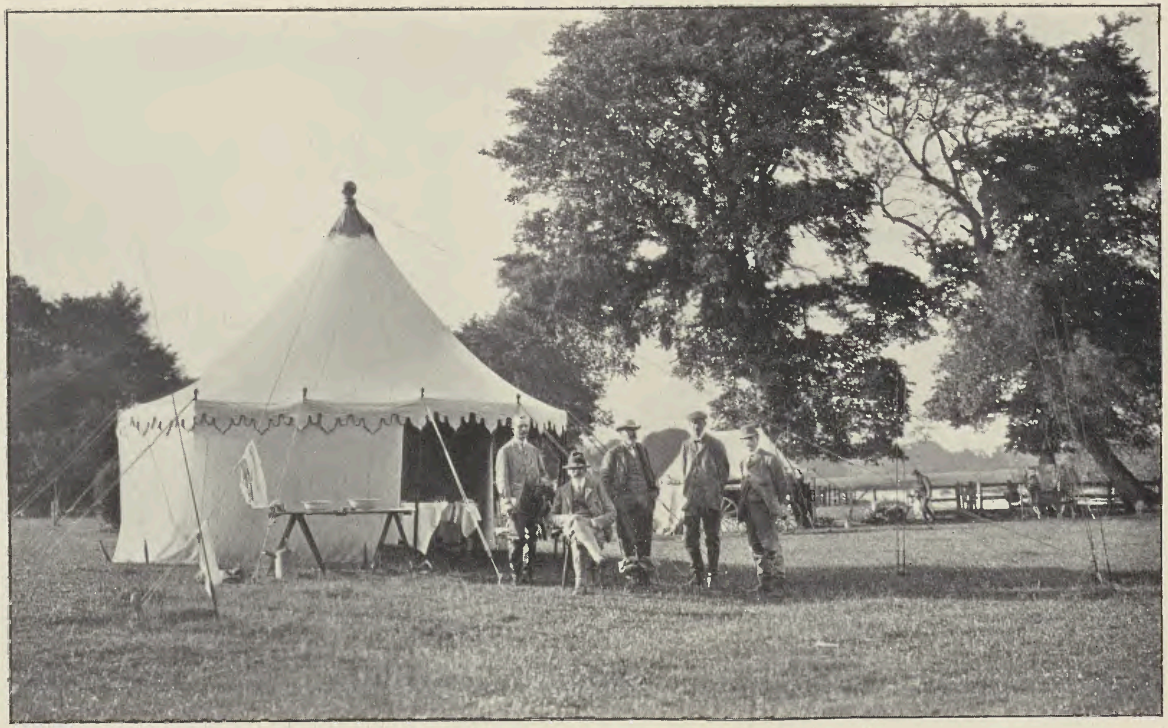
A FELLOWSHIP OF ANGLERS



THE DINING TENT.

(A. N. Gilbey, Lord Moreton, D. Meinertzhagen, R. Smith, R. D. Balfour.)

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A FELLOWSHIP OF ANGLERS

BY

HORACE G. HUTCHINSON

AUTHOR OF "GOLF" IN THE BADMINTON LIBRARY, ETC.

WITH 19 ILLUSTRATIONS

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON, E.C.4
NEW YORK, TORONTO
BOMBAY, CALCUTTA, AND MADRAS
1925

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Made in Great Britain

TO

ARTHUR N. GILBEY

MASTER-ANGLER

I thank the respective owners of "Blackwood's Magazine," the "Cornhill Magazine," and the "Westminster Gazette" for their kind leave to reprint here pages which have appeared in those publications.

PREFACE

FLY-FISHING is the business of this book ; and of fly-fishing the business is to attract by false pretences. For all that, it is by no means so that I desire to catch my readers, and therefore will repeat, thus early, the warning which I have put at the beginning of Chapter III., that the book will be far more round and about angling than of the act of angling in itself :—" There will be scarce anything of those hairbreadth 'scapes but final capture of the giant fish, with the strength of a Hercules and the brain of an Aristotle, which has for years defied the best fishers and most artful dodgers of the Club." All that has been done so often and so well before, that I despair of making the pulse of a reader go quicker by attempting it again.

So there is the bare hook, naked to the barb ; let him who will, rise to it at his peril.

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

A FELLOWSHIP OF ANGLERS

Chapter I

THE HOUGHTON FISHING CLUB

I DEDICATE this book, all unworthy, to the finest dry-fly fisherman I ever met, having received thereto his gracious permission. Later, I know that I shall find occasion to make remarks about him which certainly I shall not submit to him, for as certainly I should not get his leave to their publication. He would forbid them utterly. When, and if, I shall allow him to see any of the proof sheets, those which refer personally to him shall not be of their number. As an amateur of the dry-fly, even one so many degrees lower than he, I have at least learnt to go delicately, to practise cunning.

It was a day in my life to be marked with a very big red letter—that on which I was elected member of the Houghton Fishing Club. I believe I claim justly for it that it is the oldest fishing club in the world. Lately it celebrated, not dryly, its centenary. That banquet was made the occasion to present Mr Gilbey with a piece of old silver plate, in token of invaluable service that he had done the Club as its Honorary Secretary for many a year. Past, as well as present, members had the privilege of joining in that recognition, and by that time, alas, I was already numbered with the past, for my poor health

made me unequal to the really severe labour of a day's honest dry-fly fishing.

There should be no mistake about that—the labour, though it be of love—for the following may be taken as something like the day's work according to the programme accepted of the Houghton Club. Members, be it understood, sleep and breakfast, sometimes also dine, in an old-fashioned coaching hostelry, the Grosvenor Hotel, in the main street, the only street, of Stockbridge village—the said Stockbridge being situate on the Test, and its main and only street forming a bit of the high road between Winchester and Salisbury.

The big first floor room of the hotel is the Club common room, sacred to its members whenever any of them are there, its walls adorned with specimen trout in cases—awful monsters, some of these—with portraits of old members, and sketches of the river and its landscape ; its side tables cumbered with fishing gear of sorts ; its central table devoted to the serious purpose of at least one daily meal. For fishermen must eat.

Eat they do, generously, early ; and by little after nine will be thinking of going forth to fish—thinking, for the moment only ; for much must needs be done first, much sorting of gear, much collecting of luncheon.

Luncheon is part of the day's work ; it must be taken as and when the rising of the fish permit, beside the river bank. And on just what portion of the bank—on which "beat," that is—it shall be partaken by each member is for us matter of grave discussion during breakfast.

For no lots are cast or drawn in that friendly brotherhood. It is thus that the talk goes :—

"Well, who's going where to-day ?"

This commonly is the stroke with which the ball

is set rolling—by Arthur Gilbey most often—he being secretary and accepted leader as well as king fisher of the Club.

No answer ! All look modestly into their tea-cups. No one will make first choice.

At length some one is forced to name a beat : " Well, how about Cooper's Meadow—if no one wants that——-? "

" Right, you for Cooper's Meadow. Now then, who else——? "

Gradually the beautiful coyness or unselfishness of each and all is overcome, and beats for the day—that is until the hour for the evening rise—are allotted. Either it is done thus, or else, if all persist in modest reticence, the oldest member is bid choose —is ordered to make a choice—and so in rotation of seniority.

Thus all is arranged ; and with no friction. After all, the limit of the membership is seventeen, and I cannot remember more than a dozen or so present at any one time. And our water goes from Longstock, a mile above our breakfast table, to Horseferry—how much ?—I think about four miles, below it ; and here and there it splits into two or even three channels ; so there is no shortage.

Now I believe it is principally because we are all so friendly that all is arranged in such friendly fashion, but also, I think, a little because it really is impossible to know what beat, in any one day, will give best sport. It is all speculation. I know that, for my own part, when I, after much feigned coyness, have been induced to make first choice, I have often found fish rising very poorly on the beat of my selection ; and on another day, having denied myself a choice until the very last, I have sometimes been left with a water of which I said to myself in the secret recesses of my heart, " Well, not much chance

of doing anything there to-day, with the wind as it is," and have gone forth sadly, and returned with joyfulness, having fared beyond all expectation well.

One never knows.

And now I think, thus early, comes good opportunity to serve you out a maxim that you may do well to lay to heart, as an angler generally and more particularly as one who does his angling in club waters—that you will not enjoy your day's fishing as it ought to be enjoyed if you are always wondering whether Brown, Jones, or Robinson, on the next beat, may not, by some inexplicable accident, be catching more fish than you.

A healthy competition is the soul of *games*, but if allowed to wax too keen it is *sport's* worst spoiler. And, after all, the purpose of a day's fishing is not to amass fish : if it were, we could accomplish it quicker, cheaper, and more fully in Billingsgate Market than on the River Test.

Now, when the beats are thus in friendly wise determined, we may go forth, each to his own ; and, since some of the beats are far down, they may be reached by motor, if any kind member have brought one with him, or by the hotel's prehistoric horse-brake—but perhaps that has now long gone to the scrap heap of other prehistoric things—or possibly by the early train to Horseferry, at the lower end of the water, thence to work up. Also, in the same motor, trap, or train, will go the squire attendant on each knight—more commonly in modern times entitled gillie—to bear his weapons, that is to say his rod or rods (for the fully caparisoned knight is apt to carry two), his landing net, fish basket and, not least important, luncheon basket.

This I write of those lovely days long before the unspeakable Great War was even a conceivable horror. Squires grew very scarce in that man-

shortage which war brought upon us. Many knights themselves went to the war—one, alas, Lord Lucas, never to return from it—and those whom age or disability left to follow the contemplative craft, so woefully distracted, of the angler, must needs shoulder their own burdens of rods and provender and fish—if they should catch any.

But those sad times were in a far and hidden future when I joined the Club and took part for the first time, at that commencement of my membership, in the breakfasting and in the debate and in the going forth to fish.

Chapter II

WAITING FOR THE RISE

Has life a better moment than that of arrival, on a fair morning, at the banks of a troutful stream on which we propose to angle daylong until the stars look out from heaven? The air has not lost its freshness nor the angler his illusions. Nothing as yet has happened to disprove to him that this may be the day of days, long looked for, never known, on which every cast shall be a thing of perfect beauty, every fish in the responsive mood. Day of his dreams! Maybe at the very point of realisation!

So now arises the first question of the morning, "Are the fish moving?" Easy of answer, "Yes" or "No" accordingly as you see the placid surface of the stream broken here and there with enlarging circles or unvexed by any such agreeable dimples.

Then, if that face have smiled at you in this delightful fashion, follows at once a second question, "At what fly are they rising?" And this, five days out of six, is far less simple of solution.

Far more likely than not, your zeal will have taken you to the riverside so early that you will have anticipated any rise of fly on that day; but it does not follow, therefore, that there may be no fly on the water and no fish on the move; for, if the previous evening were calm and warm and favourable for a dance of spinners, some of those poor senile insects may be drifting down along the water now and the fish be breakfasting upon them. They lie flat-winged, scarcely visible on the surface. You may

The Grosvenor Hotel and Stockbridge Town.

Piscator Expectat.

scoop out one or two, for identification, with the landing net, or, if you are of those fishers who come complete to the last detail in paraphernalia, with a small edition of a butterfly net designed for the very purpose ; and may then try to match these naturals with your artificials.

This dry-fly fishing, though it is, on the whole, a business which will give to a stout man, in hard condition, a good day's work, is yet one in which there often are long intervals of " nothing doing "— no fly, not even spent, are on the water ; no fish are rising. It behoves our angler then to have some resource not intimately concerned with the angling wherewith to while the leisure hour away. There is that " communing with Nature " of which we read, most fascinating and soul-soothing pastime, as I find it ; the study of the water-voles, the birds ; the clouds that course in the sky and drag their shadows across the downs between which our chalk stream glides ; there is " the wind on the heath, brother."

All these are very good, and what our angling would be without them I cannot think, nor wish to. But there are moods of all men, and of some men there are all moods, in which these influences fail of their effect, and from that failure comes boredom, and from that boredom relief is possible only in some other mode of distraction.

Therefore the angler whom this dour mood is liable to befall is counselled to take with him in his luncheon bag either the newspaper that suits his view of politics, or a small pocketable book of some sort, which he may carry with him, and so cheat the time while his gillie keeps eye on the water for the rise of fish. A nice selection of such literature is to be made ; and of that I may hope to say a word on a further page.

But, after consideration of all the books which

may bring peace to the soul and delectation to the mind, what while the angler waits upon the capricious rising of the trout, there is at long last but one to which he will turn for constant and final edification after the refreshment of all the rest has failed—his fly book.

Technically, perhaps, it is box, rather than book, in which will be prisoned flies which are to be presented dry—to these sophisticated fish who prefer them *frappé*. No matter.

And be that how it may, it is certain that among things apt to be forgotten by the angler with the fly, whether wet or dry, but the latter more especially, is that he cannot expect, with the most perfect possible throw, to let his fly come down over the fish so as to look more like Nature than the natural fly itself, nor more attractive. The best that he can hope is that it may equal the natural and appetising aspect of the real insect.

That being so, and the fish, when there is a large rise of fly coming down the water, taking only one in ten, it may be, of those that pass him within his easy reach, it is obvious that the odds are nine to one against his accepting the lure of artifice that is proffered, even on the best possible assumption—that it is perfectly placed for him and equally pleasant, in his eyes, with the original which it imitates.

What the odds may be against its being thus displayed to his fancy depends, of course, on the personal element in the equation—the skill of the angler. And this is a delicate subject to approach : it has to be handled gently. Where all circumstances are favourable, such as absence of perturbing winds, of the spear grass which catches at the fly so much more greedily than does the fish, and other, the myriad vexations which try the angler's spirit, the odds still are perhaps no more than level that even the craftiest

of craftsmen in the gentle art will place his fly thus perfectly at the very first offer. And it is to be remembered that no subsequent offer is quite equal in its value and virtue to this first, because there is always the likelihood that the first will have conveyed to the delicate perceptions of the fish a hint that all is not quite as it should be, that there is some disturbing influence entering into his world.

When all these considerations are weighed in the balance, the evident reason for wonder is not that the fish should so often decline the artificial fly, but that they ever should be deceived by it and should accept it as the genuine article. It almost does appear now and then as if we succeeded in making our simulacrum more attractive than Nature, for we do see fish, wonderfully as it must strike us, turn aside from a natural to take the artificial.

