and in good time the fish came to the gaff, a splendid bull trout of 10 lb. I wish some of my friends who are not satisfied upon the bull trout question could have seen this dark, broadly-spotted, burly fish, as it lay side by side with a silvery four-pound sea trout that I had previously taken with the same fly. It was as a Clydesdale to a thoroughbred. Seeing must then have been believing.

For the present let us forget that wet week. We will return to the rain, perhaps, another day; suffice now to state that we had three weeks of it—three weeks and never a day without mackintoshes. Last night it must have snowed pretty hard up on the fjelds, for there are at this moment white mantles lower down on the mountains than have been seen for many a year at this period of the season. The only way by which I can temporarily forget the weather is to go back to the day when, in England, the sportsmen were "inaugurating" (there are worse words than that though it is not pure English) the grouse season. On August 12 we were on a visit to S., whose river is a few hours' steaming from the stream upon which I was established in headquarters. It was our fourth day there, and, as a relief from the salmon rod, which had found out the unused muscles of my arms and shoulders, I took a holiday so

far as to go out for once with a trout rod. It was a whole-cane pattern of 10 ft. 6 in. As it was already put together in the rack at the back of the hotel, I borrowed it just to save the bother of fixing up my own greenheart. In the tidal portion of the river capital sport was sometimes to be found with the common trout. They are *Salmo fario* of the kind one often catches in Norway—silvery, marked with a galaxy of small black spots, with a red point here and there, and game to the death; and their favourite taking time in this river was when the tide was nearing low water.

On that particular date this happened pretty early, and I was on the pebbly strand by eight o'clock. Our friends who fish the river use small March browns, blue duns, and teal and reds for such light amusement; but I had with me a couple of patterns—to wit, the Killer (a sea-trout fly which in a previous visit to Norway the small trout had fancied very freely) and an adaptation of the Alexandra used on the Costa for grayling. Both have silver bodies, but the former is a study in yellow, the latter a harmony in peacock-blue; and these special dressings were on eyed hooks, say about the size of a medium sedge, though of more scanty material. One of each was put up on an untapered cast of the finest undrawn gut; but, in ordering the collars to go with the flies, I had begged that every strand should be of picked stuff, round and even from end to end, and that they should be in every detail sound and sure.

My temporary gillie D. was by nature taciturn but always willing. This morning he was willing enough, but mum as an oyster. Nay, he sat upon the great grey rock on the little island and watched me make ready with a wonderfully melancholy expression. It was only when a salmon on the other side splashed noisily that he smiled—the grim relaxation of features that means resignation tempered with pity, not encouragement, nor hope, nor approval. His entire demeanour said, "To think that I should have carried the gaff, and gillied good salmon fishermen for years, and be degraded into this mean tomfoolery." A little impressed with his attitude, and, I think I may add, half in sympathy, I advised him as well as I could to rest him tranquilly on the rock, and not worry till I demanded his assistance. Then, hitching up my wading stockings, I went in to less than knee-deep and angled for trout for a quarter of an hour to no purpose. The green, dark water of the regular current was an easy cast out, but the fish I sought were generally taken on its edge, or in about a foot depth of shallow, when the flies came down at the end of a line that had been allowed to sweep round with the stream. I got a couple of 9-in. fish, and knew that the half-pounders were not rising.

Next I moved in to above the knees, and pulled out a little more line; was looking up at the snow patches on the mountain tops, and the fir trees on the slope, when I was startled by a rude pluck and a whirring of the little reel. I receded to shore as quickly as I could with a bent rod and running fish to hold, and then became aware that my line could not be more than thirty yards in length. Down and down went the fish. Sometimes he paused and shook himself; now and again he even responded to my winching in, or even played about without rushing. Once he ran ten yards upstream, but for the most part I ran with him, and was mainly absorbed by a desire to keep as much line in hand as possible. D. had seen my position at once, and was soon at my rear, pocket gaff in hand, and all the sadness gone from his harsh visage. I think the fight lasted about ten minutes, but it was splendid battle every moment of the time, and D. finally gaffed out a silvery grilse, the smallest I had ever taken. I weighed him on the spot; he was 3 lb. He had taken the small edition of the Killer, and a few moments more would have given him liberty.

This was an encouraging beginning certainly, for I suppose no man complains if, going out to catch half-pound trout, he bags a grilse, small though it be. Now I regretted that I had no longer line, and that I had not stuck to the winch which I had replaced by one of my own—a small ebony and silver one, which five-and-twenty years ago formed part of a collection of goods composing the only prize I ever received. It happened that the biggest pike of the year at the Stanley Anglers, of which I was a member, had been caught by me without competing, or thinking of prizes; but I was proud to take the award when it was offered, and had the amount laid out in tackle. Here was the winch, after much service, accounting for a grilse in Norway! I now ran my fingers down the gut cast, tested the knots, and began again. D. did not go back to his rock, and while in the water, having delivered my cast, I was turning round to hand him my tobacco pouch, when a furious pluck nearly brought the rod-top to the water. But one manages these things by instinct, and the whole-cane was arched like a bow again, and, out of the water, now abreast, now below, now away in the stream, leaped a sea trout. He was the most restless of fishes; the grilse had gone through his campaign with severe dignity, but this fellow played endless pranks, and led me a merry dance down the pebbles, ending in the production of the spring balance, and a register of 2 1/2 lb. The sun was out strong now, and I feared that the fun was over. Never, however, leave off because of the sun with sea trout; no, nor with salmon either, though only half or quarter of a chance is left you. I have killed some salmon and plenty of sea trout, though after much apparently hopeless toil, against all the rules as to sun, wind, and cloud. I was recalling examples when the rod was made to quiver again, and this time it was a sea trout of over 1 1/2 lb. I would not degrade D. by allowing him to interfere, but walked back and hauled the fish up a sandy spit, extracted the hook, and weighed him myself, as I generally do. In the next quarter of an hour I got three sea trout of the smaller size, and weighed them *en bloc*, tied together, at 5 lb. the leash. Breakfast was now fairly earned, and in a fine state of perspiration and contentment I led the way home. In the afternoon I was bound to make a show with the big rod, but left the whole-cane trout where I could pick it up for an evening trial on the scene of the morning's sport. We all got something that day, but the sun was too much for anything but casualties with salmon. With a small Bulldog I found, hooked, and strove with a fish that bored and jiggered most unconscionably. He worked like a fair salmon so long as he remained dogged; when once he moved up from the bottom, however, I estimated him for a sample that would at least not prove beyond the 10 lb. limit of my spring balance. And so it turned out. D. did me the honour of missing him twice in succession with the gaff, and he quite lost his nerve. He threw down the gaff, in

his agitation, and, amidst roars of laughter from a couple of onlookers on the farther side, literally danced about amongst salmon, gaff, and line. Sternly I bade him get out of the way, and by a crowning mercy his gaff at the false strikes, and his feet during the *pas deux* (he and the salmon were actually waltzing together on the stones) had not touched the line. However, the fish was exhausted, and followed me with commendable docility as I retired in good order up the bank, hauling him bodily. D. now seemed stricken with remorse; he clattered into the water behind the fish, and with the ferocity of a very Viking kicked it ignominiously up to the grassy plateau to which I had moved. How much *avoirdupois* the worthy man had kicked out of that salmon I know not; what remained weighed 7 lb., and it was a singularly bright and handsomely shaped fish. There was this advantage in the application of the boot instead of the gaff—the fish was not disfigured by a gashed side.

The salmon was very welcome, but I was thinking all the while of the excitement of the morning and the brisk quivering of the trout rod. Somehow I found myself down there again in the early evening, D. accompanying me with another attack of depression. He was quite right from his point of view. His master had taught him—if, indeed, he had not inherited the doctrine—that salmon are the only things worth calling fish. Sea trout count for nothing; brown trout for less than that. Still, he pocketed his disapproval, and came along with lack lustre eye. S. came down, too, just as I was wading in, to see me start, and in a few minutes I announced that a good fish had risen short at the small Killer. This was a timely falsity, as I wanted just then the opportunity of filling my pipe—not an easy thing to do knee-deep in water. By putting your rod over your right arm, and fixing the butt into your pocket, it may, however, be done; the line takes care of itself, and the flies will be below you somewhere out of danger. There must have been down there a 10-in. sea trout at the very lap of the water on the stones—perhaps it had followed the fly in from the stream; anyhow, there it was on the Killer when I had lighted the pipe, and I gave it freedom, without including it in the bag of the day. After the brief interval I addressed myself to the false riser who had, without knowing it, accommodated me in the matter of the pipe. With the sense of obligation strong upon me, I gave him his opportunity with delicacy and deliberation; he came up like an Itchen patriarch at a Mayfly, and I had a full ten minutes' race down the bank, with heartfelt tussles at intervals that made the engagement gloriously alive. This fish was quite worthy of the gaff, being a beautiful sea trout of 5 lb.

The five-pounder had been hooked on the shallow, and to the shallow I again devoted myself. There were rises, without touches at the fly, in two successive casts; at the third I was fast in another good fish; saw him roll over and over on the surface, and lost him. He was lightly hooked, and the little Killer and the cast came back entire. It was a sea trout quite as large as that last knocked on the head. But I could afford one loss that day, and my philosophy was presently rewarded by a sea trout of 2 1/2 lb. As the golden sun set in a world of rose-coloured clouds reflected in one of the loveliest of bays, I found myself engaged in a warm contest that seemed never to end. Twice there was not a yard of line left on the small winch; several times I had to go into the water again; between whiles I was kept on the trot and canter, and was puffing like an engine when the combat ended with a grilse of 3 1/2 lb., the gaffing of which caused the loss somehow of the ornamental handle of the instrument. I never found the gaff handle, but I retain a vivid remembrance of my gymnastics during that superb sunset. There was another sea trout to complete the day's sport—an inconsiderable pounder—which my henchman, however, strung up with the rest. Besides the eleven fish (one salmon, two grilse, and eight sea trout) there were some small brown trout, given to a young Norsker who had been hanging about the bank; and the bag was altogether an honest 34 lb. It must be remembered that the stream was always so strong that the endurance of the cast and strength of the rod was a really remarkable fact. At times the rod was bent until it seemed it must break somewhere, especially with the grilse and 5-lb. sea trout; but it came home as straight as ever. The same fine gut collar and the one small Killer accounted for every fish caught that day except the salmon, which was taken with the usual salmon equipment. Yes; balancing the accounts fairly, I really do think I may with a clear conscience set that one bright day against that one wet week in Norway. At the same time it must not be supposed that such a bag is anything to talk about for Norway. Did not H., only two days ago, venturing out for an afternoon, return early with 40 lb. of sea trout, and did he not three seasons back kill 60 lb. in part of a day? The moral of my modest narrative is that you may do more than you wot of sometimes with a trout rod and fine tackle even in the strong streams of Norway.

CHAPTER XVII

LAST DAYS WITH NORWAY AND ITS SEA TROUT

To-day we say "farvell" to the willing, good-hearted fellows who have served us so loyally these bygone weeks, and to the kindly people with whom you cannot help making friends after a brief residence amongst the simple farmer and village folk of Norway. We have, therefore, to prepare for flight of seventy miles down the fiord in order to catch the English boat at Bergen; and, to do this, we have had to charter a small craft on our own account if we would intercept the next regular steamer plying from Trondjhem southwards. The greater part of the day has been, in consequence, spent perforce in the odious work of packing up; but I need here only say, as cognate to packing up, that the tackle one carries is considerable, and that many of us undoubtedly get into the habit of taking much more than is necessary. At any rate, the occupation of stowing away impedimenta has gobbled a

considerable slice out of this day. Yet I have not only managed to get a bit of fishing but, strange to say, have made exactly the same bag of fish as to number and weight as I did on that bright day aforesaid. Perhaps it is unnecessary to begin by affirming that once more, as diem per diem for three weeks, we have had to work at our play amidst rain unceasing from morning till night. H. has been two hours and more gone up the river salmon fishing, and as dinner to-night will be somewhat late, I sit down with the storm racketing around the house, to write the history of this last day's sport with the sea trout. The consciousness of a fairly good day, all things considered, puts me at peace with myself and the world; and the transference from wet to dry clothes, not to speak of the storm-tossed appearance of an occasional boatman dropping down to the fiord, imparts a sense of comfort that is not at all a drawback when one takes up the pen.

Before getting into his *stolkjarre* this morning, H., referring to the high tides, solaced me by the remark that, although the river was a couple of feet higher than it ought to be, there was an even chance of fair sport. To begin with the water was not badly coloured, and it was clearing. The two hours preceding low water were, as usual, mentioned as the period in which business with sea trout should be most pressing. After, therefore, three hours in my littered rooms with two big portmanteaux, I summoned my man (always ready for a summons), and we trudged off along road and bye-track to the island which was our customary starting point, and a favourite place at all times.

If newly-run sea trout rested *en route* anywhere, it would be somewhere off its green banks. Above the island the river was a long, broad, dull reach, where a good deal of harling was done by the natives. At H.'s boundary there were rocks, breaking the stream into typical runs, and there was one channel or gut, about ten yards out from the island bank, which rarely failed in giving temporary lodgings to running fish. Properly speaking, an angler should, in fishing this down from shore, keep behind the low-growing alders; but it always seemed more advantageous to me, as a student of fish movement, to watch the progress of the fly. Never in the world could there be a better place to note the movements of a sea trout, and so you began the day with faculties all awake. The small Bulldog (after the point had been duly touched up by the file) was first put up, and at the third cast I beheld a brown streak and a silver flash, followed by an abrupt disappearance of the object. A sea trout had showed himself without nearing the fly, and had retired immediately to quarters. Ten minutes as a rule was ample for this island casting, but as, on this occasion, there was no other sign than that I have mentioned, I could not but spare a few extra minutes to my friend who had falsely made overtures to the Bulldog; the least to be done was another trial with a fly of a different pattern. But he remained sulky or scared.

Then we took to the boat, and began to fish the well-known water with careful assiduity. And my heart sank as time sped along, and resting-place after resting-place for fish was deliberately worked without result. Low clouds, in horizontal strata of white masses, shrouded the mountain sides, there was a miserable shiver of wind upon the water, and for any token to eye or hand there might not have been a fish in the river. By and by we came to the conclusion that, for the time being, the game was not worth the candle; and we went ashore to snatch a hasty luncheon under the dripping eaves of a boat-house. In the bows of the boat there were two fish, so insignificant that we would not weigh them, though we afterwards found that they were each about 2 lb. We shrugged our shoulders on the surmise that either there had been no run of sea trout during these propitious moonlight nights, or that they were by one consent in one of their non-taking humours. Sea trout, however, are notoriously capricious, and not being likely to get any moister than I already was from the rain, I determined, before saying a final good-bye, to toil on through the two hours after low water, notwithstanding that what remained was the lower part of the beat on which the slight incoming tide made itself felt earliest.

When you are fishing on the forlorn-hope principle, you are not thinking much about the immediate chances of sport. At times of anything like encouragement, you are keenly particular as to the fall of the fly and its correct working on an even keel; nay, you are so sensitive and alert that the touch of a passing leaflet on the hook produces some sort of excitement. Every cast goes out with a cluster of hopes in pursuit, and dreams as to possibilities; you keep looking round to be satisfied that the gaff is ready to hand, and everything in the boat shipshape for action. As it was after luncheon to-day, you think of anything but a fish taking hold; you swish on monotonously and mechanically; you muse of friends at home and abroad, of the sport you enjoyed yesterday or the day before, of chances lost, perhaps even of your general career through either a well-ordered or misspent life as the case may happen to be; and then, hey presto! you are startled, brought up with a round turn by a sudden plunge of the rod and that delicious sound—an alarm of the reel.

This was precisely my case, and from the evidences permitted it should have been a worthy fish which, so suddenly welcome, intruded upon reverie. One of the disadvantages of boat fishing in a big, strongly flowing Norway river, is the prolonged chances given to your fish by the necessity of going ashore to land him. We had now to tow this unknown quantity close upon a hundred yards across before we could gain the shore, and the hooked one was resisting all the time. It turned out to be a 3-lb. sea trout, hooked foul. For a little while there was seldom a cast without at least a rise. Twice the fish broke water heavily without touching the feathers, and that is comparatively an out of the way occurrence. Two or three times they just touched the hook, ran out a yard or so of line, fluttered on the top of the water, and were off. This is one of the common phases of sea-trout fishing; it just now showed that the fish were in a different temper from that of the pre-luncheon era, when there was no moving them, whether truly or falsely. There was, at any rate, a change, promising that sooner or later they would fall into a really gripping mood. Sea trout are indeed kittle cattle. There are days when the fish one and all seize the fly boldly and are fastened beyond recall, while for days in succession they touch the hook only to get off the moment a fair strain is realised.

Three times during this fast-and-loose interval was the fly changed. Now it was a Jock Scott with

double hook, now a Durham Ranger on single hook, now the Bulldog again. The latter, however, was out of favour, and I rummaged out from the box a Fiery Brown, which I had selected with some others from the stock of Little (of the Haymarket), who happened to be in Norway at the time inspecting certain salmon and trout rivers, with days of fishing in the intervals, and who was good enough to allow me to take what I wanted from his book on the morning of his departure for England. The Fiery Brown did very well. It brought me in succession fish of 4 1/2 lb., 3 lb., and 2 1/2 lb., and others, so that at four o'clock in the afternoon, instead of two small sea trout in the boat, I had ten, and was quite satisfied if they remained at that figure.

On this last day I did not, however, care to lose sight for ever of that half-hearted sea trout which had baulked me at starting up at the island. A., although he was out of sorts, and had been pretty well worked day by day, was for towing the boat up-stream and fishing the whole river down again, but to this I objected. There was no use in working a willing horse to death; and perhaps I might also honestly say that by this time I was a trifle tired myself. We therefore left the boat at its usual moorings half-way, and plodded up through the sloppy marsh and over the slippery rocks to the desired spot. I wanted no more two- or three-pounders, and, in a sort of care-nothing spirit, decided upon a Butcher, of small salmon-fly size, this being perhaps one of the very best all-round patterns for Norwegian waters. A few casts tested the hold where my sea trout of the morning lay, but he was still obdurate, unless he had adopted the unlikely course of pushing upwards since our transient interview.

I pulled out a few more yards of line, and fished farther out over water that was deeper and not of high repute as the halting-stage of sea trout. But I had my reward presently in a determined assault upon the fly, delivered well under water.

It might here be mentioned that at the tapering point of the island, some fifty yards below, a swift branch stream, created by the island, poured in; and again fifty yards farther on there was a general conjunction of streams and eddies, making a leaping, roaring toss of broken water, with a tremendously heavy, sliding volume to the left. Below this lively meeting-place the concentrated currents swept round furiously under the cliff at right angles. It was tolerably certain disaster to one party if ever a fish got so far as that. To be forewarned was, however, to be forearmed, and, knowing the dangers of the position, we always examined our cast beforehand, so that, in case of the tug of war, defeat should not be caused by defective gut. It was evident from the very beginning that I was now at issue with a heavy fish of some kind. There was that short steady run deep in the water which we all like; no foolish pirouetting at the end of the line on the top of the water here. The rod was arched to its utmost; everything was splendidly taut. It was one of those combats when the fisherman feels that he may, when challenged, plant his feet wide apart and lean bodily against what he is holding.

After the preliminary canter the fish made a gallant rush straight down, shot like an arrow past the end of the island, and, hesitating an instant, betrayed a desire to sheer into the heart of the rapid. Kept out of this by a firm hand, he sped across to the other side, then made another attempt to get down to the narrows. For just about a minute it was neck or nothing between us, but I had made up my mind that, whether he broke me or not, go a yard farther towards danger he should not. He might have known what was my fell purpose, for, after doggedly holding his own while I might count ten, he came up, literally inch by inch, in response to the cautious turn of the winch handle. It is the acme of sport to have a fine fish on your winch, as it were, trying his best to increase distance, fighting right and left incessantly, and yet compelled to advance against his will in the teeth of a powerful glacier-fed stream. There was a prolongation of this exquisite excitement. Sometimes the fish would be winched up to within thirty yards of line, and then in a twinkling there would be fifty or sixty yards quivering at the stretch, and the old tactics had to be repeated. The fear all the while was that the fish, however well hooked at first, might eventually break away the hold; but I had not now to learn that in such a dilemma it is always well to be as hard with the fish as the tackle will bear, and the time arrived when the line became short and the fish subdued, and A., seeing his opportunity with the gaff, waded in amongst the boulders at the very point of the island. Nothing, however, could induce the fish to come into the moderately slack water where gaffing would have been an easy matter. He floundered about on the very verge of the branch stream, and before long, rather than give more line, I was forced to walk back amongst the undergrowth.

It was time the fish was out of these mutual difficulties, and if he would not take the steel where he ought to have been, we must strike him where and how we could. Back amongst the bushes I could just see A.'s head and bent body with the outstretched gaff. As the poor fellow had missed a fish once or twice that day (being as I have before said much indisposed with a severe cold and a splitting headache), I was, at this delay, fearful of the sequel, and observed with horror his wild, scythe-like sweep with the gaff. I could feel also, but too surely, that the fish had received a violent blow; but the sound of its continued splashing in the water and the steady strain upon the line allowed me to breathe again, and to realise that the weapon had not touched the gut. A. would get very nervous if you spoke to him under these circumstances, and the ejaculation that would have only been natural was therefore suppressed. Silently retiring a few steps farther into the bushes, with tightly set lips, I could only hope for the best. The best happened, and in a moment or two A. came up the grassy slope with a glorious sea trout of 12 lb. impaled upon the gaff. It was a mystery that the ending was of this kind, for on the shoulder of the fish there was a rip quite six inches long, where the gaff, on its errand of failure a few moments before, had shockingly scored the flesh. "A good one for the last," I said, "now we will go home"; and homewards we went, calling at the boat on our way down to string up the rest of the spoil, which I counted and weighed there and then, and, as I intimated earlier, found that it was exactly the record of my other best day in August—eleven fish (but all sea trout) weighing 34 lb.

Having written so much of this last day with the sea trout, I find on inquiry that there is no sign of

H. yet, and that dinner will not be ready for at least another hour. I therefore amuse myself by going through my daily record, to tot up the gross returns. We are very curiously fashioned, inside as well as out, and although, considering the adverse circumstances which I have not failed to describe, I ought to be contented, I find myself grieving. Will the reader guess for a moment why? I will save his time by stating that it is because upon adding up the daily jottings of my notebook, I find that I leave off just 5 lb. short of 400 lb.—ninety-eight fish totalling 395 lb., not including sundry bags of brown trout. This is hard, but it is too late now to make the gross weight even figures. It is much too dark to go out again, the tide would be all wrong if I did go out, yet had I known that I was so near 400 lb. I should have remained on that river until I had made it up.

The salmon fishing, I may take the opportunity of adding, was a failure. But for the fact that we had hired the river for ten days, we probably should never have gone to the trouble of making the two or three attempts we did make. There had been some fine fish taken during the weeks when we were occupied in sea-trout fishing. There had been one of 57 lb. killed on a spoon, and on my first visit to our newly acquired fishing, a party of young gentlemen, who had taken the other side of the water, were in high spirits. On the lawn in front of the house there lay a fish of over 30 lb., another of 29 lb., and two smaller ones.

The angler who had caught them naturally thought that with a record of four fish weighing 96 lbs. in a day, and that his first day, too, and the fish all caught with the fly, he was in for an uncommonly good thing. But the river, instead of improving, afterwards got worse, and to the time of our leaving the party had had indifferent sport after that auspicious beginning. The sight of the big fellows lying white and shapely on the grass in front of the chalet taught me that I might have driven up two or three hours earlier, but there was still reason to suppose that there might be a salmon left for me. I began by hooking and playing in the first pool a small red fish of, I should say, 7 lb., which did me the honour of making a graceful twirl when I had, as I supposed, tired him out; with a flutter of his tail, he sheered off with contemptuous slowness under my very nose into the deeps again. An hour later I got a similar fish, small and red (just under 7 lb.), which did not escape. By and by, with a full-sized Durham Ranger, I had an affair of the good old sort; it was a well-sustained contest after I had been landed on the farther shore, terminated by the landing of a bright, handsome salmon of 25 lb. A young gentleman on the same side, fishing from the boat with a prawn, hooked and brought to the top, while I was playing mine, a fish of equal size apparently, but it got off, leaving him still the consolation of an 18-lb. fish and another smaller, which lay in his boat.