And usually they are very constant in their appetite, almost monotonous. It would be thought, by one who did not know the ways of fish, that the trout which had been steadily on the feed for an hour or more at olives, of one sort or another, would be only too pleased to have a change of diet, and would welcome, with great joy and very ready acceptance, the first alder, let us say, or caperer, or even May-fly, which we showed him by way of variety. On the contrary—his strongly and commonly avowed preference is for *toujours perdrix*, so to speak. As a rule he will go on feeding, till it seems altogether surprising that he can hold any more, on the one fly which is in chief evidence on the stream, and if you pass one of another sort above him he is most likely to take no favourable notice of it ; and should it be a specimen of one of the larger kinds it is exceedingly probable that it will give him so severe a scare as to spoil his appetite altogether for ten minutes or more.

It is a little different with flies which do not appear in great multitudes, such as the aforesaid caperer—which is used in places as an alternative and pleasantly descriptive name for the Welshman's button—or any kind of sedge-fly. As these come only as comparatively rare items on their menu, the trout will sometimes snap at them in the midst of other more familiar condiment ; but if you were to commit such an outrage on their finer feelings as to put a May-fly over them in April or in July, it is nearly certain that the most busily and greedily feeding of them would scuttle off in high alarm. Indeed the May-fly is an insect of such huge size and uncommon aspect that in the early days of the rise of this fly, even on those rivers which it haunts in its multitudes, the fish have not the courage to look at it. It takes them days of familiarity, and very many opportunities of studying it, before they will begin to feed on it with that ferocity which has been written of by all writers on the craft of anglers since Dame Juliana Berners onward. Now and then they will take the artificial better, as it seems, early in the rise than when it is fully established ; but the right explanation of that is likely to be that when the rise is fully developed the numbers of the natural insect are so enormous that, according to the doctrine of the chances as set out above, the odds are very heavy against your fly being the accepted one among so many.

But true as this is about the trout commonly being so selective of one kind of fly out of many passing over him, it is a rule that has exceptions. Indeed the more one learns of the ways of fish, the more one finds that no rule is universal, that the exception is always turning up, that the word you should *always* avoid in speaking of their ways is "always" and the word you should *never* use is

Below Tanner's Trunk.

A Luncheon Hut.

" never." The trout themselves, next time you go along the river, will be very apt to stultify you if you do.

I will tell you now a story to the point. It is the story of a day on which I had compelled myself to go out without my rod. It is a hard compulsion. The temptation is very difficult to resist. But I have a conviction that we all should kill more fish during the season if, say once or twice only, we were firm with ourselves and dragged ourselves out to study the ways of fish without the distraction introduced by the thought of immediately catching them. In the long run it would profit us.

On this day, when I had been thus austerely virtuous, the first fish that I found was rising only a yard or two from the bank. Down the surface of the pellucid water were coming spent olives, a few freshly risen duns, and some smut. My friend the trout was neglecting entirely both the first of these, and of the last he could not have enough. He missed not one of them that he saw in time for its capture. So I said to myself: " Smut—that is what the fish are taking. How I wish I had my rod and a smut at the end of the cast ! "

But so it was that virtuously I had not, and there was nothing for it but to go up higher, continuing my observation. Subjects for study were not lacking. Soon, close beneath a fringe of high willow-herb, I saw two fish rising together. The tall and strong-stemmed plants, with their bold, red flowers, made me a perfect screen. I could steal up behind them and, standing at ease, divide a peephole between green leaf and crimson bloom.

There, below me, not ten feet distant from my eye, were the two fish, the one, slightly in advance, a bravely spotted trout of two pounds or so, the other some four ounces lighter in weight, lighter also in

hue. Both were eagerly on the lookout. Here, as below, came down some spent fly, a few duns, and smut. The larger fish, the leader, was taking the first and the last impartially. He was not as eager as my first friend, below, on the little black insects : he made no selection between them and the spent olives. But on one point he was just as determined, he had no palate at all for the freshly risen olive. His way was to let the spent or the smut come very nearly up to him, as he lay some twelve inches or so below the surface. Then, when it seemed as if the fly would go down past him, he lifted himself to an angle of near forty-five, let himself float down a foot or so, and, putting up his head, gaped his mouth and lazily took down the fly. That was his invariable manœuvre, whether black fly or light was its object. The duns he never paid the honour of going out of his way to regard.

The other fish, the smaller, had quite different tactics. It had an equal contempt with its leader for the fresh risen fly ; it did not seem to have the least appetite for the smut : nor did more than one in twenty of the spent flies tempt it. Now and again though, having let a score go over it unheeded, it would put its head half out of water and suck down one of the spent olives which, for all I could see, was the very image of all those others that the fish had not troubled itself about. The trouble that it did take, thus exceptionally, was not excessive : it did no such down-floating and coming up from below the fly of its choice as the fish just in advance of it performed so faithfully ; it did but just tilt its body so that its nose was brought to the water's surface, opened a wide mouth and the fly went down. It was the process of feeding reduced to its simplest and accomplished with least effort.

Here were three trout within a few yards of

each other in the same river, all rising differently, differently in their way of moving to the fly and differently in the selection of the fly. Is it a wonder that we find the art of fishing with the dry-fly so infinitely fascinating when there is this infinite variety in the problems which it sets us to solve even in circumstances so similar, and, to all human seeming, identical, as those in which these three fish showed their idiosyncrasies ? And what folly of mine to say to myself, after the object lesson of that first fish of the three : " Smut is what the fish are taking."

Sometimes I have fancied that the trout may be attracted by any kind of black fly in preference to others, when a variety are on the water. It must have happened to every chalk-stream angler to notice again and again how apt the trout are to pick out the iron-blues on a day when these not very numerous, small, dark flies are coming down in the company of others.

It is not very easy to distinguish the iron-blue from some of the smaller and dark varieties of the olive, and it is certain that often, when the angler speaks of the iron-blue, he has been mistaken in this way. Very probably the trout themselves are not precise in distinguishing the species, but it does seem as if they were peculiarly partial to the blacker flies. The picking out of the smut supports the theory. And many a cunning fisherman has made good profit from acting on it and floating down an iron-blue over a trout's head even when none of the natural fly of that kind were on the river. The larger fish especially appear to like them.

Actually, when trout are taking smut, and no other kind will appeal to them, they often show a discrimination even among these. When many of the execrable little flies—so freely execrated by the fisherman because it is almost impossible to find

patterns small enough to imitate them and yet to cover a hook of any serviceable size—are on the stream, there will often appear, besides the individual black mites, a little group of two or three of them all bunched together. A clever trout, of cultured gastronomic tastes, will sometimes be seen to leave severely untouched every single specimen that floats over him, but to devote himself assiduously to the collection of each of these small bunches.

That is again a hint which the angler may then do well to take ; he may tie two together of his most cunningly confected imitations, and thus achieve a very tolerable likeness of the bunched natural flies. So, with these massed atoms deftly cast, he may perchance delude the gourmet, and eat him for his own dinner, with the piquant sauce of thinking what a clever fellow he has been to fool a fish of tastes so educated.

Chapter III

ABOUT CERTAIN "HARDY ANNUALS"

But now we are still standing upon the river's bank ; we have not yet cast a fly upon the water ; and I begin now, dimly, and as if in distant prospect, to foresee somewhat of that which this book is going to be. It is like to be something of a portent, a phenomenon ; for I believe it will prove itself a book round and about angling in which mighty little of actual angling will be writ. I am afraid there will be scarce anything of those " hairbreadth 'scapes," but final capture, of the giant fish with the strength of a Hercules and the brain of an Aristotle which has defied the best fishers and most artful dodgers of the Club, only, at long last, to succumb to the narrator's wile.

All those thrills have been so often and so well done that I despair of making my readers' nerves go pleasantly tingling to them again. And I have more than enough to say besides. All this I have said before, as I am well aware, in the Preface ; but I do not mind that, because no one reads a preface.

Perhaps there are fish, or perhaps there are not, already, at this early morning hour, moving on the beat which is our day's share of the river. In either event we ourselves may gradually move up-stream, on the lookout, having lodged our implements in the shelter of that thatched hut of which each beat has one. Each member has a key which will open each hut door, and within he will find a small table, couple of chairs, couple of tumblers. The pro-

spective contents of those tumblers, with the solid sustenance for self and gillie, will be in one of the bags which that henchman shoulders.

Now in days long past, the ancient days of the Club's story, when men went angling, as they seem to have gone doing everything, in top-hats, the Houghton fishers used to "blow." The Test was a great May-fly river then. When I joined the Club there was not such an insect seen on those Middle Test reaches. Now it has begun to make a reappearance, but very sparsely in comparison with its multitudes of old.

This "blowing" was dependent on the May-fly, because its fashion was on this wise. You used a long rod and a very light line, with a spun silk cast in place of the usual gut cast, and on your hook you put one or perhaps two of the natural May-flies. Then, when you saw what looked like the rise of a good fish, you let out line, giving the line and the cast and the fly a series of gentle jogs as you did so, in order to keep the fly up off the water until it was out over the spot where the fish was rising. There you let it alight gently on the water in front of the fish's nose, and, if all went well, he had it. Then you had to remember that you must strike ever so gently, and not at all as you would with a gut cast, because this light silk would not stand the strain. You had to play the fish lightly, bring him into the reach of the net only when he was tired out, and then—the usual obsequies.

But this sending out of the fly in this manner could be achieved only with the wind's help. You had to get yourself to windward of the fish. The skill of the expert "blower" was shown in the distance to which, by means of executing his jogs just rightly, he could keep the fly off the water and send it out towards the fish. This, and the deposit-

ing of the fly at the exactly right spot for the trout's deception, seem to have comprised the whole art of "blowing"; and a very fine art I believe it to have been.

And because the wind was needed for this sport, and because trees impeded the blowing of the wind, therefore those old "blowing" members of the Club had every tree and bush along the bank cut down which might intercept these necessary breezes; and therefore it is that on all the Middle Test to-day you will see hardly a tree or bush throughout its length. During my time as a member we did some planting of willows and other fast growing kinds, to help the angler of to-day in his secret approaches to the river.

My beat, on the day of which I am now writing, was away down at that Houghton village some two or three miles southward and down-stream from Stockbridge, from which the Club still has its name. Originally, as I seem to have heard, Houghton, and more particularly the Boot Inn, in that very picturesque small village of thatched cottages and bright gardens, was the headquarters of the Club. This was a hundred and a few more years ago. The records are for the most part inscribed in some very precious volumes which enshrine much wit and wisdom and accomplished art.

When the Club moved its G.H.Q. to Stockbridge and the much larger accommodation of the Grosvenor Hotel, the fashion was for the gentlemen—top-hatted to a man—to come down by coach from London. It was therefore something of a journey. Therefore they did not come down for any flying week-end visit merely. They stayed, once they had come, a fortnight or three weeks or so, right through the grannom season—this is, the end of April and beginning of May—and again, at the end of that

month, for the May-fly: and possibly once more, later again, for the "Caperer" season, a fly which on the Middle Test, at least, appears to be generally confused and confounded and identified with the Welshman's button, though elsewhere two different flies are denominated thus.

Mr Halford—authority so sacred that I certainly do not dare question it—says that the "Caperer" is *Halesus radiatus*, while the Welshman's button is *Sericostoma personatum*. These are caddis-flies, both, but of different families—not different genera, only. Mr Moseley, moreover, author of "The Dry-Fly Fisherman's Entomology"—that perfectly delightful little book—a very pious disciple of Mr Halford, says likewise, adding, of S. P., that it "is one of the day-flying sedges" . . . of "reddish mahogany colour" . . . and that it "flops about on the surface."

Now this exactly describes that fly which, on the Middle Test, the Houghton Club calls the "Caperer"; though it is Moseley's description of the Welshman's button. Of "H. R.", which he and Halford call "Caperer," he writes:—"The caperer is very abundant, late in the season, coming out of its hiding places at dusk." And that, emphatically, is not the "Caperer" according to the gospel of the Houghton Club, for it is a day-flier, not an evening fly, that the Club so names, calling, I think, "S. P." indifferently "Caperer" or "Welshman's Button." The truth is, one can hardly say that there is a definite right or wrong about these unscientific names, so loosely used.

In those ancient coaching times, before the railway came to Stockbridge, the Club had not only many days but also several hours on many a day when fishing was "off." Fishing with the "spent fly," except the big "spent gnat" of the May-fly,

seems to have been unknown ; they had little use for really small flies of any kind, and, with only this big artillery in their magazines, it is little wonder that in the heat and brightness of a summer's day they did not think it worth while to go out at all.

Therefore they had abundant leisure, and since there were among them some who knew how to use both pen and pencil, certain large volumes intended in first place for record of numbers and weights of fish killed, came to be adorned with witty and humorous comment and finely finished pictures of episodes by the river and portraits of members. Such famous artists as Sir F. Chantrey, Sir Francis Grant, J. W. Turner, Sir E. Landseer, Robert Seymour, and Frederick Lee, R.A., were either members or came as guests, and drew sketches in the books. Those volumes are a great possession.

I will make bold to quote from them a passage which came into my mind that morning as I began to work my way up, inspecting the river on which no sign of a rise was yet apparent, from the so-called Boot Meadow adjacent to the inn of that name :—

"When, during the season of the May-fly, your friends the gentlemen from London say that they 'have scarcely seen a fish rise all day,' do not too hastily conclude that the fish have not been feeding on the fly. The only 'rising' which is seen by the unlearned is the splash which is made by a fish when he darts from a considerable depth in the water to catch an occasional fly on the surface. There is, however, another sort of 'rising,' which is better worth the angler's attention—viz., when a fish is seriously feeding on the fly, he stations himself at no greater depth than his own length, and, making his tail the hinge of his motions, he gently raises his mouth to the top of the water, and quietly sucks in the fly attempting to pass over him. A rising of

this sort is not easily seen, but it is worth looking for ; because, although a fish feeding in this manner will rarely go many inches on either side for a fly, he will as rarely refuse to take one which comes (without any gut in the water) directly over him." Finally follows the injunction, " if your fly (gut unfortunately included) should swim over a fish without his taking it, look out well for a darting line of undulation, which betokens his immediate departure ; and remember that it is of no use to continue fishing for him after he is gone."

But now for the moment I am unable to see, in all the stretch before me, a fish rising even in that unobtrusive manner which escapes the notice of " the gentlemen from London." However, I come soon to a spot very well known of all members of the Club where, in a kind of bay cleft out by the stream from the opposite bank, is a hole, reputed to be of prodigious depth, around which constantly cruise, and from time to time rise at objects humanly speaking invisible, certain immortal trout known and execrated as the " Hardy Annuals." They cruise and they rise to the invisibilities ; but to the fly of the angler they never respond, except perhaps once, in the season, and generally on a rough, coarse day of wind and rain on which, as a member who had just caught one of the cruisers explained that miracle to me, " he supposed the fish thought that nobody would be such a damned fool as to be out fishing on such a day."