One of the most curious days in the way of weather was yesterday. It was my turn to fish the salmon water, and I did fish it, hard and honestly, but came ashore with a clean boat. H., on the same day, did splendidly with the sea trout in his own water, making a bag of close upon 40 lb. There was a gale blowing in the morning; rain of course was falling, but the curiosity of the day was an intermittent sirocco, which came up the valley like blasts from a fiery furnace. The wind was so overpowering on my salmon reaches that it was hardly possible either to hold the boat or to get out line. But here is a summons to dinner, and I have only time to add that on one day last week I had a very pretty half day with the sea trout, getting six fish, which weighed 29 lb., and they included one of 8 lb., one of 6 lb., and two of 4 lb. each, all caught with the small Bulldog. Three fish, weighing 17 lb., is the entry for another day, and that included an 11-lb. bull trout. On August 15, which was a day of continual losses from short rising, there were four sea trout, weighing 18 lb., one of them a fish of 9 1/2 lb. On the following day, fishing from eleven till three in a bright sun, the take was five fish and some small trout, making a total of 24 lb.

One morning (it is August 30) the mountain tops were beautifully white. There has been heavy snow during the night, and the poor hard-working people I find reaping down their scanty oats, or chopping off their 3-in. grass for hay, in a bitter north wind. The G. P. F., as we trudge off to his water, draws my attention to that spot in the middle of the estuary which has been mentioned before as exposed at low water. There are now a man and three women upon it, mowing and gathering in whatever growth it bears, so that not even this is unworthy of the economy enforced by their hard conditions of life. We fall into converse, as we walk, about the manner in which the Norway salmon are netted, and truly the wonder is that so many run the gauntlet and reach the spawning grounds. In ascending the fiords the fish creep along within some twenty yards of the shore, and this makes it easy for the native to intercept them. Besides bag and stake nets, there is a look-out dodge, under which a primitive but fatal net is hung out at each promontory in the direct path of the travelling fish. The nets are off, however, and the traps open after the middle of August. Thus holding sweet counsel by the way like the pilgrims of old, we defy the north wind, and can afford to stop occasionally to admire the new panorama which has been arranged during the night. Where there were only occasional patches of snow yesterday, to-day there is a widespread whitening, and the folds of the ermine mantle are lying far down the shoulders, traces of the first heavy downfall of the season. We do not expect any sport to-day, but a moderately lucky star smiles, and for myself, on one of Bickerdyke's *Salmo irritans* (Jock Scott) patterns, I get a lively quarter of an hour with an 11-lb. sea trout, a grand fish, so thick that I am not certain about it until I lay it on the grass. There was a fish of 14 lb. or 15 lb. killed by my friend yesterday, which he pronounced a fair sample of the richly spotted and burly bull trout which runs up late in the season. He himself has killed one of 19 lb. My fish I at first fancied might be one of the breed, but it is not, as indeed I see for myself the moment he points out the difference. In the afternoon I flank this fine *Salmo trutta* with a brace more—3 1/2 lb. and 1 1/2 lb., some compensation for a wet, cold, blustering day.

The next day is hard, clear, exhilarating. The snow has spread out rather than melted, and encroached still farther down the hillsides, but the sun waxes strong as we drive to the upper water,

and the bolder mountains up at the lake are in dazzling splendour, and apparently close. There is a wire across the stream, an easy means of crossing for the ladies and gentlemen who inhabit the handsome fishing lodge built by an English gentleman on the very edge of a grand salmon pool. The stalwart Norsk gillie who attends him found it a trifle too easy yesterday, for it gave way and let him into the river. The house-party were making ready to leave, however, and the young ladies, who had been doing well with the salmon, had the concluding excitement of their favourite henchman floundering in the water to take on board the steamer as a final remembrance of their visit. The toss by which the lake water escapes is a magnificent commotion of white roaring water, tossing at first sheer over huge rocks, then tumbling headlong down a broken slope. Just below is a deep hole, always, however, in a state of froth, upheaval, thunder, and spray. Away races the water in a turbulent pool about fifty yards long, rough and uproarious on either side, but more reasonable in the middle. Below are the rapids again. The game is to kill a salmon in this pool. There is not much difficulty in finding him, for there are always fish there, and they take well when the humour is on them. By every right, human and otherwise, Hooper should take first toll of this ticklish maelstrom; it is called by his name, but, as usual, he insists upon his guest making or marring the chance, and leaves me for other pools bearing the names of brother anglers, members of that Anglo-Norwegian band of sportsmen whose names have been welcome household words in these parts for many a year. I confess I like not this pool. To command it you have to wade out in a very rough shallow, amongst bushel-sized boulders, each more slippery than its fellow. The din of the foss is deafening; the rush of the water as you stand with uncertain foothold over the deep dark swirl bewildering.

Before leaving me my friend finishes his brief explanation of the conditions with the application of the whole. "Hold on"; that is the ABC, the Alpha and Omega of it. So mote it be. Still, saying it is one thing, doing it another. My steel-centred Hardy I know pretty well, and have no fear, though it is small by comparison with the full-sized greenhearts to which my attendant is accustomed, and I can see that he distrusts it. Of the line and twisted gut collar I am reasonably sure; the hook, of course, is what it may be. But I test the tackle all along, and fish down the pool with a large Butcher. It does not take long, with this express speed of water, and, I think rather to my relief, nothing happens. Then I flounder out, sit on a rock, fill a full pipe, and look through my flies. Here is a Wilkinson that brought me a big fish on bonny Tweed last autumn; for auld lang syne I meet the blue-eyed gaffsman's shake of the head with a confident smile, and put up the Kelso fly. I know the hang of the pool now, and get back again to my precarious ledge, feeling much more master of the position.

What is that feeling you get in salmon fishing that tells you so surely that the fly is doing its work well? Certain it is that such an inward assurance helps you amazingly. Thus at the fourth cast there is a thrilling pull under water, a momentary, but shrill, complaint from the winch, and a quivering arched rod. "Hold on," of course, means shutting the mouth of that reel. The House of Commons gag was never better applied. Not five yards of line, in fact, go out after the first rush, stopped with a firmness that amazes myself. But I have to follow down, in stumbling cautiousness for another ten yards, which bring me perilously near the torrent of the pool's tail. Now it is the salmon or the angler. And the fish responds to the insidious sideway slanting of the rod, and is good enough to head, ever so gingerly, up into the heavier water. Never no more, *Salmo Salar*, unless something smashes—not an inch, be you of gold instead of silver. How the good man gaffs the fish in the rough edge stream I know not; only he does it masterly, and with back and knees trembling, and breath puffing hard and short, I drop upon the moss in an ecstasy of silence.

Yet it is only a salmon of 15 lb.; but that quarter of an hour of "hold on" is the most intense thing, so far, of my experience with salmon, not forgetting that surprise, many a year back, when I killed my first salmon with a No. 1 trout fly by the dorsal in the Galway river. The split-cane rod comes out of the fray as straight and happy as when new, and I notice that, as I am recovering my equanimity, the gaffer examines it closely, handles it fondly, and pronounces it correct, in warm English words. The rod indeed seems to have entered into the fun, and to say, "Get up; don't waste time." We therefore move off to another pool, and in the course of a couple of hours, after trying two or three different patterns in a bright sun, I get a 12-lb. salmon on a Carlisle Bulldog, medium size; this, however, in a pool where we all have fair play.

On either side of a foss below that above mentioned is one of the salmon traps peculiar to the country, built in the slopes which form a natural salmon pass. It is a grating of massive timber and stone blocks, roughly fashioned like an inverted V; and, on the principle of the Solway stake nets, when a salmon swims into it he cannot return. He is trapped in a narrow chamber at the end of the open entrance. The old timbers of these particular traps remained, an irregular line of upstanding palisadings, at the top of the foss nearest the roadside, protruding a yard or so, jagged and weather-stained, out of water. Hereby hangs a tale worth telling. My friend was fishing the short swift pool above, on his favourite "hold on" principle, but there was no checking the salmon. "Do they ever go over?" he asked his man, in the midst of the battle. "No, sir," was the reply. "Well, there's one over now," said my friend, as the fish shot over into the churning foam. At the foot of the foss the little road curved round with the stream, making a sharp bend at the tail of the rapid. Altogether it was an ugly situation at the best; as the line had become entangled in those weather-worn palisades it was hopeless. There was a hang-up. The angler looked at his winch, which was nearly empty: he could see the barrel between the few coils of line left—left of 120 yards. The gillie was (and is) one of the smartest, now that he has had a few years with the Englishman. At the suggestion of his master he departed to reconnoitre, got round the bend of the road, and was lost to view, the master remaining rod in hand above the foss, as well hung up as angler could desire. The man, it seems, saw the fish in the tail of the rapid, tied a stone to a piece of cord, threw it over the line, hauled in hand over hand, and gaffed the salmon, a beautiful fish of 25 lb. Then he went up and told the angler, who was still holding

on to the tight line, for it was jammed and would not answer to a pull. A consultation followed, and the man went back round the corner, and discovered that the line would slip from below. The angler thereupon cut it at the winch and the line was recovered. This is the kind of adventure, demanding resource upon the spot, and experience in every move on the board, that so piquantly spices angling in Norwegian rivers of this kind, where the ordinary methods of fishing with the fly are practised.

On the morning when the breechloaders are cracking amongst the coveys there is incipient frost, followed by a blazing sun, which finishes off the remnant of new snow which did not melt yesterday; and there is a violet hue upon the shallower water which ought to look brown. Beautiful to look at, but fatal, they tell me, is this reflected tint. The shade of the alders and the velvet pile of the mosses induce a fit of idleness; it is only the flycatchers, in great numbers, that are busy in the heat and glare, twittering as they hawk for insects, in notes that suggest robin redbreast on a winter day. By and by the clouds obscure the sun and we tackle our pools, with the result, for myself, of sea trout of 7 1/2 lb. and 3 1/2 lb., and a miscellaneous lot of a dozen and a half of brown trout whipped out on a small cast in the evening hour. Before this happens, however, I sit me down for a spell, and, in pursuance of a determination to make these notes as practical as can be consistently done, jot down the following sketches of pool types as they present themselves to my friendly vision. They will answer, I dare believe, for many a river in Scandinavia.

i. This is a true boiler, a torrential pool never at rest. It charges down amongst huge masses of rock, and just where the descent is comparatively easy the inevitable salmon trap is fixed. Sometimes the salmon takes in the very boil, if you cast fly right into the milky tossings, and believe me you need not strike. Hooking is quite an automatic affair if the fish comes. Downward it goes at speed, and your man will have to steady you maybe as you follow amongst the stones, at least until the rapid has become something like a stream.

ii. Here you have a very strong stream, making a ridge of wavy upheaval in the middle. The fishable water is on either side in an average height of river. Wading is the plan, and you can fish every inch of likely ground. I know the fish lie in this central disturbance, for I saw one dart out amongst the waves, and follow the fly for some fifteen yards, by which time the line was at the proper angle for sport if the salmon had inclined that way. Pity that it was not so, for I have always found turbulent water likely to send a turbulent customer. I love a pool of this kind, if only for the bright life and music of it.

iii. Now we have a totally different type. The pool is at least 200 yards long, is, in fact, a broad straight section of the river, with two distinct streams, and an oily passage between, in which the salmon lie. A favourite method here is to be let down slowly in the boat. The Norwegians are extremely clever in this work, and it is a treat to see one of them tow the boat up with one line attached to the bow and another to the centre thwart. They steer it between boulders and round spits with the certainty of driving a horse with reins. By letting you down, the boat never disturbs the pool proper, and you command every portion. On hooking a fish you get out and play it from the bank, a practice, of course, followed also on the necessary occasions when the boat must be rowed.

iv. A stately sweep of dark deep water, with a high-wooded bank of rock on the farther side, and ample wading ground on your own, with pleasantly shingled bottom perhaps, and a current where you may work breast-deep in safety. Yet it is strong and even enough to make very tolerable a notion quite new to me, though, no doubt, well known to many. I learned it in this very pool. When you are wading about to the fork, just sit down on the water, lean back upon it, and you find delightful support and help from the buoyant easy chair of running water. There will be the inevitable rapid by and by, and the salmon have a great fancy for taking you at about the last cast at the end of the glide. This is a capricious sort of pool, but when the fish do take they are worth the having, and are not given to fooling. A cock salmon of 40 lb. was killed here this summer.

v. This is a swift and massive stream that is ever troubled and seething rather than rough, patched with smooth areas that look much more innocent than they are. Your line will get drowned somewhat until you know the tricks of the under-currents and eddies. From the boat you often have a chance of casting right and left as you drop ever so slowly down, and it must be a good man who knows how to keep on rowing without advancing faster than the stream.

It is in such a pool that I make my last cast for salmon in this delectable valley, and it fully satisfies my chief ambition of this ten days' fishing; humble enough in all conscience, being nothing higher than to finish up knowing that I have not once returned at night with an empty bag. Even that is something, and it is something done. In the last two hours I get a 12-lb. salmon, a 2-lb. sea trout, and a leash of 1/2-lb. brown trout, all on the same No. 3 Jock Scott.

On one of our days we see a procession of carioles proceeding up the valley, and all the natives are in a state of agitation, if such sober-minded people ever are agitated. *The Midnight Sun* is in the fiord, and these ladies and gentlemen are ashore for the day bound for the glacier. We dine on board at night with the captain, who is a brother angler, and who makes light of a sea trout of 10 lb., which he has caught in the afternoon. Well; I have met many anglers in Norway who feel disgusted at such game; they want salmon, and think themselves hardly used if sea trout intrude. But I thank the gods (when I suppose I ought to sit in sackcloth for perverted taste) that up to this present *Salmo trutta*, great or small, evokes my fervent gratitude, and I can only say that, while I paid my five gaffed salmon the highest respect, I recall with no less satisfaction my seventeen sea trout; and, while serving this week on the grand jury at the Old Bailey, sketched the best of them one after another on the margin of the prisoners' calendar, and found a true bill for at least the fine fellows of 11 lb., 9 lb., 8 lb., and 7 1/2 lb., which headed the list. They are good enough prisoners for me, anyhow. However, I really believe our

captain was after all secretly proud of his ten-pounder, as he sat at the head of the table in the palatial saloon of the magnificent steam yacht of oceanic size. The passengers seemed entranced with their luxurious life and the charms of the fiords they were visiting, and we heard a concert on board that was really first-rate. A fortnight of this sort of yachting for twelve or fifteen guineas is, verily, one of the privileges of this age of enterprise.

On my way south I broke the journey to spend a couple of days upon another river, but only added a few sea trout to my achievements. The salmon were plentiful enough, but they were waiting, sullenly yet restlessly, for a rise of water, and I left the two anglers, owners of the river, who were living in a snug Norwegian home of their own, waiting, too, with patient resignation. There they were amongst the fishing tackle, guns, cartridge cases, dogs, and miscellaneous paraphernalia essential to noble sportsmen who, poor fellows, in these hard times, can only spend a few months every year with a lovely fiord under their noses, and a few hundredweights of salmon, and odds and ends of reindeer, blackcock, and ryper now and then to engage their attention. I wonder no more that English sportsmen go a little mad about their beloved Norway; and that hard-working judges, bishops, university dons, and professional men of all sorts and conditions, find their best balm of Gilead amongst its picturesque valleys and hills. Of course the sportsmen are not always happy. If in the smoking-room on our homeward passage A. was able to remark that he had finished up, two days previously, with a 30-lb. salmon, and B. stated the heavy totals on a few favoured rivers, there were C. and D. to bemoan deplorable blanks, and tell of anglers who had gone home disgusted before their term of tenure expired; indeed, one fellow passenger whispered me near the smoke stack that a gentleman of his acquaintance had paid close upon 400 pounds for a river that yielded him just thirty fish for the entire season.

CHAPTER XVIII

GLIMPSES OF CANADA, ETC.

Perhaps I may be allowed to say that my visits to both Canada and the States were on journalistic work which gave little time for play of any sort, and I half fear that I only introduce these scraps of fishing matter to get an excuse for re-telling my own story of how I caught a big "lunge" in Canada, in the early autumn of 1897. In the Natural History books of the Province of Ontario the designation is Maskinongé. The word is often made *mascalonge*, or *muscalunge*, and, it being less labour to pronounce one than four syllables, people in many districts where the fish is caught, for short call it "lunge." As offering a minimum strain upon the pen, in this form I will refer to it in the course of my chronicle of how I caught my sample. The fish is, in a word, the great pike (*Esox nobilior*), and it is to all intents and purposes possessed of the general characteristics of the *Esocidae* family. Our old friend *E. lucius* occurs in Ontario waters, and the Indians call it *kenosha*. The French having, in old days, rendered this *kinonge*, we can easily understand why the name, as adopted by Ontario, was given. While, however, the pike proper is common to both sides of the Atlantic, the 'lunge is confined to the basin of the St. Lawrence.

My angling friends in the club at Toronto could lay before me a bewildering choice of places where I should have a fair chance of that one 'lunge and one bass with which I professed I would be content. But to do them justice it would require a week of time, and much travel by night and day. After contriving and scheming I discovered that three days would be the utmost I could spare for fishing, and on the advice of friends, Lake Scugog, at Port Perry, was decided upon as a tolerable ground, not more than forty miles from the city. We were set down on the permanent way of the Grand Trunk line about nine o'clock, and were met by a couple of local gentlemen, anglers good and true, who had been advised of our approach, who had kindly come down to guide our footsteps aright, and who welcomed us in the true spirit of sportsmen. First came breakfast in the hotel opposite, or to be exact, first came inquiries of the boatman and all and sundry as to possibilities of sport. The lake was most fair to look upon from the veranda, the water curled by a nice breeze, the sun shining over it, and the abundant woods of an island about two miles from our landing-place.

But the fish had not been biting well for a week. It was incomprehensible, but true, that the boats had never returned so empty of fish as latterly. One shrewd boatman, who fell to our lot for the day, said that the Indians, of whom the small remnant of a tame tribe lived as agriculturists on the island, had a tradition that in August and part of September the 'lunge shed their teeth, and that during this period they never take the bait, or feed in any shape or form. What fish did Scugog contain? Well, there were shiners, suckers, eels— Oh! sporting fish! Ah, well, there were no trout, but there were 'lunge, perch, and any number of green, or large-mouthed, bass. This was Ben's information, elicited by cross-examination as we sat on the veranda before unpacking our effects.

As to what he considered a reasonable bag, he had often, from a four or five hours' outing, returned with a dozen and a half of 'lunge or bass, the former averaging 9 lb. or 12 lb., the latter 2 lb. or 3 lb. The opening day was June 15, and at daylight the lake, so he said, was alive with boats, each containing its fisherman. He had known a ton of 'lunge and bass landed every day for the first week. I am not to be held responsible for these statements, but everything I subsequently heard from

gentlemen who weigh their words and know what they are talking about, confirmed the assertions of the Port Perry professional. 'Lunge of 40 lb. had been taken moreover, but not often. These were the encouragements which dropped like the dew of Hermon; refreshing us into temporary forgetfulness of the undoubted fact that the visitors who had been angling on the lake had met, even on the previous day, with bitter disappointment. The boats had not been able to account for more than perhaps a brace each of four or five pound fish.

Skipper Ben stared in amaze at the preposterous tackle with which I proposed to try and catch my first 'lunge. I had much better take the rig-out provided with the boat. If, however, he disapproved of my equipment, how shall I describe my feelings with regard to the vessel for which (man and tackle included) we were to pay two dollars per diem. It was a canoe of the smallest, built to hold one person besides the man at the small oars. It was impossible to stand up in such a cranky craft, and your seat was about 6 in. from the bottom boards. No wonder all the fishing was done by hand-lines. The local method was simplicity itself. To fifty yards of line of the thickness of sash-cord was attached a large Colorado spoon, armed with one big triangle, and mounted on an eighth of an inch brass wire. The canoe was slowly rowed about, up and down and across the lake, the spoon revolving behind at the end of from ten to fifteen yards of line. All that the angler had to do was to sit tight on his tiny seat in the stern of the cockle-shell, holding the line in his hand, and dodging the inevitable cramp as best he could by uneasily shifting his position from time to time.

This, of course, is trailing in its most primitive form, and it is the method adopted by the majority of fishing folks on Canadian inland waters. Even the grand lake trout (*Salvelinus namaycush* really) are taken in this way in the spring and fall when they come in upon the shallows. The fish hook themselves, and are generally hauled neck and crop into the boat; but the careful boatman will have a gaff on board for the emergency of a ten-pounder or over. Many, however, do not affect this luxury, but treat great and small alike on the pulley-hauley principle. They say, nevertheless, that few fish are lost. The hooks are so big and strong that there is no reason why they should be lost when once they are securely hooked, as they will almost invariably be by this easy style. The boatman is always maintaining his steady two mile an hour pace, just sufficient in fact to keep the spoon on the spin, and the lightly hooked fish of course quickly find freedom by honest and abrupt tearage. The coarse triangle fairly within the bony jaws would be instantly struck into solid holding ground, and with tackle fit for sharks, there would be no more to be said. Something, however, there would be to be done, and the same simplicity which characterises the style of angling is carried on to the process of dealing with a hooked fish.

"Yank him in," is the order for medium sizes, and I had the opportunity very early of seeing how it was done. We were nearing a canoe in which a gentleman was seated, holding his hand-line over the gunwale, and slightly jerking it to and fro; suddenly he struck with might and main. The effort should, as one would suppose, have wrenched the head off an ordinary fish, and I should say this event often happens with 2-lb. or 3-lb. victims. In this instance there was no harm done. Out of the water, like a trout, ten yards or so astern of the canoe, came a yellow-hued, long, narrow-bodied fish, and presently, hand over hand, it was dragged up to the side and lifted in by sheer might. It was a 'lunge of apparently 7 lb., and the only one taken by the fisher, though he had been out three or four hours.

We had not been long afloat before I began to see that Ben was not far wrong in preferring his rude tackle to mine, though he was all abroad in his reasons for ruling me out of court. His belief, expressed in the vigorous language of the born colonial, was that it was darn'd nonsense to suppose that my line would hold a fish, or that my rod was other than a toy. The difficulty, of course, was with the boat. For the sort of spinning to which we are accustomed in England the thing was useless. The discomfort was vast and continuous, and as the hooks were everlastingly fouling in loose weeds, and the progress of the boat converted the hauling in of the line into not inconsiderable manual labour, the outlook became barren in the extreme. My companion A. in the stern was furnished with the orthodox hand-line, and I sat on the second thwart facing him. The rod rendered this necessary, and A. told me afterwards that Ben spent most of his time winking and contemptuously gesticulating over my shoulder. Probably this accounted for the number of times he pummelled the small of my back with the clumsily advanced handles of his oars.

My rod, I might explain, was the trolling or sea fishing version of a capital greenheart portmanteau rod, to which I had treated myself in hopes of use in Canadian waters, and was a stiff little pole (in this form) of a trifle over 9 ft. The medium dressed silk trout-line on a grilse winch was about a hundred yards in length, and quite sound, and on a twisted gut trace I had attached a 3-in. blue phantom. Ben impartially, not to say profanely, objected to the lot. We had ample opportunity to admire the very pretty scenery of the lake shores, and the charmingly timbered island which for ten miles diversified the blue water. The depth was seldom over 6 ft. or 8 ft., there were subaqueous forests of weeds in all directions, but there was a kind of channel known to Ben where one had the chance of intervals of peace—spells of clear spinning for A.'s great spoon to starboard and my delicate phantom to port. In those times of tranquil leisure we learned much as to the splendid duck-shooting of the fall and the wonderful stores of fish in the lake.

Scugog is not a show place, but it is beautiful in its quiet way; the surroundings are quite English, and Port Perry is a pleasant type of the small, prosperous Canadian town where nobody perhaps is very rich and nobody very poor. The aforesaid island in the centre makes the lake appear quite narrow, and, indeed, its length of fourteen miles is double its widest breadth with island included. And it is one of a chain of Ontarian waterways so vast that, had we been so minded and properly prepared, we might have passed through close upon 200 miles of lakes and connecting channels. Two hours of incessant hauling in of weed bunches, and no sign of a run of any other kind, were enough; you could not be

always admiring the green slopes and woodlands of maple and pine; discussions of local topography cannot be indefinitely prolonged.

Thank the gods my good shipmate and travelling companion A. was cheery to the backbone, as, in truth, a good-looking fellow of fourteen stone, and with nothing to do but travel about the world and enjoy himself, ought to be. Being no angler, it was all the same to him whether fish sulked or frolicked; his patience was as inexhaustible as his amiability, and when my questioning of Ben about fish and fishing ceased by force of self-exhaustion, A. would quietly cut in with reminiscences of his recent run out to Colorado, former campings in the Rockies, adventures in Japan and all parts of Europe, and personal acquaintance with the States and the Dominion. The trouble that dear A. saved me in looking after baggage and tickets, the reliance I felt in his fighting weight and well set-up body, the placid smile with which he took life whatever it might be, were invaluable to me; and, though he accepted the ill-luck of our forenoon as only what he expected, as being, indeed, the ordinary outcome of most fishing expeditions, my chief desire was that he should have the bliss of landing a good fish. For myself I was not hopeful, and we went fishless ashore in the hot sun at mid-day, glad to release ourselves from the cramped positions in which we had been enduring the discomforts of that wretched skiff.