For the rest, the current went slowly and perhaps swirly, so that the fly, with the gut attachment, probably travelled in manner unlike that of the natural, unattached insect ; and, besides, these were fish of a vast experience, for, as they were always rising, so every angler that passed up paid them the compliment of a chuck or two and left them

with an imprecation for which, like that of "the Cardinal Lord Archbishop of Rheims," "nobody seemed one penny the worse."

Why is it that certain runs, certain places, hold fish which rise continually, thus, to the natural, yet never will be deluded by the artificial?

At this point I think I might make bold to proffer yet another maxim, viz.: That it is not the part of a wise fisher to continue casting for a trout rising in a particularly difficult run of the stream while there are others to be seen moving on his beat in places of less difficulty.

In most of the dry-fly rivers of our acquaintance we may recall that there are certain runs in which fish rise, and continue rising all the season through, where it is impossible for even the most deftly offered artificial fly to deceive them, except by some happy fluke. As a rule, the reason why these places present such an insoluble problem is obvious enough: there is a quicker stream flowing between you and the fish than the stream in which the fish is rising. That is the most common form of the difficulty, and it may often be overcome by a deft angler who can throw his line with such a bend in it that the faster stream does not straighten out the bend before the fly has come over the fish's nose. If the line, in such circumstances, is allowed to lie straightly for ever so brief a moment before the trout sees the fly, the faster going current will inevitably drag the fly across the fish's face, will not let it go down with the same equable motion as the other flotsam on the surface, will create a little "wake" in rear of it, as if it were a miniature steam-boat breasting the stream. It will seem all that is least natural, and the fish is far more likely to flee from it in terror than to mistake it for a real and succulent insect.

We may speak thus lightly—though always we shall speak with much respect, for it is an accomplishment given only to the artist in the craft—of this throwing of the fly with a bended line so that its bight shall lie convex to the stream's direction and so permit the fly to float without drag for a foot or so. We may talk of this as at least a possible solution if there are no circumstances to aggravate the difficulty, but such circumstances are more by way of the rule than of the exception. One or other seems almost always with you, whether it be a baffling current of air, a bush which will not let your line go out freely behind you in the direction that you wish it to extend itself, or it may be that the fish is lying so that only your farthest throw will reach him and a circling finish to the cast will put the fly where he will not so much as see it.

However that be, it is sure that only the fisher of small experience will waste time, while trout in likelier places are on the rise, over a fish that is moving in a disposition of the waters such as this. Obviously he is a very difficult fish to catch.

There are other fish, well known by those anglers who are habitués of the part of the river in which they live, that rise in places where to all human seeming the artificial fly goes down over their heads precisely at the pace and after the manner of the natural, and yet nothing—not even the most artful inducement—will inveigle the fish into mistaking the one for the other. These are, of all trout, the most exasperating to the finest feelings of the fisherman. They are a living reproach to his self-respect as an angler, a constant reminder of his lack of skill.

Has it not happened to us often, coming in from an evening's fishing on a water to which the kindness of a hospitable friend has given us access,

to say, " Ah, yes, I enjoyed my evening very much —caught a fish or two—but there was one—I don't know how it was—I wasted a lot of time over him—he was rising just in a little run below a bend in that meadow there——" By this time, before your yarn is finished, your friend, whose eye has been growing glad with expectation all the while you spoke, will cut it short with a laugh and " Ah, yes—that is ' Charlie Chaplin '—or ' Cæsar,' or ' Lloyd George,' " or whatever name of notoriety has been bestowed on that celebrated fish. " We've all fished for him. We all know him. He can't be caught." And then you ask why, and you find that even the fishers who are on terms with him to call him by his Christian name cannot answer you the question. All know the fact, of the moral impossibility of catching the trout—not a man—not even the most foolish of them—will claim to know the reason. The fish, by his way and place of rising, looks as though he were every duffer's fish. He is in a little rippling run which one might suppose would confuse his vision, so that he would not be able to distinguish very nicely between the true and the false, in the way of insects ; but it is not so, and it is likely that it is this very ripple which we look on as in the favour of the fisher rather than of the fish that is really working in quite the contrary way. Likely enough it is tugging, with its cross currents, at the cast all the while, so as to be dragging the fly in a manner unlike the fashion in which the real insect floats down the water.

This is an effect which we often see on a larger scale, when the currents which go criss-cross are themselves a little wider. Then we behold the fly whisked this way and that, and say to ourselves, " The fly's going anyhow there—no use to waste time on that trout any longer."

That is a conclusion we come to swiftly when the erratic movement is tolerably obvious ; but here it is such a small matter as to seem nothing at all to us at the far end of the rod and line, but still may be very manifestly unnatural to the trout over whose head the fly is dancing thus curiously. That is probably the explanation of the continued existence, and the indifference to our most deftly offered lures, of the Cæsars and the rest of the immortals of the stream.

If you do not happen to know the river, or this particular part of it, and this particular fish, you are exceedingly likely, while the best of the rise is on, to lose a large number of its golden moments and opportunities in making your vain advances to this trout, whereas one who was better acquainted with all the circumstances would leave him severely alone. As a rule such fish are very constant risers, feeding, with a confidence born of their long immunity, when not another fish is breaking the surface ; and that is the moment, when the angler has no more promising business on hand, for practising his skill and floating a variety of samples over the heads of these immortals.

And then, once in a while—perhaps owing to some accidental shift of wind, or of light, or of current—the artificial fly may appear to the eye even of that highly educated trout as if it were a natural, juicy insect. It is just that sporting chance which gives its zest to the casting for the Cæsars, but it is the wise angler's part to leave them severely to themselves while there are fish more worthy his attention.

Chapter IV

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF TROUT

Those wise reflections noted in the last chapter passed through my mind, what while I paid the usual salutations to the "Hardy Annuals" and received the usual no response from those cruising rascals. And now I did begin to see a few circles dimpling the surface, and my expectations rose; but they were only occasional and I could not well make out that any new fly rose with them. I made offer of a spent olive to two languid feeders—invitation disdainfully declined!

The third proffer was more fortunate—a rise, a strike, a tightened line, a leading of the fish downstream, my gillie close following, audibly hard breathing, as he did in all moments of excitement, a scoop of the net—good little fish, $1\frac{3}{4}$ lb.! At all events we shall not go to luncheon with empty bag. That is always a point to the good: I hate lunching with no fish in the bag. The preprandial fish, or, better still, brace, is a great help to gastronomic enjoyment and digestion.

And now I bethink me that a good fellow-member who fished this beat yesterday had said to me in the evening:—

"I'll tell you where there's a good fish. You know where the river comes round the bend below Tanner's Trunk"—I knew the promising spot well—"I hooked a fish there yesterday. He gave me the dickens of a run, took me down 200 yards and more, and then, just as I'd got him to the net, I

saw what had happened. He was foul-hooked in the tail. That was why I could do nothing with him. And just as I got the net to him he gave a last flick, and out came the hook and away he went. He's a good fish—over two pounds."

"Well," I had said, "I'm much obliged to you for telling me, but after you've given him such a doing as that yesterday I shouldn't think he'd be in a very taking humour to-day."

"Oh, yes," my friend had replied confidently, "I tell you I foul-hooked him in the tail, so he won't associate all that happened to him with the fly."

I pondered this last comment of my friend, and the more I thought of it the more sapient it seemed. The observation which he threw out as a matter of obvious course was one which would not, I fear, have occurred to me, although I take credit to myself for some study of fishes' minds and motives. There could be no doubt, once it was made, of its correctness. It was, to say the least, most improbable that the trout which had risen to a fly, had failed to take it, and then had suddenly been called upon to fight this terrific rearguard action, would have established any association between the two. It had aimed to take the fly in its mouth. So, too, it had aimed, usually though not invariably with success, at thousands of seeming similar insects during its life. Almost simultaneously a small harpoon had transfixed its tail, and had commenced dragging it hither and thither in most unaccountable and undignified manner. Even to a human intellect, thus stimulated, the two events would hardly seem to be in close connection. Far less so in the incipient mental processes of the trout.

I have no further dramatic story to tell about that trout. I found him, indeed, just where my

kind friend had indicated, and he seemed to be in amiably taking mood. He was rising freely to some natural fly. But I suppose that I did not present my artificial to him in a sufficiently natural manner. At all events, he was not to be imposed upon by it. Perhaps he was still nursing the injury to his latter end and considering the indignity that he had suffered. He was, at all events, back in his old place, and feeding hungrily. And that, in itself, is by no means the invariable habit of fish that have been subjected to such treatment.

If a fish has only been lightly hooked, and turned over, he will very soon be rising again in the old familiar spot. A hundred times an angler has retold the tale of losing his fly in a fish and catching the same fish again, very likely with a fly of the very same pattern, within two minutes of the first hooking, and so retrieving the fly first lost. That is always a comforting episode, not only because of the recovery of the fly, but also because it indicates so very clearly that the pierce of the hook into the trout's jaw causes it no pain, and scarcely any inconvenience. It acts as balm to the conscience of the tender-hearted angler.

But this only occurs when the break has followed quickly on the hooking. If you have played a fish long, and nearly to the death, and to the net, he will not resume his normal vocation of feeding at all in the same unconcerned manner. It is quite another story then. As a rule—and there is no rule of angling yet framed to which experience does not show us exceptions—a fish which has been thus long and heavily maltreated and hauled about does not rise again for the whole of that day. It is likely that he will not rise for several days, and quite possible that he may feed sulkily below the surface for the whole of the remainder of the season.

Persons unacquainted with the ways of fish and of riverside folk may ask how the doings of a trout are to be known so intimately that one may speak of them with so much confidence. The answer is that the angler or the river keeper, who knows the water by daily observation, is aware of all the more important fish in it, their stations for feeding, and so forth. If one of his old familiar friends is absent, even for a day or two, he begins to ask the reason why. So it is, that if a big trout changes his habits or his station, the man who knows the river will soon find it out. And this, the changing of his station, is just what a big fish sometimes does after a fight, very nearly to a finish, in which he has succeeded at the last moment in getting the better of the angler. Sometimes he will leave off surface-feeding altogether, but often he will resume, after a while, his old fly-catching tricks, but will choose another spot, with less alarming associations attached to it, for indulging them.

It has been said, humanly speaking, that the most difficult problem in life is to see things from another man's point of view. Speaking more generally, we must appreciate how very much more difficult it is to see things from the point of view of persons so differently situated, with habits so remote from our own, and with a mentality so much less developed as even the most cunning and sophisticated of trout. It is very interesting, and adds immensely to the zest of fishing, and, indeed, of all our dealings with the other animals, to try to realise their point of view ; but, unfortunately, we never can be sure to what extent we succeed. In some ways fish are far more knowing than they are commonly supposed to be. There is not the slightest doubt, for instance, that they distinguish their keeper, or any human figure with which they

are familiar, from a stranger. To say that they are aware in any general sense when danger threatens would be to credit them with an understanding more like the human than is possible, though experience, both of the personal kind and of the instinctive, teaches them that a pike is a dangerous neighbour.

Apart from a few instinctive responses to certain stimuli of this sort, which are a common inheritance in their tribe, it is always the unfamiliar, in whatever form it comes, that causes them apprehension. They make no analyses. That which they know and have proved harmless they endure marvellously, though it be on the scale of an express train thundering over the bridge beneath which they lie. But the slightest drag on the tiniest artificial fly will scare them, because that is a phenomenon to which they are not used.

Now, it is permitted to us of Houghton, by the traditions and unwritten law of the Club, to wander, beyond the particular confines of our beat allotted for the day, to the beat above or below, provided always that such beat is not of another member's allotment for the moment.

Seeing that there were not many less miles of water than of members, taking into account those places where the river splits into two or even three separate streams, and seeing further that scarcely ever more than half the members, and seldom as many as that, came down to fish at any one time, it is apparent that this licence to fish beyond your daily bound might be taken often.

Thus to me it happened on this day, that, having wandered up my own beat and transferred one good fish into the bag besides carrying on a pleasant but inconclusive flirtation with several others, I arrived, still with no very definite rise of fly on the water, and still with some short interval to waste before I

should feel inclined to " rise " to my own luncheon, at my legal confines. Just above them the river went into triple streams. The Old River and Ascham's Arms, the right arm and the left, were the distinctive names of the three. One arm made a pleasant bend of the elbow, and in the bend grew a thorn tree, a tree or bush notable among the few that the old " blowing " brigade had left us. Under that bush rose often a good fish. I would look for him to-day, or for a successor to that which was there a day or two ago. I knew that day or two ago fish to have gone, for his captor had told me of his catching ; but would he not have a successor ? The most " eligible lodgings "—that is to say places where food comes most abundantly—seldom go long begging a tenant in the water : and the best and fattest fish get and keep the best and fattest pitches.

I did find a fish there rising ; but to tell the truth and (far more important !) to spare the reader disappointment, I may say at once that I did not catch him. I did not get a rise out of him. I did catch the thorn tree : and I did swear. What I said is of no importance—luckily fishing is a sport which we may pursue not only far from the public eye, but also far from the public ear—but my execrations and the tugs I made to disengage my cast from its disgraceful liaison with the prickly thorn tree, between them effectively put down the fish ; and I saw him no more.

I was not absolutely without excuse. I am far from claiming for myself any great mastery of the angling craft even now, and assuredly I was a simple innocent then ; and as that fish lay, and a branch of the thorn came down, and a vexing wind not only blew whither it listed but also conveyed my cast in the same capricious manner—all this made it very

difficult to induce the fly to go out and come down in any naturally attractive fashion over that fish.

I always like the dictum of the man who said that each fish presents a different problem to be solved on its own conditions. It is profoundly true ; every fish—that is to say, every trout to which the angler will address himself on a dry-fly river ; and one who has followed this mode will hardly allow to any other kind of angling the name of fishing at all —every trout thus watched rising and deliberately angled for has to be studied just as if he were one of those chess problems on which we exercise our wits week by week.

There are such a multitude of factors to be taken into the calculation. First there is the run of the current ; it is no good casting for him in such a way that part of your line lying on a swifter-going stream than that in which he is rising will be swept down so fast as to communicate an unnatural drag to the fly.

Then you have to study the sun, that it may not throw the shadow of your rod or line on the water ; and, of course, the wind, as to how it will allow your fly to alight on the surface at that most important moment when the initial force of the throw has nearly been spent, and the fly is very much at the wind's mercy for the manner of its alighting.

And naturally you watch and take note, as well as you are able, of the exact condiment, the precise species of fly, at which the fish is rising. Sometimes you are able to distinguish this quite clearly and easily, but at other times it is almost impossible to be certain what the fish really is feeding on.