In the afternoon we went out again. What would I not have given for a boat really fit for the work—a steady, square-sterned craft, on the floor of which one might have stood firm, casting right and left, and able to take every advantage of those weeds which now made trailing a positive nuisance? Ben's theory was that twelve yards of line were enough for his style of business; that though a fish might be temporarily scared aside by the passage of the cockle-shell, it would be just about restored to quiet when the spoon came along, and more likely to dash at it than with a greater length of line. Of course, I stuck to our English ways, and kept my phantom engaged at a distance, when possible, of never less than thirty yards. In course of time Ben's objections and protests were once for all silenced; he gave me up as an opinionated ass, whom it was waste of time to trouble about any more.

"Smack, smack," at last—a momentary sensation at the rod-top. How the fish could have struck at my phantom, doubled up the soleskin body, without, however, touching a single hook of the deadly trio of triangles, was as much a marvel as ever it has been from the beginning. In the course of half an hour I had three such abortive runs at the phantom, and one small fellow of 1 1/2 lb., lightly hooked, bounded into the air and fell back free. Under these circumstances there was little thought of discomfort. Who cared for cramp now? The fish were assuredly on the move, and that one 'lunge' of my modest desire was not so remote a possibility as it had been in the forenoon. The chances of friend A. were of course held by Master Ben to be the best of the two, and, in truth, why not? For reasons hinted at above it would have delighted me if it was left for him to prove how unnecessary were all the finer precautions of scientific sport. Such things have happened in salt water, and, it may be, in fresh.

Musingly, as the canoe was proceeding midway between island and mainland, I was thinking of examples of the caprices of piscatorial fortune and of the positive instances when art and skill had been practically put to shame by the rudest methods. From the reverie, and a crouching position on the low seat of the miserable canoe, I was roused as by an electric shock. The rod was jerked downwards almost to the water, the winch flew, and the line, run out at express speed, cut into my forefinger. A., facing me, saw from my expression that something had happened, and, with the instinct of a sportsman, began to pull in his sash-cord and coil it neatly out of the scene of action.

"I have him," I said by way of assurance, and Ben realised that the whirring scream of the winch was not a mere private rehearsal. Growing excited he began to give me directions how to behave under the circumstances, taking it for granted that the rod and line would fulfil all his prophecies of disaster and failure. By the backing of small line, which was now for the first time being rushed off the reel, I knew that my game had in the preliminary dash not stopped under eighty yards, and it seemed therefore as if the great fish that plunged on the surface away in the wake, and leaped 5 ft. or 6 ft. into the air, could have no connection whatever with us. I had seen that kind of thing before, however, with salmon and sea trout, and tingled with joy at the evidence I presently had that the tumble back into the lake had not parted me from my game. Ben noticed as quickly as I did that the line presently slacked, and called Heaven to witness that the darned fish was off, and that he had been predicting such a result all along; the fact was the 'lunge' was racing in towards us. I am one of those anglers who hate being pestered by advice when playing a fish, and never pretend to choose my words to the interrupter.

Moreover, Ben had continued pulling, so that, besides the wind behind us and the weight of the fish, whatever it was, against me, I had the way of the boat to assist the enemy; furthermore, he announced his intention of pulling ashore, as he was in the habit of doing with the hand-line operation, and the nearest land was not a yard less than a mile off. Then I opened my mouth and spake with my tongue, and Ben, finding that I could shout bad language as well as he, proved himself after all a fine fellow amenable to orders, and a veritable sport when once he comprehended that here was a fish that must be humoured and not lugged in by brute force. He not only ceased rowing, but quickly tumbled to the trick in other respects. He backed water, and, shortly, was most intelligently taking care that the canoe should follow the fish. We all knew it was worth catching, and from its appearance during its flashing somersault in the air I had estimated it at about 15 lb.

It was a new experience to play a lively fish of respectable dimensions, sitting low and cramped, and fearing to move, in a cockle-shell canoe. If one could have stood up square and fair to the fight the course would have been clear; it would have been something to have knelt, but there was no opportunity for even that modest sort of compromise. And the fish did fight most gamely; certainly, too, with the odds immensely in its favour. Wrist, arms, shoulders, back, and legs of the angler were strained and pained by the efforts necessary to keep the taut line free of the boat, but A. ducked his

head deftly once when the fish shot to the left of me at right angles, and lay low until I had it back in line of communication again. Twice the fish tried the expediency of running in towards me, and alarming Ben with the slack line, delighting him in proportionate degree when the winching-in found all taut and safe. So far as we could make out afterwards the fight with my 'lunge lasted half an hour, and it was fighting, too, all the while in the gamest fashion.

Little by little the line was shortened, and the battle, so far as the rod and line went, was virtually won. Aching by this time in every limb, I welcomed the yellow-brown back when it came to the surface a few yards from the canoe. But here was another difficulty. How was the fish to be got into the boat? I could see now that it was certainly twenty pounds, and A. confessed that he had never used the gaff. Ben was out of the question, having his oars to look after, and even if he had been free the position would not allow me to bring the fish up to him. The gaff was strong and big, and it was furnished with a rank barb, generally a detestable implement in my estimation.

Yet it proved our salvation. The gaff handle, I should state, was tapered the wrong way—that is to say, it was smaller at the end where it should have afforded some sort of grip to the hand. A. slipped the barbed affair into the body with great adroitness, but he had no experience of the strength of such customers, and at the mighty plunge it made the gaff slipped out of his hands, and I had my fish (with the added weight of wood and steel) once more on my conscience.

Fortunately the tension on the line had not been relaxed. A. remained cool; Ben ordered him to seize my line. "I'll knock him out of the boat if he does," was the shout of another of the party, with a dulcet aside, "Lay hold of the gaff, old chap; we'll have him yet." And we did have him; A. leaned over, grasped the stick, hoisted the fish, kicking furiously, out of the water, and deposited it amongst our feet, where, in the confined space, there was for awhile an amusing confusion. Ben had a "priest" under his thwart, and by and by I found a chance for a straight smite at the back of the neck. The 'lunge received his *coup de grâce*, and we cooled down to sum up. Truth to tell, the three of us had for the last five minutes been as excited as schoolboys; the odds had been so much against us that the tussle was not what is termed a "gilt-edged security" until the fish lay still in the bottom of the canoe. He had been well hooked far down the throat by one triangle; the phantom with the other two came out of its own accord at the application of the priest, and the double gut of the triangle that remained inside was cut through.

Ben was profuse in his apologies for attempting to interfere and for making light of my rod and line, and frankly explained that he had never seen the like before in 'lunge fishing. The absent triangle lost me two fish in succession, and we went ashore to repair the damages and to weigh the fish. It was absolutely empty, was 4 ft. long, yet it only weighed 24 1/2 lb. For the length it was the narrowest fish I had ever seen. The head was 11 3/4 in. long from outer edge of gill cover to tip of lower snout. Ben showed it in triumph as we walked in procession from the landing-stage to the hotel, and when it became known that it had been caught on a small rod and trout line there was a popular sensation in the nice little town of Port Perry.

Men left their horses and buggies, workpeople threw down their tools and hurried to the scene, mothers caught their children in their arms and held them up to see. Later in the afternoon I killed another 'lunge of about 6 lb., and that too had an empty stomach. A party of American visitors returned at night with four or five of similar size, and every fish presented the same emaciated appearance. There was not a vestige of food in their stomachs. Had my good one been feeding well for a few days previously he would have been many pounds heavier. As it was, I ought to have preserved the skin and brought it home as a specimen, so long and gaunt was it, so different from our deep-bodied English pike, to which it otherwise bore, of course, a close family resemblance. This conclusion I arrived at by the aid of a suggestion from A. when it was too late; and some day I must try and catch a still finer specimen.

Captain Campbell, of the Lake Ontario (Beaver Line), informs me that he once brought over in a whisky cask the head of a maskinongé from the St. Lawrence that was said to weigh 140 lb., and it would really seem that these fish do occasionally run to weights far into the fifties and sixties. I never heard of anyone trying for 'lunge with live baits, or spinning with dead fish and the flights such as we use at home for pike. The use of the big spoon is universal. And I may add that a month later (say October) those fish would not have been quite so much like herrings in their insides.

Green bass and speckled trout are Canadian names, signifying the large-mouthed variety of the black bass for the one part, and our old friend fontinalis for the other. It will be remembered that under the circumstances of brief opportunity and far-distant waters which I have duly explained, my expectations were modest, and hope would have been satisfied with a simple sample each of the black bass, immortalised by Dr. Henshall, and the maskinonge of the lakes. How I caught my first 'lunge has been already told, and the story was, like the fish itself, a pretty long one. I may confess at once, with deep regret, that I have no excuse for length as to black bass, since I did not get even one. I had been warned that only in the early part of the season—the month of June—is there any chance with the fly in lakes, and very little in the rivers. They were, however, to be obtained by bait fishing, and on the day when I killed the 'lunge Ben took me out in the evening equipped with the correct tackle for bass. It consisted of a single piece of bamboo, about 15 ft. long, a strong line a few inches longer, a bung as float, and a hook with 2-in. shank, and gape of about 3/4 in. You will remember this kind of rig-out, only with hook of moderate size, as often used by Midland yokels in bream fishing. It is delightfully primitive. Heavily leaded, you swing out the line to its full extent, and, hooking a fish, haul him in without the assistance of such a superfluous luxury as a winch. There was a kind of bait-can in the bow of the canoe, but I asked no questions, contenting myself with trailing with a 2-in. phantom.

The fishing ground was along the water-grasses and reeds that extended hundreds of yards from the shore into the lake, and very shallow it was. The wind had completely died away, and the sun by six o'clock was well down in the west. Ben by and by told me to wind up, and urged the canoe into the heart of the weeds, in and in, until we were apparently in the midst of a verdant field of high coarse grass. Here he threw out the killick and unwound the line from his fishing pole. Then from the bait-can he took out a half-grown frog and impaled it upon the huge hook, which I now perceived was of the size and blue colour of the eel hooks of our boyhood. Looking around as he made his preparations I began to understand things. There was a uniform depth of 3 ft., and here and there were clearances—small pools, free of vegetation, and of varying dimensions. They might have an area of a couple or a couple of dozen yards. The frog was swished out into these open spaces, and if a bass was there, well and good. The fish was not allowed more than five minutes to make up his mind, and if nothing happened the bait was withdrawn and hurled elsewhere. If the bass mean feeding they let you know it pretty quickly, and in this simple way a fisherman often, in a couple of hours, gets a quarter of a hundredweight or so of them, ranging from 2 lb. to 5 lb.

But after a quarter of an hour with the frog, Ben pronounced the absolute uselessness of remaining any longer. While he was operating I had fixed up my most useful portmanteau-rod with its fly-fishing tops, and with a sea-trout collar, and a small, silver-bodied salmon fly cast over the open spaces. This was no more successful than the frog, and we, as a matter of fact, caught nothing at all that evening. These green bass take the bait voraciously ("like so-and-so bull-dogs," Ben assured me) when they are sporting, and haunt these reedy coppices in incredible numbers. As with the 'lunge so with the bass. I should say that with proper appliances and some approach to a skilful method, the arm, on a favourable day, would ache with the slaughter. One of the canoes next morning at breakfast time brought in a couple of these fish of about a pound weight. They were dark green in colour, fitted up with a big mouth and a spiny dorsal fin, and had all the burly proportions of a perch, minus the hog-shaped shoulders.