My friend who had caught the former tenant of that nice lodging under the thorn bush had told me the details of his catching, thus :—" I tried him with all sorts of things. He would come up and look at

a little red quill or any sort of spent fly, but would not take one of them." I may say that he who told me the story was very much a past master of the angling art, one who was supremely able to offer the fish these delicacies in a manner likely to be acceptable, and not at all likely to drive him away in disgust. " And then," he said, " as I was watching, I saw something fall off the tree. The fish had it in a moment. So I thought I'd try him with a silver sedge. I put it on, showed it to him, and he had it directly."

I am very far from giving this story as an example of genius in solution of the particular problem, although it was finally solved to his own satisfaction by this angler, who most assuredly has a genius for the deft throwing of a fly. But why, just because he saw the fish take an insect falling from a tree, put on a silver sedge ? A silver sedge does not live in trees. It is far more probable that what the fish rose at was a small caterpillar of the lepidopterous kind. Of course, it may be argued that we do not fish " dry-fly fashion " with caterpillars, nor with any simulacra of these creeping things, but at the same time, if I saw a fish thus rising under a tree, I should go through, either with the eye of the mind or of the body, my fly-boxes to see if I had not somewhere a creature with a green body, say a spider, or even a grannom, which might do duty for the things likely to fall off the tree.

By some lucky chance my friend's silver sedge happened to hit this particular trout's fancy, as it might be some small brown moth falling off the tree. But I doubt whether it would have caught the attention of the next trout likewise, and I believe my own green-bodied concoction would always be a more likely lure in such places. But the more particular quarrel that I have with the angler, as a

problem solver, who told me the tale, is that he was so long in tumbling on the solution. It was not until he actually saw the fish rise at some particular object falling off the tree that it began to seem probable to him that it was jetsam off the tree on which, mainly, the fish was feeding. I believe, on the contrary, that whenever we see a fish rising in a place like that we may safely infer that it is animal debris from the foliage on which he is making, or at the very least with which he is varying, his meal, and that we should take our measures accordingly. That, at least, is how I should set about him ; and I should not, at all events in the first instance, try a silver sedge among those measures, although it was successful here. I think that was something of a lucky chance.

It is really, no doubt, because of its problem-setting, and because of the interest of guessing these conundrums, that angling for the fish which you see rising is so much more interesting than the method which is irreverently called " chuck and chance it." It seems to me that, no matter how old or how cunning you may be, you are never likely to go out for a day's dry-fly fishing without learning something. You may be surprised, now and then, no less by what the fish decline to take than by what they will take. It happened to me one day to go to the very top of our water and to find a trout rising just as far up as it was our right to fish. He was feeding on small flies, and I tried him with one or two, but he would have none of them. Then there came sailing down the river an enormous creature, no less than a daddy-long-legs. To my surprise, my friend for whom I had been angling went at the daddy like a shark, and gobbled him up. It gave me a hint.

I had in my box an immense confection of grey hackles and what not that some friend had entreated

me to try. I had shown it to other friends, and they had prayed me not to exploit it on their river for it would inevitably frighten off the feed for ever and a day any rising fish that might catch a sight of it. Till now, I had not dared to make offer of it, but seeing this fish—he was a good one—gulp down this long-legged insect, I fastened on my strange device.

The first throw was a bad one : it came down 6 in. wide of the fish, and though he might have seen it 20 yards off he made no move for it. I was sorely afraid that he had, in fact, seen it and fled. But I threw again, on the chance ; it came right over his head. He went for it with all the zest he had shown for the real insect, and very soon he was in the net, and pulled over 3 lbs. on the balance. It was very satisfactory. Of course, I was not greatly surprised at his taking my artificial after seeing him take the real—the imitation was quite a good one—but what did astonish me was his original gulp down of the first thing of the kind that appeared to him. It suggested the idea that it might often be worth while, when we find an obdurate fish which declines to make any response to the normal, statutory lures, to try him with one of these large and exceptional things. It might tempt him.

And is it not true that we never know from day to day what the mood of the fish is going to be? Lord Grey has a story of a day's fishing on which he found no trout able to resist a certain skinny-bodied black gnat of a lure which it occurred to him to offer. They would look at nothing else. He deemed himself to have solved the secret of all angling—to have discovered the lure that fish would always take. Happily for his joy in the craft, the belief quickly proved an utter delusion. The next day no fish would pay the skinny gnat the compli-

ment of the least attention. It is the illusion that we all of us have shared, and have disproved, a score of times. It is an illusion which, if realised, would rob our fishing of all that exasperating uncertainty which is its most abiding charm.

That fish under the thorn tree I put down in the first place by twitching at the bough on which I had bunglingly hung up my cast. It was my last effort, and a poor one, before going into my hut for luncheon. But is it not wonderful how very easily a trout is put down, and put off his feed, by any twitch that your hook or cast gives to some herbage near him—is it not wonderful, considering how every leaf and blade of herbage is in constant agitation and twitching from the wind ?

It very often happens that we find a trout rising in just such a vexatious situation that it is possible to put the fly over him in one manner only. He is there, under the bank, and, by reason of the direction of the wind or other sufficient cause, it is impossible to throw for him with the rod working over the surface of the water. It is a position in which the one way feasible is to cast over the sedges and long grass of the river's bank and trust to his accepting your invitation on the first or at worst some very early time of asking.

There will not be many such times. Once or twice, maybe, you will have the luck to draw back the fly, with a very even and jerkless action, through the tangle of herbage, but very soon it is quite certain to catch in one of the blades ; you are obliged to pull. It may be that it is so fast fixed that only by crawling forward and loosening it with your hand can you retrieve it. Even this serpentine approach may discover you to the fish and lead him to cease his rising. To avoid this imminent danger it may seem to you worth your while to put more strain on

the cast than it will bear, to compel a break and so sacrifice the fly rather than risk putting down the fish. But will you not, even so, by the pulling at the reeds which this strain compels, have put him off his feeding, even though he may not have caught sight of you or of the rod or the line or gut? That is always a doubt, and the very fact of this doubt thus arising suggests rather an interesting speculation as to the trout's outlook on his world—indeed as to that very world itself, so far it is his.

It seems, after all, such a very little disturbance that you have made—no more, as you would think, than the wind, in its proverbial shaking of the reed, sets up a hundred times an hour. And yet the fish, it is plain, perceives a difference, knows it is not the wind, or, at least, acts as though it had the knowledge. Sometimes it will show itself even more subtly perceptive; for it may very well have happened that, just before you took up your position to cast your unappreciated fly before the fish, you observed a bird hanging and playing about in that same plaguy tussock of sedge which has now so fatally engaged your fly. Most probably he was one of those smart and cheeky reed-buntings which chatter and chuckle about you so attractively as you go a-fishing. But whatever his kind, you will quite painfully notice that although he was bending the stalks and blades this way and that, deflecting them down over the trout's very head, that aggravating fish took not the slightest heed of him and his doings. The fish appears to have reserved all his suspicious attention for the perfectly harmless agitation which you and your engines have imparted to the grass blades. It is very singular.

The explanation, of course, is that these other movements are all more familiar to the fish's sight than those which you have been producing. They

are also, perhaps, rather more rhythmical, less sudden and jerky. Probably it is some novelty in your mode of shaking the reed which puts the fish on his guard; and the fact that so very slight a departure from the normal, in his environment, should be enough to arouse his fear to this degree gives us an insight that is quite interesting into the character of that environment as it impresses itself on him.

Few of us, perhaps, who come to angle for the trout, and fewer still of those who, unhappily for themselves, are no fishermen, realise how very stationary, on the whole, a trout's life is. To be sure, he has his migration periods, goes a-wooing up the little rivulets in the winter. That is his great annual outing and change. But for the rest he is likely to be found in one place all the season through, establishing himself close to some station where the flies are brought down to him kindly by the current. Likely enough, with a change of strong wind he will be seen rising on the other side of the stream, because the flies are blown there; but otherwise he lives in one tolerably deep hole, where he grubs about for larval food in the weeds, and moves up a yard or two thence, when there comes a rise of fly, for a change of diet. A circumference of a few yards is likely to be the limit of it all.

The consequence is, manifestly, that within and near the bounds of this circumference all must be exceedingly, we might almost think monotonously, familiar to him. He must know very intimately every detail within his ken.

Inevitably, then, an alteration in surroundings known so precisely is observed at once. Alterations often repeated, such as those of the reed shaken by the wind, or by the bunting, become only a little less familiar than the static surroundings themselves,

but the instant that a novel appearance of any kind is visible on the trout's horizon it causes disquiet and suspicion, no matter though it threaten no danger to the fish at all.

For this reason, that idea of the angler, though ingenious enough, was quite futile, who thought to mask his approach to the fish by holding before him a fan or screen composed of grasses so arranged as to have all the likeness of a tuft of sedges. The rising fish that he thus strove to stalk vanished, to his disappointment, into the depths, just as speedily as if he had come to it without any of this camouflage. The tussock had all the look of a hundred other tussocks by the water's edge ; it was life-like as life itself. But, then, to the fish's view, it was a tussock suddenly appearing where no tussock had been before. That was the alarming feature about it.

The fish, indeed, was justified, on every ground, of its suspicions. Tussocks do not, according to Nature as known to men and little fishes, thus jump up of an instant into full growth. If, however, it had pleased that almost too ingenious angler to affix his tussock there, and leave it until the following day, then it is likely indeed that he might have stalked the fish successfully behind its screen. By that time the fish would have grown familiar with the tussock, would have made friends with it, so to say, fitting it in among the other details of its surroundings ; and no less suspicion would have been aroused in it then, were the tussock suddenly taken away again, than in the first instance by its sudden apparition. Not the fact of the tussock, but the change that it made in the silhouette of the landward surroundings was the motive of the fish's fear.

It is a point for us to realise, if we would

appreciate the whole outlook of the trout on its extremely limited world ; and that is an appreciation which has some practical importance for the angler.

But the matter which now, for this particular angler, assumed the aspect of overmastering importance was the matter of luncheon. My gillie was quite of that opinion too. We began to move towards our hut.

Chapter V

BIRD FRIENDS BY THE RIVER

Beside this particular portion of the silvern Test, along which I make my way, hungrily, yet still observantly, towards my luncheon, most of the tree life has fallen victim to the windy wishes of the old "blowing" men; but there is shelter abundant for many a bird, none the less. The banks are fringed high and densely—and far more numerously than the angler, after frequent catchings up of his fly in them, will whole-heartedly admire—with the sedges, the sword-grass, the wild parsley, and a score more of grasses and plants, some of which are brilliant in the tints of their bloom, and from and among which there is an incessant coming and going of the birds themselves, and of their notes as they call to one another or proclaim to the Power that gave them life their irrepressible joy in living. The fowls, therefore, make a much more insistent claim on attention than the fishes. From some of the notes of the birds, especially the sedge and reed warblers, that chatter and chipper at me from among the sword-grasses and sedges as I draw near their haunts, I am very well assured that my presence is regarded as an intrusion. I may not understand the precise message of their notes, but in a general way it is quite impossible to mistake that their intent is to scold me and bid me be off.

They and the reed-buntings occupy their business in these surroundings, and amongst them comes and goes a cuckoo here and there, for on the shoulders

of one or other of these he often thrusts the domestic cares that should be his (or hers). There will be meadow-pipits, too, and wagtails of several species, so it is just possible that the cuckoo may be using the nest of one of them, rather than of any of these others, as his foundling hospital. But while the sedge birds keep up a perpetual protest at my troubling their peace, the whole air is full of the skylarks' song as they climb their spirals into the sky above. From the copses come the song of thrush and robin, the whistle of the blackbird, and every now and then, breaking off so abruptly as to tantalise one's longing for more, the nightingale's richest of all the avine trills.

And now, round the bend of the river, there is some little dark object that has risen up, as I appeared round the corner, from a bed of weed in the middle of the river. It is a little dark bird, and it had been sitting on the mat of weed until it caught a sight of me ; but now it seems to be intently busy on some operation executed in feverish haste. The next moment it has dived off from the weed, and is hidden beneath the water ; but I know it for a dabchick, and know too what the business was that it was completing thus hastily. For there is a small mass of newly overturned weed just there, where I saw it at work, and if I were to toss this over I should find the eggs beneath them on which the mother was sitting until I came in view. What she was doing when I saw her so active was covering the eggs over, to conceal them, with the weed that she shovelled up.

It is almost impossible to scare a dabchick mother off her nest so quickly that she will not make some more or less adequate attempt thus to hide the eggs with some of the dead weeds among which they are laid, and the quickness with which she

achieves their covering is marvellous. Her own absolute disappearance is no less wonderful, for once she has dived you see no more of her, unless she shall please that you do so, than if she were one of those shy trout of the Test which so rarely show themselves. The dabchick is as much at home in the water's depths as they are, and it appears as if they accepted her freely of their company.

It happened to me one day, having just crept into position for casting to either of two fish which were rising side by side, to be startled by the apparition of a dabchick coming up like a jack-in-the-box between them. She had been diving, no doubt, in search of subaqueous food, and had no more idea that I was near than I had of her presence. But I said things altogether unparliamentary of her apparition, thinking that it was sure to put down the trout. I said them, however, beneath my breath, so that they did not scare her, and she dived again, in search of more food, beneath the water. To my surprise and gratitude those trout behaved as if she never had been there at all, or had been another person of their own fishy kind. The indifference of the fish to many of the demonstrations of the aquatic beasts and birds is a little disconcerting to the angler who sees how quickly they take the alarm at the lightest descent on the water of his most deftly thrown gut. A vole may swim across the river, leaving a wide wake of broken water behind it, and long before the eddies have time to settle a trout may be rising in the very thick of them ; or a moorhen may go scuttling across the surface, smashing it to silvery pieces with the lazy trailing and paddling of her feet, and this, too, the trout will disregard.

There are certain happenings, however, that the birds may bring about, which will effectually put

down the trout. It was on an afternoon in early June ; rising trout were far to seek, but there was one which I had seen afar off as he broke the still water beneath a tussock. As I went up the bank towards him, but still 150 yards away, there appeared in the river close beside me a mother wild-duck with a numerous little brood of youngsters, like a big ship followed by a fleet of small yachts. The big and little ducks scuttled for hiding in the rank grasses and lay low ; but I and my gillie were obliged to go almost on top of their hiding-place—on which the little ones swam out in a hurry towards a big weed garden in the middle of the river. But as for the poor old mother, she went as if she were demented, scuttling in a broken-winged way, and in pretence of an immense hurry and flurry, breaking up all the broad and placid surface of the river in a big semicircle.