That same day two Port Perry gentlemen, keen and good anglers both, left their homes and businesses to drive me and friend A. in a pair horse buggy some nine miles across country to a fishing house belonging to a club of which they were members. Indeed, they were part proprietors, for more and more in Canada every bit of water that is worth the acquisition is taken up for preservation. The club consists principally of professional and business men from Toronto, and the doctors are a large proportion. For the sake of a couple of ponds, and the facilities for damming others out of a picturesque valley, these sportsmen had formed themselves into a company, and bought up some hundreds of acres of land. Their house was a wooden one-storied building in the middle of a fine orchard and garden, and outside the front veranda, where you sat in squatter chairs to smoke the pipe of peace away from the noise of civilisation, there stood a discarded punt converted into a bed of gloriously blooming petunias. It was an ideal spot for week-end outings. The pond nearest the clubhouse had once served the business of a mill long abandoned, and it was full of sunken logs and of fontinalis—always spoken of in Canada as speckled trout, and the same, of course, as the "brook trout" of the States. They were said never to rise to a fly, and they are fished for with live minnows or worms, with float tackle. There was a lower lake less encumbered with snags and submerged timber, made by the club by building a workmanlike dam at the lower end of the property, and the clear little stream which once worked the mill keeps it clear and sweet, after, on the way down the valley, between the two ponds, doing good service at the club hatchery hidden in a lovely thicket of sylvan wildness, and looked after for their brother members by the intelligent farmer, who with his mother and wife takes charge of the clubhouse and fishery. The fun we all had at eventide, sitting in the punts and catching or missing the trout that dragged our floats under, was certainly uproarious, and I am ashamed, now that I am writing in cold blood, to say that I enjoyed it as much as any of the party.

But this was a bad example to friend A., who, as I have previously stated, was "no fisherman." He blandly smiled as I begged him to understand that it was nothing short of high treason to catch such lovely trout with anything other than artificial fly. Just then his float went off like a flash almost close to the punt, and as he fought his fish with bended rod he murmured that, meanwhile, minnow or worm was quite good enough for him. The way in which a fifth member of the party, a youth who had brought us a bucket of minnows (so-called), hurled out half-pounders high in the air, and sent them spinning behind him, was provocative of screams of laughter. In the morning I was anxious to try this lower lake with the fly rod, though warned by the farmer that it was of little use. For the good of A.'s piscatorial soul I, nevertheless, insisted, and the capture of two quarter-pounders with a red palmer, and several short rises, rewarded my efforts in his interests. If he has not received my counsel, and laid it to heart, it will not be because he did not have ocular demonstration of the virtues of fly-fishing. I was not surprised to hear that these club fish were not free risers at the fly, for both ponds were swarming with half-inch and one-inch fry, as tempting as our own minnows, and the trout simply lived in an atmosphere of them. Our Canadian brother anglers here, as elsewhere, are of the real good stamp, sportsmen to the core, pisciculturists, botanists, naturalists, racy conversationalists, and big-hearted to a man. Please fortune I shall shake hands with them another day.

HASTY VISITS TO AMERICA

The untravelled English angler has, pardonably enough, vague notions as to the sport to be had with the rod of a mere visitor in the United States. He fancies generally that he has only to come, see, and conquer; and this is partly because he confuses Canada with the country south of the great chain of lakes. No doubt there is an abundant variety of angling in the States; but here, as at home, you must go far afield. Do not forget that even the best American streams are as easily fished out as our own. Pending the completion of the Exhibition at Chicago, I had been gathering, from reliable sources, some facts that may be of use to those readers who are always craving knowledge in the columns of the fishing papers; and I endeavoured to discover what the casual visitor, finding himself at the best-known cities, may expect without travelling too far from his base of operations. The result of my inquiries, however, is at best only an outline sketch, and it may be that time has brought changes.

Let us suppose that you are in New York. At the termination of the voyage, when you were not engaged in admiring the pretty residences on the wooded slopes of Staten Island, you would look occasionally to the right upon Long Island, one of the lungs of New York, though the city has in itself so clear an atmosphere that people are able to build marble houses with impunity. Still, in the heat of summer the citizens—and small blame to them—make it a rule of flying nearer the ocean, and Long Island is one of their handiest and most appreciated resorts. There are upon it many trout preserves; "ponds" they are called, but we should give them the higher title of lakes with a clear conscience. They are generally maintained by clubs of wealthy members, and each has its comfortable house.

The earliest trout fishing to be found in this country is here. April 1 is the opening day, and the season opened well, though a snap of rough weather during the last fortnight interfered with sport. There are numbers of lady anglers, members of the Long Island colony, and two of them to my knowledge made capital baskets during the Easter week. A New Yorker gets through his business in the city before luncheon, and then, in a couple of hours, he is at the Long Island clubhouse getting into his fishing suit. Fly-fishing only is practised, and the fish are principally fontinalis. Unless otherwise stated, this species is always intended in any reference to trout.

Our brother anglers here are, as a rule, keen sportsmen and honest men, meaning that they are glad whenever they can assist another in securing the recreation which makes fishermen kin all the world over. My chief trouble was that I could make no manner of use of a tantalising list of kindly invitations to cast a fly in Long Island. Then there is another and smaller island at a greater distance, Martha's Vineyard, beloved of old whalers, where there are well stocked trout streams; but it goes quite without saying that all the water near New York City is preserved. Outside, in New York State, the trout fishing opens on April 15, and the favourite country is in the Adirondacks, where the wood-built veranda'd clubhouses are pitched here and there over a vast tract of woods, beside lakes and streams. To reach the Adirondacks you have a fifteen hours' journey by rail, and waggon tracks over hilly, and not macadamised roads, that will account for from two to fifteen hours more, according to the retreat chosen. You are here quite out of the world, and for the nearest fishing grounds you may leave New York by the evening train to-day, and be at work at even-tide to-morrow.

From Boston, the quiet city of studious men and women, who regard their old town still as the "hub of the universe," there are endless possibilities, more or less inland. Connecticut, Vermont, and mountainous New Hampshire, abound in charming minor streams and picturesque scenery. The delights of this New England fishing and camping have been faithfully immortalised in that incomparable prose idyll "I Go a Fishing," by Prime. Maine, however, is the United States angler's paradise. This involves at least a twenty-four hours' journey by rail and steamer, if you would reach the famous lake region of that sporting state. The trout run large, and I have seen the skin of a handsome 9-lb. fontinalis killed there with the fly. There are declared to be even bigger fish than this; but 4-lb. and 5-lb. fish are considered really good specimens. The average is not lower than 2 lb., and 3-lb. fish may be taken as "good." The flies used are never smaller than our sea-trout size, and they are more often larger; but the best anglers catalogue you as a lubber if you wield anything heavier than a boy's rod. I have looked over some fly books in active service, and when some day I find myself in that log-house in the Maine woods which I have in my notebook, I will back my selected half-dozen of our English, Irish, and Scotch sea-trout and lake flies against the best of the Orvis favourites.

Philadelphia, which, from my all too passing and superficial view of it, has the most English-looking suburbs of any city I have seen, does not count for much with the angler. There are some streams in Pennsylvania which yield plenty of small trout, and if you know the proper places, at the head waters and elsewhere, the Delaware and Susquehannah rivers, which, in crossing them, I was assured contained no game fish at all, have very fair black bass streams, while there are what we should rank as burn trout in most of the tributaries tumbling down through the woods and the mountains and hills. As for salmon, I may here remark that I could only hear of one pool in the United States where *Salmo salar* can be caught. There are heaps of salmon on the Pacific slope, but they are not salar, and not sportive in the rivers to the fly. This pool is the watery fretwork of a dam where the tidal portion of a fifty-mile length of river is ended, and the salmon are therefore caught in brackish water always with the fly. Seventy were taken there the previous year.

Washington—the city still of magnificent distances, though it is gradually filling in the blanks, and is looked forward to as the coming city of the leisure and pleasure classes, who shall live unpolluted by the rank snobbery of New York fashion, the chicanery of Wall Street, and the genius of the almighty dollar, which rules in other cities—Washington, I regret to find, is no better for the angler than Philadelphia. But you get bass fishing in the historic Potomac, and small trout in the hill country of

On the face of it, Chicago, with its surroundings of prairie and lake, would not tempt the angler. Yet it is in this respect most fortunately placed, and I made the acquaintance of many anglers of the right sort, and enthusiastic enough for anything. It is a marvellous city, of really magical growth and extent, and the energy of the people is appalling. But it is nonsense to call it magnificent in anything but its enterprise and the size of its buildings towering to the sky, and not beautiful. Moreover, it is smoky. Hence the anglers are numerous; they have many incentives to flee from it. The lake yields no angling for the skilled rod. The boys and loafers get, however, plenty of 1/2-lb. perch. The nearest respectable sport for the fly or minnow man is with black bass, in the smaller lakes and connecting rivers within two or three hours' railway journey; and there are six or eight other percoid forms such as striped, calico, and rock bass, and several of the sunfishes, all of which take a fly. The game is not of high repute all the same, and they are somewhat slightly spoken of as "only pan fish." But they run from 1/2 lb. to 3 lb., and rise voraciously. The next best sport with black bass, which is the game fish most sworn by in this district, is in Northern Illinois and Indiana, fifty miles and more by train from Chicago. Farther afield still are the streams and lakes of Wisconsin, which may be brought into a day's work by starting early. In Northern Wisconsin there are trout in the streams, and muskalonge galore in the lakes. Altogether it is a very fly-fishing state, and heavy creels can be made from the streams falling into Lake Superior. The Michigan and Montana streams enjoy the distinction of holding the indigenous grayling, which take the fly freely, and have their enthusiastic admirers, who protect and cherish them. They are, however, decreasing in numbers and their establishment in other states was still problematical. A 2-lb. Michigan grayling is the maximum, so far as the experience of native observers can fix it. A pound is an honest sample for the creel.

The black bass, as I have said, are prime favourites in the angling resorts of the interior. They spawn any time, according to locality, between April and July; but there is a brief spell of smart fishing before they get on the shallows. This happens during what is called the "spring run"; that is to say, when they are moving from the deep waters of their winter quarters (some think that they hibernate) to the sandy shallows (if they can get sand) of the streams and lakes. Before this, however, the pike-fishers have been having sport, if the waters allow it, in March. The winters here are often open, that of which I saw something, with a snow tempest of three days, being the exceptional season of ten years at least. Sometimes the enthusiasts are piking even in February, getting fish from 2 lb. to 20 lb., which Dr. Henshall, the well-known author and naturalist, pronounces true *Esox lucius*. This is the fish we often read of as the pickerel, and it is taken with a local minnow some 3 in. long, or one of the spoons, of which America is the cradle.

The black bass, it may be premised, has been transplanted to many states where it did not previously occur, and has taken most kindly to the waters of middle and eastern states, where the croakers predicted it would and could never thrive. The fly-fishers prefer wading, and use a fly large as a small salmon pattern, gut of Mayfly strength, line of corresponding size, and the light ten-foot built-up cane rods, which were first brought into general action in this country. The custom is either to cast across, with a tendency downwards, and to work the fly slightly as it swings round, or to cast down and work back. Three or two flies are used. Minnow fishers are in a minority, and fly-fishing is reckoned the correct method by the angler. Dr. Henshall had had so many "records" that he could not remember offhand his best with fly; but his heaviest bag—and he did not confess it with any pride—was, spinning with the minnow, seventy black bass, averaging 2 lb., in a day. The biggest fish are in the lakes; but a 4-lb. specimen is large anywhere, save in the Gulf States, where all fish seem to reach abnormal dimensions. June and July are the best months for sport in these North-Western States; August, as in England, is a depressing month for the angler; but fishing becomes merry in September and October, and is pursued with zest in the cool evenings, at which time the gorgeous tints of the American fall are deepening. Altogether the autumn fishing is the most enjoyable; for, while the conditions just indicated are to be considered, the water has become thoroughly settled, and there are no fears of flood and disturbance. After spawning, the bass is quickly in condition; as a matter of fact, it is seldom out of it.

There was some rare fun one day with a brace of alligators sent by express from Florida. They were the patriarchs of a considerable consignment, and arrived pretty miserable five days back in wooden boxes. They were put into a lagoon in the open grounds. Then we had bitter wintry gales with snow flurries, and a blizzard which, had the season been earlier and the ground frozen, would have given us a foot of snow. Anyhow, it made the temperature of the lagoon a very unsuitable figure for the alligators, and they had to be looked promptly after. They were driven at length into a bay with poles, and pretty furious they were, lashing round with their tails and snapping viciously. As these fellows were 10 ft. long, the men told off to the duty had to proceed warily, and after an hour's exciting sport succeeded in lassoing them one after the other round the neck, yanking them ashore, and bustling them into wooden cases made expressly for their accommodation. They were at once taken to the warm interior of the horticultural building, and I saw them spending their Sabbath in some degree of comfort in the tepid water of the basin, without even guessing that in the old country it was Shakespeare's day.