Of course, it was all play-acting ; she was not hurried nor flurried in the least ; all her antics had for their object to distract our attention from her little brood, as it very well might have distracted it had we the least intention of paying them the compliment of our attention, and if we were not perfectly acquainted with these delusive antics of the wild-duck mother. And, having completed her first big semicircle of confusion, she was not even then content, but must begin describing smaller figures of geometry, or hydrometry, inside it, so that at the end all the water was broken up as if a sudden and very local storm had been assailing it ; and as for our rising fish beneath the tussock, it was all far too severe a trial for his nerves. He rose no more ; perhaps he has never risen since.

Chapter VI

DRAMA IN THE LUNCHEON INTERVAL

And so to luncheon.

I have written of that first arrival in the morning at the riverside as the best and brightest moment of the angler's day. He has many a good moment, let us hope. But not one of the worst is that on which he unlocks with the key, of which a copy is given to each member, the hut upon his beat, and finds within that small, round, ivy-clad shelter a table, and the needful chairs and tumblers.

It is simple furniture, but sufficient; and whether he shall choose to take his prandial ease within the hut, or with chair and table brought out and set up in sun or shade according to the temperature, will depend on his own idiosyncrasies and the behaviour of the wind and weather.

In any event, unless he has a soul so dead that he never to himself has said that there is interest beside that of lunching pure and simple, at the luncheon hour, he will so seat himself as to command a view of the river before him and of the multitudinous life which he knows to be in and about it, even if for the moment it appears dead.

I had, as a fact, finished my lunching and my munching on this day of the days when there happened before me, as I sat, in satisfied and digestive mood, one of the prettiest comedies of wild life that it ever has been my luck to see.

Diagonally from where I sat ran a water carrier, a small branchlet of the main stream, spanned by a

plank whereon a man might cross it. On the far side there was a little—a very little—commotion among the grass, and then, out of the swaying grass and the commotion, came one whom, on the very first glance, I put down as an old lady stoat. She came running along the plank bridge over the water carrier. She did not run far across it. After going a few feet she stopped and looked back. Plainly she expected to be followed. Plainly she was disappointed. She waited but a moment and then turned and went back into the long sedge whence she had come. In another minute she returned, running on the plank again ; again stopped and looked back. Still nothing further happened.

It seemed to me that I caught a gleam of her vicious little white teeth as she said a swear word to herself, and back she went again into the grass. Yet again, after a minute's pause, she reappeared. This time she was not quite alone. In her teeth she carried a burden. She set it down a foot or two along the bridge—a little thing about the size of a water-shrew, but more russet coloured. It uncoiled itself as she set it down, and then I saw it for what it was—a baby stoat.

The mother ran then a step or two in front of her infant along the bridge ; paused as before and glanced back. The little image of herself did not come after her. It moved its head this way and that, looking rather miserably, as I thought, at the gliding water on either side of it. Then it slowly wheeled itself about and began to crawl back by the way its mother had brought it.

At that, it seemed that the parent could possess her patience no longer. She snarled her lips back more emphatically than before, so significantly that I almost could believe I heard her exclamation, "Drat the children!" She made a bound along the

plank, seized the retreating baby before it could make good its way into the shelter of the sedges, lifted it, not too gently, in her teeth, and carried it at a quick trot right across the bridge, setting it down on the further side. That done, she returned again, in a hurry, with none of the pantomime of invitation which she had indulged in before, dived into the sedge grass, brought out another similar baby, which she carried, as she had the first, over the bridge, and repeated the action undeviatingly until she had no fewer than six little ones safely transferred from the one to the other side of the carrier. Then the whole family vanished in the long, dense grasses as completely as if there was not such a creature as a stoat under the sun.

For all this literally transpontine or "across-bridge" drama I had a front seat as I sat waiting, beside the placid chalk stream, the good pleasure of the trout to begin to rise.

What interested me especially in this particular play was the light that it threw on the principles by which creatures such as this stoat mother conduct the education of their children. Being without speech, or with strictly limited powers of indicating their wishes by means of sounds, example is very much more, with them, than precept. They do the thing themselves first, the children see them doing it, and accordingly the children begin to do it too.

It is not to be thought for a moment that it is any conscious idea of education that is in the mother's mind. A supposition such as that would contradict all our best knowledge of the psychology of animals lower than man—perhaps even the psychology of some low races of man himself. What happens is that the mother does that which it seems good to her to do—that to which her instinct prompts her—and the children, being hers,

have an instinct that prompts them to do the same as she. That is the whole story of it, with very little mind work entering into the process at all.

In this present, transpontine instance, the mother wished to go, with her family, across the carrier. She relied on the instinct which inclines children to follow their parents to lead them over the bridge after her. But another instinct—that of avoidance of the unknown—and another emotion—that of fear—made the little ones hesitate on the brink of the stream. This instinct and this emotion were stronger than the desire to be near the mother, and overruled it, though twice she put the children to the proof by going before her family along the bridge. Eventually, as I saw, she had to go back, and be at the labour of carrying them over one by one, and it did not seem that she was in the best possible temper at having to do so.

So I had front seats for this play ; but now I rose up quickly from my seat, for obviously I had allowed myself to be too long and closely engrossed by it. The rise had begun. Little dark olives were coming down the stream in flotillas ; the trout were up and busy rising at them ; it was time, and more than time, for me to be up and busy too.

Now, as I said before, I am not going to attempt to thrill you much with descriptions of the actual angling—how this fish declined, how that said "Yes" ; how another was hooked but got away ("It is better to have hooked and lost than never to have hooked at all," says one of our piscatorial maxim-mongers) ; how here and there one was delectably brought to the bag. I will not retell all this adventure because such tales have already been very much more than twice-told.

Take it that I, a bungling fisherman at the best, had angled this rise through with moderate share

of luck and of success and so, as its richness began to "peter out," found myself arriving at my beat's upper limit. I might rest me awhile; the fish had gone off feeding on such sparse surface fly as still came down occasionally.

Then, looking up-stream again, I saw, on the beat above, a very familiar figure—Arthur Gilbey, hard at work upon a fish, one wadered leg nearly thigh-deep in the water, the other kneeling on the bank. This was his favourite pose, that in which I most often found him when I came on him thus, unawares. It meant that he had found a fish after his own heart, rising just where he liked it best, close under his own bank, so that, with one foot in the water, and thus with all his body low down out of the trout's scope of vision, he was free to work his rod low and horizontally over the water. The odds were long against that poor fish.

Now it is not to be thought, though I say so much—though not at all too much—about Arthur Gilbey, that there were not in the Club, when I joined it, other fine fishers too. There were.

There was Mr Henry Birbeck: he was a fine fisher; a very strongly-built man and able to throw a very long line. Then there was Mr Edward Power. He died, poor fellow, during the war—though not of the war, for he was beyond army age—to the very great sorrow of us all, so unselfish as he was, such a good sportsman! After he had caught a couple of brace or so of good fish he would hardly try to catch more for that day, saying to his gillie, "We mustn't catch too many, Grist. We must leave some for the others."

I know, because I always had this Grist, his gillie, when Power was not there. Grist was a fine old fellow, with a great beard, scarcely tinged by grey, and upright in figure, to his stature of well

WHERE TREES HAVE BEEN SPARED.

over 6 ft., and broad of shoulder, to correspond, even up to a very ripe old age. He had the very voice of the Boanerges. All his early and middle life he had tramped the highway as a postman; and thus it was that when he came to follow the river he followed it with most remarkable indifference. Of angling, and all pertaining to it, he remained profoundly ignorant to his dying day: it really was something like a triumph of detachment from his immediate surroundings, to spend so many hours by the river and yet know so very little, or nothing at all, about it. Power landed his own fish always: he would not let Grist have a hand at them; and I soon found how right he was to do so. But I had a great affection for the old stentorian-voiced man none the less—perhaps all the more. He looked with great compassion, and most charitably, on our interest in this angling which was so inexplicable to him.

He too has now gone across the Styx; but I am quite sure he never made any comment about the dark river to Charon as they went, nor inquired whether there were trout in it.

Sometimes I asked Grist the simplest question about the fishing, in order to get his remarkable answers. He was quite sound in one point, however: "Mr Gilbey's a good fisherman, is he not?" I inquired innocently.

As out of the mouth of a bull of Bashan came a roar in answer: "Mr Gilbey's an extra-ordinary fisherman"—please say extra-ordinary in six syllables: it then becomes extra-ordinarily expressive from the depths of an extra-ordinarily deep voice. "Mr Power's a good fisherman," he added, "and Mr Birbeck's a good fisherman; but Mr Gilbey can catch fish when Mr Power and Mr Birbeck can't."

Mr Power handicapped himself, for the dry-fly art, by throwing too straight a line. Really it was a beautiful line from the point of view of the wet-fly trout fisher or the salmon fisher ; but he strangely failed to recognise the virtue of the bend in the cast for the dry fly. Old Grist was perfectly right : he had put his large finger on the very spot of difference between Mr Gilbey and the others—A. N. G. could catch fish when they could not. On a coarse, rough day another might equal, or, with luck in the beat, and in the rise, even defeat him ; but on a bright, still day others would come in with blank looks and blank bags : Gilbey would almost always, on a day like this, get some fish.

Another good fisher was Mr Gibbs — " the Honourable Gibbs," as the gillies invariably called him. He was the Honourable Herbert, Lord Aldenham's brother. We had several specimens in the Club at that time of what we may call the perfect insect, the imago, the lord. There was Lord Moreton, the Club's oldest member when I joined, and now dead, poor fellow, though of no age to speak of. Then there was Lord Lucas, who lost his life—flying, if I remember right—in the war. And there was Lord Coke. But Gibbs was the only one in the nymphal condition of Honourable. He too has now passed on to further metamorphosis under the title of Lord Hunsdon ; not of mere process of passive succession but by the active and personal merit of first-rate service, as any Conservative in the City of London will readily assure you.

It was very funny how inveterately the gillies gave him this " honourable " title. I have heard my own gillie, Grist, correct himself thunderously, after the dreadful slip of speaking of him as " Mr Gibbs "—" the Honourable Gibbs, I should say."

Later there joined us another "Honourable," and a good fisher too, Colonel Orde-Powlett. He too has now become the imago, by the title of Lord Bolton. But the gillies got over the trouble of his honourability by using his military title and saying "Colonel Powlett." He was a great addition to our brotherhood, and so was Mr Willie Barry, who joined about the same time—very good fellows and good fishermen both.

Then there was Mr Page, shikari and fine all-round sportsman, Mr Robert Newman, six foot six of height, or nearly so, and Deputy-Governor of the Bank of England; Mr Stephenson Clarke and his brother Colonel Coghlan Clarke, first-rate ornithologists both; Mr Branch and General Colville. And I am sure there were one or two more I ought to name, but I forget them at the moment.

And all this while Mr Gilbey has one leg down in the water and the other kneeling on the bank. He must be getting cramped. But the chances are that he will have caught the fish by this time. Perhaps we had better take another chapter now to tell you just how he caught the trout, for he has his own method, which is well worth studying, and also well worth comparing with the method of that other excellent good fisher, Mr Birbeck. The contrast is enlightening.

Chapter VII

THE SUPER-CAST

Let us start with yet another maxim : That a coil or two of gut around the fly do not help to commend it to the trout as a natural insect.

I had my first instructions in the gentle art of delivering the dry-fly from the late Mr Frederic Halford ; and immense is my debt therein to him. In one of his classic works on the great subject he has written that if an angler find a fish steadily rising under his own bank, that fish is in the most ideal position for capture. If the stream is so shallow and the bed so firm that you can wade in, it may be possible to get thus directly behind a fish feeding out in the middle of the river also ; and by so doing you usually gain the vast advantage of obviating the very probable necessity of throwing across a current moving at a different pace from that of the piece of water in which the fish is lying. Thus placed, you eliminate most of the risk of that drag on the fly, causing a little wake in the water to follow it, which makes trout rising in certain places almost impossible to delude.

It seems to me, however, that there are many skilful anglers with the dry-fly who do not so greatly prefer this position, directly behind the fish ; and for this reason, that if the cast be delivered in the ordinary manner, when trout and angler are in this relative situation, a certain short stretch of gut is bound to go over the fish's head, and to come within its vision even before the fly itself.

But Mr Gilbey, both by precept and example, confesses himself firmly of Mr Halford's opinion ; and he has a special method of his own devising, which I do not know that any man before has ever practised, nor that any man since has brought to anything like equal perfection, of so giving the fish a sight of the fly, even though the angler be thus behind it, that no preliminary gut comes over its head to alarm it. Standing, or crouching, directly behind the fish, whether wading in the stream or kneeling on the bank, he is able to do this, and is able to do it either fore-handed or back. That means to say, that if he is fishing on the proper right[1] bank of a stream, so that he will naturally cast fore-handed with his right hand to a rising fish, he will be kneeling on the bank, or perhaps have the left knee on the bank and the right foot down in the water, and will essay to beguile this fish to its death in the following way. With rod held low over the water, he will execute the horizontal cast, fore-handed, making the line travel, in the forward part of the cast, very nearly in the true horizontal plane, parallel with the surface of the water. Then, just before the line and cast have gone out straight, while there is yet a considerable curve, convex towards the bank, in the line, he will arrest the movement and hold the rod rigid.

That means that the following movement is imparted to the final end of the cast and the fly that terminates it—it is arrested, with a sudden stop, almost a jerk, as it is coming round to straighten itself out, and the effect of that is to give it a little sharp flick round towards the left. That is really the final moment of the cast : the cast is completed ; but of course there is a moment yet before it all—

[1] By "proper right" I mean the right hand of a man facing down-stream.

fly, gut, and line—comes on the water, the moment, namely, that it takes the force of gravity to bring down the line and the rest of the arrangements to fall lightly on the stream.

And you see what the result of it is, so far as the fish is concerned, if the final curve of the gut towards the left has been nicely calculated and the whole throw has been correctly performed—that the fly lands a foot, or a foot and a half—whatever distance, in the pace of the stream, may seem to be best—above the trout's head, but that no part of the gut is directly in front of its nose. All the gut will lie on the right of the trout, and will come floating down to its side. The fly alone will pass over its head.

Does this sound something of a *tour de force* or conjuring trick? To those to whom it comes as a new project it is possible that it may so sound, but as a matter of fact it is not altogether so difficult of achievement as may be thought. Far indeed be it from me to pose as having at all conquered its difficulties. Now and again, after much practice, I am able to achieve the throw correctly, to put the fly, and the fly only, to sail over the fish's head; and when this happy event does come off, it is wonderful how seldom a seriously feeding fish seems able to decline the invitation, of course on the assumption that the stream is flowing so as not to put any drag on the fly. But when you can get right behind your fish it is not often that this fatal drag occurs.

The real expert should be able to accomplish this little curve of the gut at the end—it is something in the form of a note of interrogation that the cast should fall—equally with the back-handed as with the fore-handed throw, for then he can terminate his invitation to the fish with the correct note of

interrogation (only turned the other way round), equally deftly whether it lie under the one bank or the other of the stream. Or it may be, if he is an ambidextrous artist, that he will, on occasion, shift the rod to his left hand and cast the curving tail of gut in that way. Ambidexterity seems to be the one gift of a past master of this craft which Mr Gilbey has not ; but he is so very deft with the back-handed throw from the right hand that I cannot see that he loses at all by being without it.

Anything like a moderate breeze of wind seems to make this cast, as is only likely, far more difficult to execute. If the wind be across stream, it either flicks the curve back or brings too much of the gut round, according to the direction of the wind in relation to the direction of the curve. If the wind be straight, and at all strong, behind, it is difficult to avoid its straightening out the curve ; and if the wind be down-stream it is hard to get the cast to pitch on the water lightly and yet not to have its end blown back on itself.

As for the mode of execution of the throw, I have endeavoured to give an idea of it above. By way of amplifying that suggestion, be it said in the first place that possibly enough there are as many ways of achieving it as there are " of making tribal lays," and very likely " every single one of them is right " ; but the way which seems effective, so far as my humble efforts at the stroke go to teach me, is to make the line travel fairly quickly before the moment of arrest. Of course the pace and the power of any throw are determined not by the amount of force that your muscles put into it, but only by the amount of that force which they communicate to the steely-springing rod. It is the flick of the rod that communicates the movement to the line, and that flick does not give its full effect unless

it is imparted at the moment when the line is at the right degree of extension backward. All this is of the grammar of the art of casting, and it is supposed that the student of this, the "interrogation note" cast, will have passed the standards of the first grammar.

It is necessary that there should be a certain pace of travel given to the line by the flick, in order that all its force shall not be spent by the moment of arrest, but that there shall be still sufficient to carry the end of the cast, with the fly, round in its curve. Nor does it in the least follow that the fly and the gut shall not fall with perfect lightness on the water, because they have been travelling at a tolerable speed shortly before alighting. They do not alight with anything like the force of their travel : it is a force which does not, in fact, affect the mode of their alighting, because that force is checked, it is pulled up short, and the fly and the gut come on the water with only the gentle force of the gravity that causes them to fall from the height of a foot or so above the water's surface. For this reason it is a very useful cast to use in a wind of which the strength is not too excessive. The line can be sent out at a pace which defeats the action of a moderate current of air, and yet the gut will fall lightly on the water. The problem is to induce it to alight before the wind has caught it and sent it erratically.

There is a further point that is worth mentioning in commending this throw to the dry-fly fisher. Most of us have proved, of our past experience, that if a fish comes away from his position to the distance of six inches or a foot—he is not likely to move further, unless it be to drop down-stream as the fly comes over him, examining it, in which case he is always a difficult fish to strike even if he does finally

elect to sample the fly—if the fish moves right or left to seize an artificial fly it means that he has fully made up his mind to have it, and is far more likely to take a good hold of the fly and to let the hook take a good hold of him, than the fish which merely sucks it in as it passes straight above his head. It is, in fact, almost to be taken as a maxim that the further you can induce the fish to come to your fly the more likely you are to hook him. And, that being so, it is evident that you have not done yourself much harm in relation to the fish—have not, to any appreciable extent, spoilt your chances of catching him—if you happen, throwing thus with the cast curving towards the left, to pitch the fly a little outside him, a little to his right. If it sails down say 6 in. to the right of him, and he does not come for it, no damage has been done. The gut and all the rest of the line of invitation are lying yet further away to his right, and he is little likely to take notice of them ; and if, on the other hand, he does observe your fly and think it worth his while to travel this half foot or so to taste it, there is all the greater probability of your tasting him, a little later in the day, at table, than there would have been if your fly had been cast so as to pass exactly over him.

The essential for the correct performance of this cast, which is really not so subtle an affair as it is bound to appear in the description, is, as I suppose in every other, that the timing should be accurate. The line must be sent forward with just force enough, and no more, nicely proportioned to the length of line that is being used, to take it out quickly, yet not too quickly, to the required distance. If the pace be not enough, or again if it be too much, then, when the check is put on, the end of the cast fails to come curving round to make its note of interrogation.

On the other hand, if the force is calculated nicely, it is most satisfactory to see the right termination placed to the all-important question which you are asking the fish—that invitation to dinner which has to be put so exactly in the form in which he likes it if it is to win his acceptance.

You may believe one who has, with infinite pains and with moderate success, endeavoured to acquire the art of this most subtle and delicate throw, that it is an endeavour which adds immensely to the interest of dry-fly fishing, and that even its very imperfect acquirement adds more than a few to the fish that you may expect to catch with the dry-fly.

We all know the proud look and the high stomach that the fisher of the chalk streams and the dry-fly thinks it his bounden duty to display towards his less haughty friend who follows the " chuck and chance it " methods in the quickly running streams. He has his justification. He can claim, and we are obliged to grant him, a greater skill and delicacy in his particular branch of angling than are demanded by any other kind of angling or in any other branch of sport whatsoever. To say this is not too much. Nothing of its kind can exceed the difficulty, and the deftness and the care required, of stalking up to a rising fish in a crystal-clear chalk stream of Hampshire, to get into exactly the right position below him, to measure with a precise accuracy the length of line and of gut required to reach him, and then, having all these preliminaries rightly done, to throw the tiny fly (itself a work of much antecedent art in matching the fly that is on the water) so that it shall alight just a foot or six inches above the nose of the rising fish—shall alight as softly as a piece of thistle-down, or as the real fly that it so very closely resembles, and shall come floating down over the fish in a manner so natural that no fish with a

healthy appetite could, reasonably speaking, fail to come to it.

Then begin the rush of the reel, the battle, and so on—we need not dwell on this aspect, for when we reach this stage in the proceedings we do not any longer find that the chalk stream and dry-fly angler has justification for his proudness and Sancho-Panza-like attitude. Size for size, the fish of the prattling brooks will give a better fight than the fish of the chalk streams "every time." The dry-fly purists hate to be told so; they dispute the fact fervently, but it remains a fact none the less. For all that, there is a delicacy and an art in this business of persuading a sophisticated fish in a gin-clear stream to take your fly that the "chuck and chance it" style does not ask for.

Chapter VIII

"ANOTHER WAY"

In that last chapter I let myself go—may I be forgiven !—in something perilously like a didactic vein—portentous phrase !

It was Mr Gilbey's past-mastership which so misled me.

But, as I have said before, we had other fine fishers in the Club beside him, and that one of the others who, I think, brought in the biggest bagsful after Gilbey, was Mr Birbeck ; and curiously enough his method always seemed to me, as a pious student of both masters, the extreme opposite from Mr Gilbey's. Whereas Gilbey set himself, as I have tried to show, behind the fish, and tried to engage its response to his own particular "interrogation" note, Mr Birbeck seemed to like to get nearly abreast his fish, or only a little "aft," and thence, keeping well back from the bank, to pitch his fly very exactly and lightly just in front of the trout's nose. That was his way of giving the fish the sight of the fly and of little or no gut.

And a very good way he proved it, by its results, and on a day that was at all coarse or rough I would not say that, given perhaps a shade the better of the luck in the rising of the fish on his beat, he would not catch quite as many as Arthur Gilbey. For A. G., although I have thus written of him as king fisher or champion otter, was, after all, but human. Even he has been known to

come in with an empty bag; on which occasion has been noted, in the great book of the Club's record :—"Arthur Gilbey did not catch a fish—thank G—d!"

Not that a single member of the Club ever grudged him his pre-eminence. He was far too good a fellow-member for that; took far too much labour of love over the Club's affairs, acting as Treasurer, as well as Secretary, giving himself endless and gratuitous trouble, in fine, for which all were truly and duly grateful. But still, if he did, for once, come in thus, with a blank, it was permissible surely to say "Thanks be——" One would be more than human not to take a certain joy in it.

Now Birbeck fished, and fished most effectively, in this cross-stream fashion; but it was not so effective on the bright, blazing days. He was a great believer in the "spiders," so-called, flies (if they were flies) composed of little more than some few hackles tied over the iron. "Nothing on a stick" was Power's description of them, and some of these fancy nothings on sticks Power, who was a most ingenious fly-tier, built up, and many of us tried them. But Birbeck was the cleverest of us all with them. Whether the fish took them for nymphs or what, I hardly know; but I fancy that they would sometimes accept them when they would not look at a dry-cocked fly going over their heads. I expect these spiders had a nymphish look to them.

Some years later we were joined by a very fine fisher who came to us with the repute of being the master angler of the Driffield Beck brotherhood. This was Mr Peter Haig Thomas. He was an old Cambridge oar, a very strong man. He fished with a bigger rod than anyone else; he commonly wore

trouser waders, right up to the waist, whereas most of us were content with thigh waders only ; I have seen him wading where I have seen no other man wade because of the depth and the swift stream. He was a great exponent of the " brown nymph," as he called it ; a little concoction intended to imitate some nymphal creature of the waters. He used it with very deadly effect.

Of course it was just carrying a step further the mode of Mr Birbeck, who would often moisten one of his " spiders," to make it sink before coming to the fish ; and it was all an exemplification of what Mr Skues has so well written about in his delightful book, " Minor Tactics of a Chalk Stream." On a rough day, with his " brown nymph," and because he was a masterful and good fisherman, he would come in with as many fish as Arthur Gilbey. He might come in with more.

But Gilbey, as far as I could see, looked with the superior eye of a Gallio on all " minor tactics." He really was a purist, of the strictest sect of the angling Pharisees, in his practice, though charitable enough to all weaker and less pure brethren. Gifted as he was, no doubt he was right : he might indulge his exclusive taste ; but I think that an angler of less gifts loses if he be too select.

All this I say, and " am free to maintain," as good counsel for him who is not too highly expert, and yet even I, very far indeed from high expertness, realise that there is its own particular joy in the acceptance by a shy trout, on a bright still day, of a dry-fly with well-cocked wings. That, as I know, and have heard Arthur Gilbey declare often, is his ideal too ; and yet the fly to which he has given his name, or to which he has been made godfather— " Gilbey's Extractor " — is no cock-winged fly at all.

It is one of the earliest ever devised of the flat-winged flies, a type of the "spent olive" patterns, with red body. Whence he got it in the first instance I do not know, for, master angler though he be, he is no student of the entomology, as was Mr Halford. But in those long-ago days when he first came as member to the Houghton Club, the old fellows, as I think I have written, did not go out at all in the daytime during the summer. They took their ease in their inn; for which we may be very grateful, for it gave them time to compose and to illustrate those fine books. But when this young Arthur Gilbey came, he said, with all the insolence and kicking over the traces habit of youth, "Oh, I'm not going to sit indoors all day."

Some chided. "Fish in the daytime, at this time of year!" It was the sort of thing that "was not done."

Others smiled indulgently. "The folly of youth! He will learn better."

When he came back that day, he brought with him that which surcharged the Club atmosphere with dangerous electricity—namely trout, trout caught in the summer daytime! If angling for them at such unholy season was among "things not done," what was to be said for the actual catching of them?

Then they must see his fly. "How was it done?" He showed them—this tiny flat-winged thing, hitherto unknown to them. And "how did he do it?" He "saw the fish rising," he explained, he "put the fly over him," and "I extracted him."

That was a favourite phrase of his—rather painfully reminiscent of the dentist's chair. So this fly, by means of which this dentistry, let us hope

painless, was effected, came to be known as " Gilbey's Extractor " ; and so, or simply as " the extractor," it is known in the Club to-day. Variations on it, of course, are legion, but should we not do every whit as well if we stuck to one pattern of " spent " —say this, the " extractor," or another—when fish are taking spent ?

That raises a question vast and vexed, and about it we may never say, until the clew of evolution is ultimately wound up, that the final word has been written ; but for the moment some such word seems to have come from the late Mr F. Halford in his last volume, " Modern Development of the Dry-Fly." When I first had the honour of his acquaintance, Mr Halford's hobby was keeping pets. There are some who make pets of dogs, of cats, of canaries, and other familiar spirits ; it was Mr Halford's hobby to make pets of such interesting and simple-minded animals as the Jenny Spinners, the Blue Duns, and all that large and various family. He cultivated these creatures as in these days a micro-biologist (if there is not such a word there ought to be) rears a healthy brood of young bacteria in a nourishing environment of beef-tea. His object was to make an intimate study of the life history of as many as possible of those aquatic insects on which the trout of the chalk streams feed, with the ultimate purpose of getting as exact an imitation of these forms as possibly could be made with silk and hair and feathers tied on a hook, and of presenting these imitations to the trout in such a fashion as to deceive the very clear-sighted fish, in the very translucent streams which flow from the chalk, into the belief that the imitations were the living insects.

He learned to know these pets so well that after a while of looking at one of them through the

LUNN (Keeper), A. N. GILBEY, and VINCE (Gillie).

microscope he would be able to tell you what it was thinking about and what it was going to do next ; and it always did just as he said it was going to do. He put all this knowledge, or as much of it as could be imparted, into many books, and found a very clever artist to make drawings in water-colour of the original flies or of the imitations—they were so alike that the imitation was often thought to be more real than the original, and an Itchen trout would often take it in preference—and gave them to a public which did not prove ungrateful.

All this very exact study of the forms and colours of the insects in their different phases suggests the question, which Mr Halford himself does not forget to raise, of the trout's eyesight and its appreciation of all the care on its behalf which the "dry" entomologist has expended.

Ribald persons have been known to ask whether the trout themselves are really as appreciative as they ought to be of this meticulous care which is taken to suit their appetite. It has been suggested that their knowledge and discrimination of the aquatic insects in their various metamorphoses is really not as intimate as Mr Halford's own, though it might seem to be a yet more appropriate concern of theirs than of his. There is even, as we all know, such a person as Sir Herbert Maxwell, who appears, possibly by some unguarded words, to have been made responsible for the opinion that trout do not distinguish colour at all ; from which the inevitable corollary is that their gastronomic tastes are not worthy of study with the microscopic care bestowed by Mr Halford ; for if they do not distinguish hue, though even Sir Herbert Maxwell is disposed to concede that they distinguish tone, all that is necessary for the copying, to suit their vision, of any phase of their insect food is that the

simulacrum should be similar to the original in form and size—which would simplify the problem not a little.