Some of the queer fish swimming about in the big aquarium tanks naturally drew my attention. Carriers from Florida and elsewhere were arriving every day with new specimens, and I could see, in a quarter of an hour's stroll round the circular annexe, more live fish than I had ever seen in three of the largest aquariums known in England, had they been combined into one. There were some large fellows, something like pollack, cruising around, and these are called buffaloes. Insinuating their slow course through the crowd were fresh-water gar-fish with long spike noses. The catfish, with its greasy chubby body, portmanteau mouth, and prominent wattles, were precisely like those we used to catch (and eat sometimes) in Australia. Carp were present in numbers, including the mirror and leather varieties, but

carp culture was not so fashionable as it was in the States. My eyes were gladdened with a grand lot of tench, in the primest colouring of bright bronze; they were raised from some of our British Stock. A whole tank was filled with two-year-old fontinalis; another with young lake trout, handsome 12-in. examples at two years old, and not easy at a glance to distinguish from fontinalis. Then came a tank of young sturgeon; and, in a general assembly next door, were a few wall-eyed pike; this is really a pike-perch, differing in the markings, however, from the zander of Central Europe.

A most droll-looking customer is the paddle fish. With body suggesting a compromise between sturgeon and catfish, he has a long, perfectly straight duck bill, and so seems to be always shoving ahead of him a good broad paper knife nine or ten inches long. This weapon is used for digging up the bed of the river, but if it could be insinuated out of the water into a drowsy angler's leg it would probably make him sit up. As the paddle is as long as the fish the creature presents a really farcical appearance. The species runs to a hundredweight, I believe, in the Mississippi.

There was a river form that seemed particularly anxious to come to the front that is called the sea trout, from its rough-and-ready resemblance to that species, but its real name is the weak-fish—a sad come-down for any creature. There was a puffed-out beast, with velvet jacket, zebra markings, and turquoise eye, which was a perfect monster of ugliness, but I did not catch its name. Its head was as much a caricature as a pantomime mask.

On another page I mentioned the killing of a fontinalis trout of over 9 lb., and I begged the captor to tell me the story of his prize. "Why, certainly," said Mr. Osgood; "I caught that fish with the rod, and the place was a typical anglers' paradise. You'll experience that for yourself when you keep that promise you have made me. You see, when I made my first cast— Oh! I beg your pardon. Begin at the beginning must I? I understand; you want to give your English brother anglers—and my brother anglers too, I suppose?—an idea of what a fishing expedition is like out here, do you? Then I begin first at New York.

"You take the evening boat at 5.30 for Boston, fare four dollars. There is beautiful sleeping accommodation, the Sound is smooth water all the time, and you get to Boston at half-past seven next morning. Better get your breakfast on board before you land, and then take the 8.30 Boston and Maine line train, reaching Portland at noon. Then you switch on to the Grand Trunk system for Bryant's Pond, reached at 4.20. Here you take the stage coach with a team of six horses, runners and fliers all. The road is pretty hilly, however, and your twenty-mile drive brings you to Andover for early supper, having on the road crossed—coach team, and everything—a wide river (the Androsciggin) by a float, hauled over by a rope. You stay at Andover for the night, and next morning continue the journey in a birchboard waggon with a pair of horses. This is a delightful drive through winding woods along the side of a hill, crossing numbers of small streams.

"Eventually you enter the Narrows, from which you emerge into Mollechuncamunk, a small Indian name that takes practice to pronounce. It is necessary to mention it nevertheless, because, in the river between it and Mooseluckmegunquic, you find the largest trout. Indian name too? Why cert'nly. It tells its own story pretty well also, but no Indian chief gets any moose, or calls for his gun there, any more. Now then we are on the spot. It is in this stream, between the two lakes, in a pool 500 ft. and 400 ft. below the dam, that the trick was done.

"The pool is magnificent, alive and streaming all over, and varying from 2 ft. to 20 ft. You can see the trout in the clear water lying on the bottom in any number; lovely fish, ranging from 1/2 lb. to 7 lb. or 8 lb. About 200 ft. from the shore, and practically facing this pool, is our wood-built hotel, one and half stories, with wide veranda covered with woodbine, green lawn, and flower beds in front, blooming with geraniums and pansies. This is the anglers' camp, and the happiest hours of my life have been spent there. We have twenty-seven rooms, and they are all lined with native pine, and varnished and kept as clean as a tea saucer. The roar of that pool is so musical that if it ever stops you cannot sleep. The people of the house are excellent people, good sportsmen, and men and women alike just devote themselves to making the angling boys happy and comfortable. You pay your two dollars a day for board and lodging, and live like fighting cocks—plenty of fruit and vegetables, and any variety of butcher's meat and side dishes. You can fish from the shore if you like, but a boat is best. You can hire one for two dollars a week, and if you want a competent guide to manage it, that will cost you two and a half dollars a day, for labour is not cheap here, and these guides are most skilful and experienced. If you have them you have forty miles of lake to fish, as well as the dam pool. However, let us suppose you go out in your own boat. One peculiarity of the pool is, that wherever you anchor you will have a down-stream wind, and that is what you want here. Out with your 40-lb. weight, and there you are at anchor.

"And now we come to September 18 last year. It was Sunday, a day upon which I seldom fish. At the bottom of the pool, however, a large trout had been seen rising, and lots of men had been trying for it. So I went out at the most favourable hour—five in the afternoon, with my 10-ft. Kosmie rod, weighing exactly 6 1/4 ounces. I like myself to fish with a single fly, and I anchored my boat about 30 ft. from the head of the outfall sluice. The fly was the B. Pond, so called because it is a favourite on a lake of that name, and, as you will see, it was a 2 per cent. Sproat hook. These big fish have a habit of showing on the top, and I had marked where it rolled. It had been in the same place for quite a week, and we all knew about it, and had even decided that it was a female fish, as, indeed, it turned out to be. So we got to speak of her as the Queen of the Pool; and it was because I had been challenged to catch her by the score of fellows who had been trying for her that I went out on this particular day. I took boat an hour before I intended to fish, and dropped quietly down, bit by bit, at intervals, to the spot I had marked in my eye. It was not far from the head of the sluice, and, therefore, a most critical position. I had worn the B. Pond stuck in my hat for days, so that it should be quite dry. I only allowed myself line 2 ft.

longer than my rod. After a few flicks with my left hand I delivered a business cast with my right, and in an instant she came up with a roll, and I struck and hooked.

"There was no need to shout. The Queen of the Pool leaped two feet out of water and then made straight for the sluice. This was the dilemma I had feared all along, and my plan of action had been well thought out beforehand. I raised and held firm my rod, and let the fish and it settle the whole business on a tight line. She often brought the top curving right down to the water, but I never departed from my plan. I kept the rod at an angle of about forty-five degrees throughout, and risked all the consequences. The men from the bank, of course, shouted 'Give her line,' but I knew what my rod could do, and knew that all the rigging was to be trusted.

"This went on for an hour and five minutes. Sometimes the fish made for the boat, sometimes for the sluice, and the rod was never still, but she had to give in. At last another boat came and fastened to mine, and the guide in it after three unsuccessful shots dipped her out in the net. I need not tell of the excitement there was when we got ashore. The fish was there and then weighed and measured, and there and then entered on the records. Weight 9 lb. 2 oz., length 27 1/2 in., girth 17 in. She was a most handsome fontinalis, and we counted ninety-three vermilion spots on one of her sides."

After this story from an experienced angler, whose word is never doubted, I was very anxious to see that small rod. The fish, as described, was before my eyes; I handled the fly (what at least was left of it), and can describe it. B. Pond was really a fair-sized salmon fly—turkey wing, orange body, and claret hackles, with the gold tip of the Professor. The collar was of picked medium gut stained black, many of the American anglers contending that this is the colour least obtrusive to fish. The line was strong, but not large. The rod was just as small as described, and certainly a masterpiece of work.

On returning to New York, after my visit to Chicago, and delightful day at Niagara Falls, it was not until I arrived at Albany that I saw anything in the shape of scenery which could be compared to England; and very sorry was I not to be able to go across the river and ramble about the town, that seemed to be environed with pleasant meadows and abundant foliage—the type of scenery one loves in the old country.

The run down the Hudson river, even in the railway train, was a continued delight; for the scenery, where it is not magnificent, is always picturesque. In the summer there is a service of steamers from New York to Albany, up and down; but just as I was too soon for the fishing, so was I too soon for the summer excursions. The knowledge that the boats would begin to run in three or four days' time was no consolation to me. Had it been otherwise I should have left the train at Albany and taken the Hudson steamer. Still, I had 150 miles of ever varying scenery, with the noble Hudson on my right hand nearly the entire distance. You soon get accustomed to the great white buildings, that at first remind one of a covered ship-building yard, but which you soon discover are the ice-houses in which is stored the cooling material for the cunning summer drinks which the American loves. By and by mountain masses appear in the distance, and the broad meadow land narrows, until you are confronted by bold headlands rising often uprightly from the water.

Of course, the Catskill Mountains are the *pièce de résistance* of this trip, and amongst the places where one would like to stop is Fishkill, a few miles below Poughkeepsie, the points of beauty being the city of Newburgh, over the water, and the widening of the river known as Newburgh Bay. Then come the fine Highlands of the Hudson, with massive granite precipices, and Storm King towering boldly 1,529 ft. above the level. West Point succeeds; and there is more beautiful scenery at Peekskill. After the State prison of Sing Sing we run past the Sleepy Hollow country, with associations of Knickerbocker, Rip Van Winkle, and the romantic Dutch citizens of old New Amsterdam. The Palisades (twenty miles of lofty, rugged natural wall) are a fine finish to the run.

There seemed to be enough nets and fishing apparatus along the Hudson to depopulate the stream, but there is some very good angling of a common sort to be obtained there. Striped bass, white perch, pickerel, sun-fish, frost-fish, and catfish are amongst the game, and trout are to be found in many of the tributary brooks. The New Yorkers, I found, also fish the Mohawk, where there are plenty of pike, pickerel, and perch, pike being most abundant. The baits are crabs, crickets, and minnows. Expensive as many things were in America, boats, at any rate on waters of this kind, could be had much cheaper than in England, 50 to 75 cents per day being a usual charge.

Mr. Osgood, the slayer of the big fontinalis, had been round the country, and I found him amongst his fishing tackle in New York, showing rods and flies to an admiring trio of anglers, who, with the near approach of June, were making ready their outfit. I spoke in terms of bitter disappointment at my fate in having to leave the country without even seeing a trout stream. I had three days to spare before the boat sailed, and when Mr. Osgood was free he began to think what could be done. The result was that he took me over and introduced me to Mr. Harris, the editor of the *American Angler*, an illustrated magazine of fish, fishing, and fish culture, issued monthly. When he learned my troubles he made a suggestion, which suggestion being jumped at by me, he sat him down, with the business-like promptitude by which our Trans-atlantic cousins save a good deal of time in the course of the day, wrote a letter, and the thing was done. The letter was an injunction to someone to take care of me and show me the best that was to be seen. Mr. Osgood kindly allowed his business to slide for a day or so,

and in an hour we were crossing to New Jersey, and were soon on board a train bound for Rockland County. The scenery here also was quite English, of the pleasantest pastoral type; for we were passing through highly cultivated farms, in conditions of agriculture that had not yet brought the owner and cultivator of the soil under such a cloud of dismal distress as we had experienced at home. A buggy was waiting for us at the station, and we had a couple of miles' drive, finished by turning out of the high road and galloping down a sandy track, across a rustic bridge, and through a charming plantation.

On a knoll, surrounded by thickets just showing leaf, stood a neat wooden structure with a veranda running around it. A couple of setters and a pointer in a kennel welcomed us by frantic barking, but for the time that was the only sign or sound of life. We were in a sylvan solitude, and somewhere near was heard the musical flow of water through the tangled copse. The good lady who had charge of the clubhouse eventually came forward and read the letter which made me free of the house. It was not, however, till dusk that her husband, the bailiff, appeared, and we therefore had no opportunity, as we had hoped to do, of any evening fishing, but we had a hearty dinner, beautifully cooked and prepared in one of the cosiest sportsman's retreats I have ever entered. The woodwork of the interior was beautifully finished and polished; the furnishing was just enough for comfort; and the bracing air and wafted murmurs that came to us, as we smoked our pipes on the veranda, were most grateful. Mr. Harris had kindly put into my hands a copy of his *American Angler*, describing the birth of the club, which may be taken to be a representative angling club for city gentlemen in America. It was called the Quaspeake Club, and the house was pitched close to the Demorest brook. This was the water the music of which we had heard, and from our elevated position on the veranda we could see it; a little to the west, and down below, it broke into a miniature cascade and was then lost among the low-lying alders which hid the course of the stream. This clubhouse was about ninety minutes by rail from New York; and in the season the members escaped from the city by the four o'clock train, got a couple of hours' trout fishing before night, and were back to business again by nine o'clock next morning.