Anglers who hold this opinion of the utter colour-blindness of the trout are in a small minority. "Why," it is asked, "do trout prefer a bright-red worm to a dull one, if they have no eye for the colour?" One answer to that is that there is far from being any demonstration of such a colour preference in the delicate matter of worms. They like a lively and freely wriggling worm—one that is "really trying," to quote the little boy in *Punch* —but nobody knows to what extent its redness interests them. Still, nine anglers out of ten believe that if you are to engage the attention of the trout favourably you must use a lure resembling the natural insect in its colours as well as in its form and size. The beautiful art of fly-tying would lose much if the opposite view became general. If we look back over the ever-lengthening record of our own experience at the riverside, do we not find case after case in which we have turned the tide of fortune in our own favour and against that of the fish by extracting from our fly-box an imitation just a trifle more accurate than that which we were using before of the fly that was on the water and on which the trout were feeding?

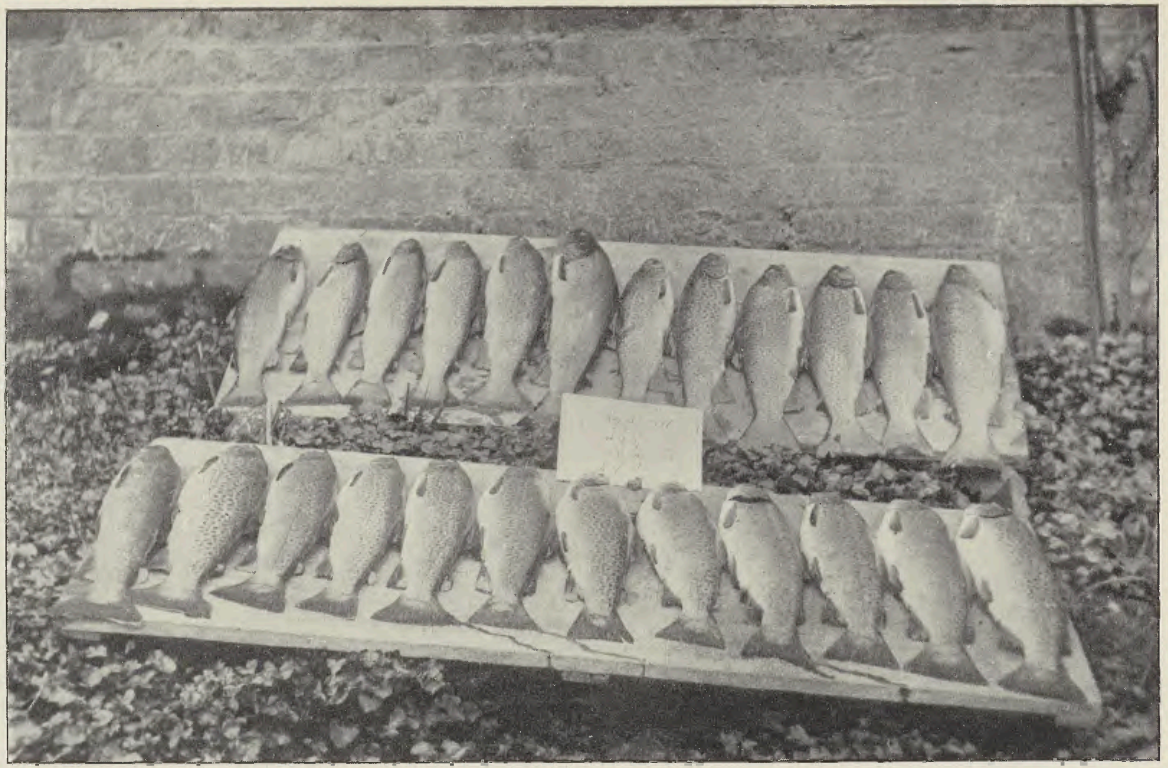
I have referred already to that frequent comment of the unlearned, when they see you thus anxiously matching the very insect and the very phase of it that is going down the stream in front of you: "Why do you give them exactly the same as what they're feeding on? Don't you think they must be just a little bit tired of that? I should think they would welcome anything else, by way of a change." And so, to be sure, one would think, being unlearned; but those who have studied the ways of trout know

perfectly well that this is only the idea of the simple person, and that the trout, as a rule which has but few exceptions, will rise to an imitation of the fly which is on the water plentifully, and on which he is gorging himself, and will not pay attention to any other.

I say "with few exceptions" designedly, for even in that last book of Mr Halford's, which goes so deeply and so delicately into the subtleties, we are told of two fish quickly exemplifying themselves, one after the other, as striking exceptions to the rule that is thus general. A few olive and blue duns were on the water, but there was no big rise of fish. Mr Halford put a blue dun over a rising fish, hooked him ; he ran across the river and the fly came out of his mouth ! Apparently he was a hungry fellow, for in a few minutes he was back again feeding at the same place as before. Mr Halford, with an intuitive genius, changed the lure for him this time to a male olive dun. The fish took it kindly, and was brought to the net—weight, 2 lbs. 12 oz.

After a short interval the angler saw another rising fish, and put the male olive dun over it. It came short. Then he tried the trout with the male iron-blue dun. It would have none of it. But a little farther out rose another and a larger fish. Over this the iron-blue dun was sent, and the trout rose, and was hooked ; but, as happened with the first fish, the hook came out of its mouth. There can be no doubt that these fish were in good appetite on this happy day, for this trout again was back feeding in its old place within very few minutes. Again the angler tried his luck with the same olive dun, and again his luck and the hook held good. The fish was brought to net—2 lbs. exactly.

These are pleasant little anecdotes illustrative of much that is interesting and of something that is not quite usual about the trout of the chalk streams. They are also well calculated to leave us with a pleasant taste in the mouth. I will say no more to spoil it.



IN THE PINK OF CONDITION.

(The smallest fish is above 1½ lbs., which is the Club's minimum.)

Chapter IX

THE ANGLER'S APPAREL

There was a moment during that afternoon when I began to believe myself a fisherman. It did not last long : like other fond illusions, it passed. But for a brief while there was a shower, a shower of warm rain ; and at the same time there was a sparse rise of some dark olives. The fish took them kindly : and on the surface broken by the raindrops they did not seem able to see even clearly enough to distinguish my bungling imitation from the real insect. So, while that shower lasted I caught fish. I shall say nothing about size or number, because the angler has discredit above all other men for proving " deceitful upon the weights."

These fish were weighed in afterwards, as always, by Goddard, the keeper, at the hotel while we were at dinner ; for it was too early in the year as yet for after-dinner fishing. Those were days before daylight saving existed, save in embryo and in the brain of the late Mr Willett, its beneficent inventor.

It was the fashion for the day's catch to be laid out on a long slab in the hall of the hotel ; and a fine show they made, after a good day. The catch of each member—of so many at least as had caught fish—were ranged together. Sometimes the comparisons and contrasts were more than a little invidious ; but nobody minded.

Goddard reweighed all fish — we were an

(The smallest fish is above 1½ lbs., which is the Club's minimum.)

ingenuous people, but we did not trust to the idiosyncrasies of each man's own spring-balance for the record—he sent up the list of weights and numbers while we dined, and later they were all written out duly, by the careful hand of Arthur Gilbey, if he were there ; and any comments worth the making added —as the direction and strength of wind, rise of fly and so forth ; also the first appearances of any migrants or the like notable facts.

And singular it was how opinions of members differed on such points as the wind's energy ; for to him who had successfully dodged that wind and deluded his fish it seemed far less formidable than to the man whom it had defeated. And in the treelessness that had been imposed upon us by the axing work of the old " blowers " we felt all the winds that blew.

Goddard was, is, and long may he remain, the up-stream keeper, at Stockbridge, the headquarters. The lower river keeper is Lunn, living at Houghton, great observer of fish, flies, and of all Nature generally. Goddard's was different work ; he was a keen observer too, within his limits, and both men had a wonderful eye for the tiniest rise of a fish. But Goddard had his other work, getting gillies to the order of members, seeing to the nurseries, for he reared and stocked with trout, weighing and recording the fish, as just noticed, sending off fish by train—a hundred and one odd jobs which did not come in Lunn's way to interrupt his observations of all that went on between his river and high heaven.

On the next day to that of which I have been writing, it was in Goddard's domain just below " the town " — so did we largely call the one long street of Stockbridge—that my daily beat lay—the Grosvenor Water, as it is known. And I might,

moreover, did I so please, take a cast down over Cooper's Meadow, which is the beat below, because none, among the few members present, had claimed that for his own.

That took me right down past the nurseries, where fish of various sizes and ages were stocked separately, like children of different ages in schools. They rushed, in their shoals, under the sheltering rafts which were set in these carriers to give them shade from the sun, as I passed, but if either Goddard or his assistant came along they would follow them down expectant for that food of mussels on which they were regaled. They knew their friends, though perhaps you may find it difficult to believe it of them.

A pleasant tale is related of an ingenious member who endeavoured to take advantage, for the more successful catching of the trout, of the familiarity which the fish acquire with a human figure that they often see beside the river, and which is associated for them with agreeable sensations, such as the sensation of dining well. Possibly the very fact of this familiarity is not generally known. But it is a fact that is not to be doubted; for it has been proved again and again, and may be confirmed by a visit to the nearest fish hatchery, that trout in the nursery know perfectly the man, or the men, who feed them. They will come right up to the surface, playing about, eager for food, when these friendly figures are on the bank. On the other hand, if it be a stranger that approaches, they make off at once into their hiding-places. Nor does it suffice for them that the stranger be in company with one of their familiar friends; they do not recognise that this guarantees them in the least from the danger suggested by the strange apparition. They show just as much alarm as if the stranger were alone.

There is a story—but when folks begin telling the truth about fish they never know when to stop —of a keeper's little girl who wore a red cloak, and it was dangerous for her to walk too near the bank because the trout knew her so well and liked the colour of her cloak so much that they would jump out of the water at her cloak ; they were big fish, and if they once caught her cloak they might have pulled her in, and then—well, shark stories are not pretty ones !

Also it was said of these same fish that the father of this little girl had some bull-mastiffs as guards against poachers, and that when the mastiffs went down to drink they had to be extremely circumspect, for, if there were any of the big trout about, the fish would rise and snap at their lapping tongues. These are trout which seem to have fallen the prey to historians of imaginative mind ; but facts about fish are sufficiently singular even as told by biographers of less playful fancy. Assuredly the fish recognise unfailingly the human figure that is known and friendly to them. Of that there can be no question.

They recognise it a little too unfailingly—that is the trouble. It is this, at least, that was found to be the trouble by that exceedingly ingenious gentleman to whom the happy idea occurred of disguising himself in the garb and outward man of the feeder of the trout, after a large number of large fish had been turned out from the adjacent nursery. Of course, his vain imagination was that the trout, seeing this angler on the riverside arrayed in Goddard's coat and hat, would say to themselves at once, " Oh, here comes Goddard, no doubt with our dinner." Then they would feel their appetites keenly excited, they would take his fly, and he would come home with all the gratified sentiments of the successful angler and

of the man who has proved himself clever and resourceful.

The event did not turn out according to his expectation ; perhaps no one but the inventor of the device was likely to think that it would. But both the experiment and its failure suggest a question of some interest as to what it is, exactly, that the fish recognise of familiarity in a figure, and what particulars they are, in such circumstances as these, that they would perceive to be strange. How, we may ask, did they detect the fraud ; but, perhaps, even antecedent to this, we may also ask how, by what features, did they identify and know Goddard, their friend, from any other man ?

We have had our ignorance of the manner and extent in which fish near the surface of the water see objects on the bank much impressed on us of late by the experiments of Dr Francis Ward, and, in a general way, it seems a justifiable inference from them that the fish are most conscious of the appearance of the silhouette as it is depicted more or less darkly against the translucent sky. There is little doubt that the apparition (on that circumference of the range of vision which Dr Ward's experiment has shown to be the place where objects on the bank would be refracted to the fish's eye) of any unfamiliar silhouette, no matter whether that of a mere man or of any other terrestrial body, would excite their alarm.

On this account we may, perhaps, think that the idea of the ingenious angler to borrow the coat and hat of Goddard, the feeder of the fish, was not quite so fantastic as it sounds. Provided he had the figure, no less, of Goddard, and could contrive a fair imitation of his poses and gestures, there seems no reason why he should not pass himself off with them as Goddard, provided that

he made his apparition among the same surroundings.

But this is exactly the essential condition in which this angler failed. Goddard had been used to bring the fish their food in their nursery. That is to say—on the view that I have been trying to explain of the outlook of the fishes—the silhouette of Goddard appeared to them among the other silhouettes which they were accustomed to see as they floated in their nursery. And had the enterprising angler borrowed Goddard's coat and hat and general silhouette, and so showed himself to the fish on the nursery wall, so to call it, it is quite to be believed that he might have misled them as to his identity. Any idea of telepathic communication or of affinity of souls between Goddard and the fishes is hardly to be presumed.

But then, unfortunately, in the mystification which the angler was proposing to practise on the fishes, all the circumstances in which they had learnt to regard Goddard as a familiar silhouette were altered. They were now no longer in the nursery—it is not to be imagined that our angler was so dead to all sense of proper sportsmanlike conduct as to propose the hooking of these nursery infants. They were now fish turned out to fend and forage for themselves in the wide world—that is to say, in the open river—and whereas Goddard had formerly appeared as a familiar silhouette cast upon what we have called the nursery wall, we have to believe that in the altered circumstances not even the silhouette of Goddard himself, though he were their food purveyor, would be likely to strike them with anything but awe ; for on the new background he would be as strange to them as any other man, or monster. Still less is it probable that they would show any friendly acquaintance with this pseudo-

Goddard — the artificial as compared with the natural.

Be that how it may, the further story goes that the ingenuity of the angler was disappointed. He did not at all succeed in deluding the trout into the fond fancy that he was their chief butler, conveying to them their daily provision of food. At best it really was but a fond and foolish imagination, for the angler's actions in casting his fly would be as unlike as possible any that the real purveyor would have exhibited to the fish. It would be altogether a different silhouette in its actions ; and therefore we must conclude that this invention does greater credit to the creative fancy than to the judicial wisdom of its originator.

Just how best we are to delude the fish in our approaches to them is a larger question. Read and ponder well the following counsel :—

" In Fishing have a great care of wearing light and dazeling apparel, but choose those that are dark, or sad-coloured ; also, if possible, shelter yourself under some Bush or Tree, or stand so far from the Bank side, that you can only discern the Float ; for Fish are Timerous and Fearful of everything they see." These are the words of ancient angling wisdom, and in the main we, who are of a later day, justify them, as we may, in our own practice. It is true that as a rule we think some scorn of that mode of fishing which the ancient writer here pictures. The watching of a float is a form of the contemplative man's recreation which even the most ruminant of us is apt to find a little too placidly contemplative and not quite sufficiently active.