CHAPTER XX

A DEVASTATED ARCADIA

Thirteen years ago it was my happiness to spend two or three days at an angler's paradise, a veritable Arcadia then, in one of the districts the earliest to be ploughed red by the hoofs of a lawless and brutal invader in the recent war. In the course of a short month this fruitful land of peace and plenty, ready for the ingathering of a bounteous harvest, was devastated by the unspeakable savagery of a soldiery whose name will henceforth be a byword amongst all civilised peoples. It must surely be so, for the records of murders, robberies, and outrages unspeakable suffered without warning, without provocation by a prosperous and inoffensive people, will be a textbook of inhumanity and wrong for generations to come.

The passing of wounded Belgian soldiers in English streets sadly reminded us of what had happened in their unhappy country; of cities, towns, and villages looted and left in ashes; and of the devil let loose in Arcady. Only to think of it! In the summer of 1914 you might, as it were to-night, dine in London, travel luxuriously by the Harwich express, cross the North Sea, survey promising scenes of industry and agriculture from the railway carriage, glance at Brussels and Namur on the way, see the Mayflies dancing over a lovely trout stream, have driven over miles of sweet woodland road, gone out in the boat and caught your first fish, and slept in the absolute repose of a charming rural retreat. Just in such a fashion did my old friend Sir W. Treloar and I in a bygone June gain the Chalet du Lac, on the skirts of the Belgian Ardennes, to enjoy the hospitality of our English host, Mr. F. Walton, of lincustrian fame. All this was suddenly cut off from the outer world and overrun by barbarian hordes, who feared not God, neither regarded the rights of man. The Arcady had become a stricken land of desolation. It is close on twenty years since we visited that beautiful spot, but the memory of it abides. Here are impressions set down at the time:

"Soon after leaving Namur the train passes through beautiful forest scenery. You are nearing the Ardennes, and for miles you follow the course of a typical trout stream, ever rushing and gliding from cool woods to greet you. There were on that seventh day of June Mayflies in the air, but the glaring sun and clear water revealed no sign of a rising trout in any of the pools that came under observation. Something after five o'clock of the afternoon on this particular week-end outing the railway was done with, and right pleasant was the change to an open carriage and the shaded five miles woodland drive to the Chalet du Lac, built by my host on a lake of some fifty acres. The supports of the veranda were, in fact, piles driven into the bed of the lake, and the house was not only charmingly situated, but, having been designed by its owner, a practical man of great artistic taste, was charming in itself. The eye in every direction rested upon and roamed over splendid masses of forest trees; they flourished down to the water's edge and fell away and around in receding tiers, becoming grand dark masses of pine on the distant horizon of mountain range. So absolutely out of the world was this tranquil spot that I saw a deer come out of the thicket and drink of the lake while I was playing a fish."

With my memory of that holiday quickened by the news from Belgium, I called upon Mr. Walton in Berkeley Square to learn what had happened to his delightful fishing quarters. He was in his eighty-first year then, but hale and hearty, and on the look-out for some trout water that should replace what he feared was now a ruined home. He had had no word from Les Epioux since the war, but we knew that the enemy had been all around. The chalet is but a quarter of a mile off the main route from Sedan to Libramont, which is the junction station for Brussels. It being an altogether undefended district, the enemy would be at ease there, and perhaps have taken toll of the deer and fish which might be secured by some of the sneak methods of warfare at which they were adepts. The pictures and books of the chalet would be portable loot to anyone who valued them more than clocks and cooking utensils, but the books would certainly reveal a hated Englishman as the owner, and on the whole we really could not expect to find the chalet above ground, unless some admiring enemy had earmarked it as his private property, on the chance of Belgium becoming a German province.

All that Mr. Walton had gathered from the war news was that there had been a cavalry engagement at or near Florenville, five miles distant. There was just the chance that the invaders had to be hustled off on the quick march before discovering those lakes, for about that phase of the operations the tide of battle was setting hotly to the west, and, as we know, according to the enemy's time-table, there was to be in a week or so a grand victorious entry into Paris, previous to a glorious descent upon English shores. There was a chance, therefore, that the Chalet du Lac remained serenely whole by the lakeside. I tried to cheer Mr. Walton by these surmises, but he shook his head, remarking, "I am afraid I shall never see my dear little chalet again, or, if so, everything dreadfully mutilated." So we turned the conversation, and I beguiled him into telling me once more the history of his connection with the Epioux lakes. Being a good, all-round sportsman, having been raised on a Yorkshire country estate, where there was abundant work for both rod and gun, he made, of course, the *Field* his weekly study, and found the advertisement columns as interesting to read as any other.

There, when settled in the world of London, he saw the fishing advertised as an eligible resort, where you might get your angling for a few shillings per day. He went over, and found that the lakes were occupied by two English pisciculturists, and that the water was in a measure stocked. Mr. Walton was so pleased with his fishing, especially in the upper lake, that he at once took a fancy to the place, and arranged for due warning should the tenancy become vacant, as seemed to be likely before long. In about eighteen months the result was that the lease was secured.

Materials were sent from England by Mr. Walton, and the chalet built as described above. There was one German name at any rate mentioned by him with affectionate regard, namely, the late Herr Jaffé, who was called in to assist in stocking. This was thoroughly done. Rainbow trout were in the fashion then, and 300 pounds worth of them were promptly introduced. They took most kindly to the water, and as they were 6,000 strong to begin with, the fishing soon became good indeed. That it was so when the alderman and I visited the chalet, quotation from the article already tapped for present use may testify:

"The sport was so good that the details would become monotonous. I say nothing about the baskets made by the two friends who also fished, save that my host and myself were, at the end, close within touch of one another's totals. We went afloat after breakfast and fished till luncheon; went out again when the sun was declining, fishing from about seven till nine. As I have stated, my first evening (which was particularly interesting, because there I was at the other end of Belgium catching fish at the hour corresponding with that of the previous day when I was taking my seat in the Great Eastern express for Harwich at Liverpool Street) accounted for twelve trout; the next day's bag was forty-eight (twenty-six in the forenoon and twenty-two in the evening); the following day's was fifty (twenty-two in the forenoon, twenty-eight in the evening); and on the last day, which was rough as to wind till the afternoon, my record was fourteen in the forenoon and thirty-one in the evening quiet.

"My host had a good deal of correspondence to attend to, and I was often out alone, but his gillie reported that he had placed in the great floating well moored off the veranda 273 fish, the produce of our two rods during the period specified. These figures must not be accepted as evidence of greedy fishing or anything of that kind, nor are they written down in boastfulness. They are given simply because they record the story of the stocking, and because the sport, which, on the face of it, looks not unlike slaughter, was part of the necessary work of keeping down the head of fish in the lake. 'Kill as many as you can; there are far too many,' was the sort of order one need never hesitate to obey. The majority of these rainbow trout were apparently in the condition best described as well-mended. The biggest fish I took was a golden-brown fario of 1 1/4 lb., probably an old inhabitant; and there were pounders amongst the few fontinalis taken.

"The point to which I trust to have brought the reader is that here was a lake which in the matter of sport may be regarded as an angler's paradise, and I may add that the success I enjoyed is the common experience. The young ladies often caught their two dozen trout in a two or three hours' paddle on a lovely sheet of water set in glorious surroundings of forest in which the wild boar lurks and the deer hides. Nobody was sent empty away. Just as a change from the chalk streams or other rivers at home, a day or two of such boat fishing is a real restful treat. Every loch fisher knows what I mean, and we need not talk about skill. In my boat during this visit I had one day the company of the worthy city knight who had caught his first trout on the day of my arrival. His worship genially allowed me to lecture him as to the simple rules for casting a fly, and when he would swish a three-quarter pound fish aloft in the

air as if it were an ounce perch, to use language for which he would have fined me at the Mansion House. After losing two rainbows in this wild work he got well into the practice of casting and playing, and so, quite in workmanlike style, he caught seven good fish, besides breakages."

In later years there was a considerable change in the character of the fishing. The rainbows from Herr Jaffé had been installed something over two years when they and we foregathered in this pleasant manner, and the fish caught would average as near 3/4 lb. as one could guess. As time went on it was evident that they did not flourish in the style usual to *Salmo irideus*. Mr. Walton was puzzled, and, in truth, so was Herr Jaffé. Amongst the stock planted in the principal lake there must have been an odd fontinalis or two, and by and by these brilliant fish were taken, of 1-lb. and 1 1/2-lb. size, freely rising at a fly. In a word, the fontinalis seemed in a brief space to take possession and the rainbows to decrease correspondingly. The first specimen Mr. Walton caught he put back as a rarity, but in a year or so they were not by any means strangers to be coddled. On the contrary they bred well, as indeed did the rainbows. The latter, however, after five or six years gradually deteriorated, while the fontinalis flourished and held their own for a while. Latterly they, too, had gone the way of all fontinalis, had become scarcer and scarcer, and it was a rare thing to catch one where they formerly abounded.

The story of Mr. Walton's tenancy of sixteen years is thus an interesting chapter in fish culture. That must be my excuse for apparently labouring this matter of stocking, more especially as there is still a curious development to unfold. It should be stated that the lake with which we are now concerned had, previous to the introduction of rainbows, been emptied and restocked, leaving probably a few of the original brown trout behind. Mr. Walton thought that there were some Loch Levens, and that these in recent years asserted themselves, and, as he put it, "came to their own." But he went on to add that a few years ago he had put some minnows into the lake by the chalet, and that they had multiplied like the Hebrews of old till they literally swarmed. As a natural consequence the trout had become bad risers, and the growing scarcity of natural flies suggested that the minnows, by preying upon larvae, have had a share in this decline. The trout meanwhile had grown big and fat, as they naturally would do, fellows of 3 lb. and upwards being not uncommon. Mr. Walton fished with nothing but the fly, and had specimens of 3 lb. to 5 lb. so taken traced on cardboard and adorning the chalet walls, if haply they escaped the marauders.

At his last visit, which was in the June of the fateful 1914, he killed ten trout, which weighed exactly 10 lb., in two hours, but this was not a common experience. His best chance of creeling one of the three-pounder type was with a long line, longer patience, and a dry fly. The sport with small lake flies, which was the usual method, was amongst singularly beautiful brown trout of 1 lb. average. All, therefore, was not yet lost, and the fishing, even in the lake which had to the extent I have explained suffered a certain deterioration, would be what many of us might, without sin, covet. When the angling was in its prime 1,500 trout was the bag expected and generally realised in a season, and, caught on small lake flies, such a number assuredly signifies much satisfaction. The minnows, frogs, miscellaneous Crustacea, and other foodstuffs in the lake then began to institute a standing veto against such a degree of pleasure. But the fishing of the upper lake, where we found our most joyous sport and surroundings in 1901, seemed to be as good as ever, save that the trout had fallen to a half-pound average.

One must conclude as one began by wondering what happened at Epioux. The château, in the distance, might, after all, have filled the eye of the enemy so effectually that the pretty little chalet was overlooked. They tell you in the district that Prince Napoleon fled there for safety after he had shot Victor Noir, and that some of the cannon for Waterloo were cast in its immediate neighbourhood.

This chapter would have ended with the previous paragraph but for a scrap of characteristic news in the *Daily Chronicle*. Many of the reports of brutalities and wanton outrage in war time should be received with distrust, but Mr. Naylor, who telegraphed this story from Paris was an old journalistic comrade whom many a special-correspondent expedition enables me to know as thoroughly reliable. He wrote:

"At Montdidier there is a great organisation which has for its object the breeding of the best kinds of fish with which to stock French rivers and lakes. As soon as the Germans came to Montdidier they proceeded to blow up the banks of the fish-breeding ponds with dynamite, and cover the streams with petroleum in order to kill all the fish in them. They succeeded in destroying millions of immature trout and other fish, and ruining completely a remunerative and useful industry. The same spirit which drives such barbarians to blow up a fish-breeding pond impels them to drop bombs on open towns, which do no harm whatever to those who are fighting against them, but only kill inoffensive women and children."

There are many good German anglers; the world of angling and fish culture owes much to their scientists. But I think there must have been a "wrong 'un" at Montdidier. That pouring of petroleum of malice aforethought into the water must have been the "culture" of one who knew precisely what he was doing. And the moral is this: The cause that transforms a disciple of Izaak Walton into a fiend must assuredly be accursed.

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