Nevertheless, we still appreciate the disposition of the fish to be " timerous " though we spell the word rather differently, " and fearful," now, as then ; and the necessity for concealment of the person if

we would have success in our fishing is realised continually more fully as the years roll by, and anglers increase in number and fish improve their education. For all that, when we come down to the first detail of the advice quoted from this old sporting volume, we may find some reason to suspect it. "Light and dazeling apparel" is that against the wearing of which we are solemnly warned, even as when we took our undergraduate oaths to the Alma Mater of either University we made pious promise that our garment should be of "sub-fusc" hue. In the same clause we gravely took upon ourselves, further, to abjure "the proud habit of wearing boots," if I remember the words rightly.

We are rather to gather from this counsel that the thoroughly equipped fisher of the date of the above writing, that is to say, about 1680, deemed himself suitably habited for his sport when he went forth in his sober broadcloth; for this, if anything, might rightly be designated as "dark and sad-coloured." In no sense could it be regarded as "light or dazeling."

Yet, if we come to consider the facts, we are obliged to realise that the comparative invisibility, which is the aim and object of this selection of colours, is a question much less of the colours themselves than of the background on which they are exhibited; and, regarding it from that point of view, and from the point of view of the fish in the river, it is not very easy to imagine any array of colours which might be called light and dazzling which would not be as if the wearer had partaken of the fern-seed in comparison with the monstrous silhouette of the grave gentleman in broadcloth.

"Nane o' yer gaudy colours," said the good old Scots lady rebukingly to the young man in the shop who was showing her some self-hued greens and

THE GROSVENOR WATER (LOOKING UP).

NORTH HEAD.

browns ; " nane o' yer gaudy colours—wrax me doon yon red and yellow plaid." That must be something like the mood of the fish when he sees such an apparition, cast between his astonished eyes and the blue vault of heaven, as this gentleman in black. He is not much accustomed to these " self-coloured " visions ; or, if he sees them at all, it is indeed as something " light and dazeling "—namely, the heavenly firmament itself in its translucency. But more often, perhaps, he will behold it flecked with a variety of hue, as from the ripple of the water over his head or the motley of iridescent clouds in the sky, and all kept in a dance and shimmer of movement by the current's glide. That is his common outlook, when he is not too intently focused on the nymph or the dun or the fresh-water shrimp ; and something, no matter how light or dazzling, cast on such a background as this is surely less likely to affront and offend his eye than a solid figure of solemn black or " sad colour."

If you will imagine yourself a trout comfortably floating and keeping yourself in position against the stream by no more violent effort than a gentle wagging of your tail, you will realise, I think, that, looking up towards the bright sky and the waving reeds and bushes by the water's side, the kind of human apparition that would be least likely to strike your eye with a great sense of shock would be one arrayed in a sort of light motley. Certainly the general hue should be light, and certainly it should be broken—not all of a piece, not self-coloured.

The angler stalking his trout in the chalk stream has much the same motives for invisibility as the tiger approaching his prey in the jungle. The tiger, in course of selective generations, has chosen for himself a garb not unlike a Zingari cricket coat—running in brilliant stripes, and very much more of

a " dazeling " than of a " sad-coloured " character. Yet his mother Nature, thus choosing the clothes he is to wear in that stern school where the eternal game of " the survival of the most fit " is played, has known what she was about thus draping him. The alternative dark and brilliant stripes " go with " the jungle surroundings, of which all the local colour is at high pitch while there is everywhere a succession of bright lines and dark, as the vivid sunlight throws one side of a branch or of a cane-stem into shine and the other into shadow.

You may see, similarly, this use of stars and stripes in the animals that wish to be invisible not for aggressive, but for protective purposes, and Nature has worked very special wonders in this regard in the way of providing the young of many species with the coat of motley, or of stripes, whereas, when the same creature comes to years in which it is able to provide for its safety by speed of foot or formidable defence, the stripes or the stars are lost, and it becomes self-coloured—that is to say, much more visible in those natural surroundings which are usually broken in hue. Even on the sand of the desert, which does, on first view, appear an exception to the common rule that the face of Nature is a mottled one, every traveller tells us that the invisibility of the striped zebra, quite close at hand and without a leaf of cover, is a standing marvel.

But certainly there is one point of the counsel above which we may accept just as it is offered to us, with no modification or reserve whatever, and that is the advice that we take shelter " under some Bush or Tree." It is worth observing the form in which this counsel is given, for it does not say that our shelter should be " behind " some floral growth of the kind, but " under " that is to say, presumably, on the river side, and the fish's side, of the covert,

not with the covert between us and the fish. That is sound and intelligent counsel.

It would be sound counsel, no doubt, were it to tell us merely to have the screen of a bush, where possible, between us and the fish—even as it is, obviously, sound that we should be as far back from the water as possible. But about this advice as it is proffered there is the intelligence, as well as the soundness, by which it is perceived how relatively inconspicuous we are to the fish if only we can blot ourselves out from their discernment against a background of bush, or tree, indeed, of anything that is, like ourselves, opaque. That is our general trouble —our opacity and our solidity. I am not sure that we should not do best of all if we could drape ourselves in a suit of looking-glass, or, failing that, of tinsel—something, in fact, that would have the effect, by reflecting light, of translucency. The value of the solid background behind us, in shape of bush or tree or wall with which the fish are familiar, is that we do not then, when we appear between this solid thing and them, appear as blockers out of the light.

If only we could make ourselves transparent we might deceive the sophisticated trout much more successfully, but, failing that, it behoves us to realise that the important thing which is tolerably feasible is to clothe ourselves in a garb that shall not be too striking a contrast against the ground on which we exhibit it to the fish, and to this end it is sure that that which is "light and dazeling" is really more to be affected than that which is "dark and sad-coloured."

Chapter X

THE TROUT THAT WENT MAD

Now on that day and on that Grosvenor Water there happened to me a curious experience, and one which I have never known before or since in all my angling life.

Some fifty yards or so above me I saw a fish, a trout of tolerable size—eventually he scaled 1¾ lbs. —coming tumbling down the top of the water as it might be a piscine acrobat doing Catherine wheels, heels over head. So mighty was the commotion on the usually placid surface of that silvern stream that when I bid my old gillie go with his landing-net to see what was happening he declared that it was an uproar occasioned by two moorhens fighting. No one who is at all acquainted with life on the rivers will be ignorant what a deal of splashing and fussing that means.

However, I insisted, having caught a clearer view of the fish than was possible for the man, and the trout continuing to show itself, at frequent intervals, in that attitude which Leech has depicted as the crest of the famous Romford family—the "turbot on its tail." All this while it was descending towards us, as the current bore it, being first observed some hundred or so yards above. So my gillie, watching his chance, caught it as its own convulsions and the stream's constraint brought it close past a little headland of the bank, ladled it out with his long net, and we set to work to examine it.

I had anticipated finding, if not a pike still hanging with a bulldog's grip to some portion of the poor trout's anatomy, at all events the furrows on its side ploughed by the carnivorous fish's teeth. But there was no mark of injury to be seen on it at all. Moreover, it looked singularly healthy, well-shaped, its gills bright and clean and red, its scale silvery and shining, its shape showing good condition. It ceased the extreme violence of its convulsive movements as we took it from the water, and struggled very little. It was evidently in a bad way, and moribund, whatever the occult cause of the trouble, so we deemed it the kinder way to give it the priestly blow on the head to hasten the death which would terminate its undoubted sufferings—and that was the end, so far as the trout and its mortal life were concerned.

I sent it up to Mr Boulenger, then of the Natural History Museum, who knows, as I honestly believe, all that there is to know about fish—I cannot remember, at all events, ever asking him a question to which he had not a perfectly ready and perfectly clear answer—and he said that after examination of the corpse he found the tissues and all digestive parts perfectly sound, and that he doubted not it was dying, when we saw it and extracted it from the Test, of a disease discovered by a German professor, bearing a name which I do not remember, and called by a very long word in the German language which I could not read, nor could have pronounced if I had read, but that the disease was caused by the presence of a microscopic parasite in the brain, which was known to produce convulsions in fish of the salmonoid kind.

The foes of fish are many and various. I often have friends writing to me for information, if I am

able to supply them with it, in the following strange circumstances. They have found a fish, or generally several fish, usually a salmon of the smaller size, perhaps a grilse or a sea-trout, evidently not in the best of health, and for a very evident reason—that something has bored, as with a carpenter's auger, a hole in their side, out of which, in some of the victims, a portion of the internal works are protruding. "What can be the reason of it?" they ask. "It does not look like the mark of a seal or of a big fish. Surely it cannot be a heron! Is it likely that poachers have been trying to spear the fish?"

All these things may happen, but in the instances cited it is almost sure that the holes have been made by lampreys. And when you ascribe the sad state of the salmonoid to this, its true, cause, you are nearly always met with incredulity. All that is known of lampreys, to ninety-nine out of a hundred persons of average education, is that they once killed a king. That striking fact in history, with the addition that it was a "surfeit" of these succulent fishes that caused the royal fatality, has proved singularly attractive and impressive to the youthful mind. But though they piously believe the historical evidence of its killing a king, they find it hard to credit the possibility of its killing a salmon—not through any surfeit, unless indeed it be a surfeit of salmon assimilated by the lamprey. For this is the habit of the lamprey, of which one of the two British species is a larger creature, of eel-like shape and character, than most people seem to imagine: it anchors firmly by a sucker-like mouth on the scales of a salmon or sea-trout, and by the gradual working of its teeth bores its way inward until it touches a vital spot or the fish succumbs to the continued waste of tissue.

But all this is a long cast from the Test, and from the beautiful Grosvenor Water, just below Stockbridge Town, where I netted out that poor mentally afflicted fish that morning.

As a matter of fact, I netted out, on that day, scarcely another. I dropped down, from the Grosvenor beat to Cooper's Meadow, below, and not until the very bottom of it did I come to a fish on which I got upon any terms at all. I hardly knew, when we got him out, whether or no he would "go the weight." But I had passed some trying and disappointing hours. I was in the mood to give myself, rather than the trout, the benefit of the doubt. So, "We'll give him Jeddart justice, I think," I said. "Yes, sir," replied the old man at the top of a stentorian voice.

That was really one of his greatest merits. It did not matter what proposition you made to him, he invariably agreed to it immediately, with no questions asked, and always in these terrific, deep-chested tones. And the less he understood the suggestion, the louder he seemed to express his agreement. It was a way which carried the conviction that your proposal was a wise one as perhaps no other form of reception could convey it. So now, when I suggested this Jeddart justice, he immediately proceeded to execute it on the trout that he had landed for me.

The said trout had given us rare entertainment. He had been rising just above a wooden footbridge, and there I had cast over him a ginger quill which he had accepted as if it were the very thing that he had been waiting for ever since he was born, and then, finding it to turn in his mouth to something very different from what he had anticipated, he had fled down the river under the bridge as if he meant going for the open sea. The situation

was critical ; it was useless to think of hauling him up, when he tired of his run, against that force of water. The only thing was to let all go slack and to pass the rod through, under the bridge, to reel up, then, something like an Atlantic cable-length of slack line, and to experience a thrill of glad surprise to find the fish still firm at the end when the line came taut again. After that there was not a great deal more trouble. The trout seemed to think he had done enough for glory, and allowed himself to be brought in to the net without much further athletic display.

I watched the old man as he gave the fish a masterful tap or two on the head with the club that he called his "priest," to kill it mercifully and quickly, and then I said to him, "You know what that is—Jeddart justice?" "No, sir," he replied, in a voice even more sonorous than that in which he had replied affirmatively a moment before. He never halted between two opinions. He would have given no satisfaction whatever to the brow-beating counsel who likes to be able to pull up the wretched witness short with his "Answer me straight, sir—yes or no." There was never anything between the "Yes" and "No" with him, and the one or the other came forth like bullets out of a Gatling gun.

"Jeddart justice," I explained, was a term in use in Scotland to designate the manner of the legal proceedings in criminal trials in the days when the border country and the neighbourhood of Jedburgh—corrupted into "Jeddart"—in particular was a wild place much harassed by outlaws. The mode was to hang the prisoner first and then proceed to try him. It was a plan which had the beautiful merit of preventing the possibility of any rescue on the part of the

prisoner's friends, or of prison-breaking on his own part.

The old man listened, delighted ; he took in all the points of the procedure and seemed to approve them highly. He also appreciated the bearing of the story on the summary execution of the trout. "I see," he said, with a grin. "We kill 'im first and weigh 'im after." That was it—he had the idea of the Jeddart justice perfectly. Our limit was 1½ lbs. Below that weight the trout was returned, a wiser, if not a happier, fish, to grow to a greater estate, which he was all the more likely to reach because of this experience teaching him that a fly with a thin line of some delicate substance attached—called, though perhaps he did not know this, "gut" in the language of his natural enemy—was to be dealt with, if at all, only with the greatest caution.

Chapter XI

"D——N YOUR EXTRACTOR!"

I WROTE of mysteries.

Now one of the profoundest of all mysteries to me is the difference that the trout discern between the same fly as presented to them by myself and as presented by Mr Arthur Gilbey. That they do discern such difference, I had striking and exasperating proof that very afternoon as I cruised up again the length of Cooper's Meadow.

For there, at a spot about half-way between the Cooper's Meadow hut and the weir below Grosvenor Water, a fish was rising steadily. He was on the far side of the river which just there is rather broad. I could reach him nicely; again and again I put a fly over him. He would not have it; but I did not put him down—none of the gut went over him. Finally I tried him with a "Gilbey's Extractor." He would have none of that. I think it was thirteen times that I passed that little image over his head and he made no response whatever.

At that thirteenth try I became aware of some one coming up the bank behind me. It was Arthur Gilbey himself, making his way towards the hotel from the beat below.

"Here," I said to him, "I wish you'd catch that fish for me. He's rising steadily. I've tried him with everything I've got. He won't have it."

"What have you been trying him with?" he asked.

"Everything," I said. "Extractor, the last. I've tried him a dozen times with the Extractor. He won't take that."

"I've got on an Extractor too," he said, "so I don't suppose it's much good. I'll just give him a try."

Well—he threw out to that fish once, only once; it was enough. He gave him precisely the fly that I had given him; he gave it, so far as I could see, in exactly the same manner. But the fish saw a difference. For he took it at the very first offer—the very first! And there was I who had given him the same fly thirteen times—unlucky number—and he had not so much as put up his head at it! A good fish too, a fat female, over 2 lbs.

I went home then; and that night, in my wrath, I composed what I was pleased to call some "Sapphics." It was enough to move the most prosaic man to verse. That verse had the honour, far too high for its worth, of excision from the pages of *Country Life* and insertion in the great book of the Houghton Club. Since it has been so dignified, I make bold to reproduce it here, not for its merit, but by way of relief to feelings too sorely tried.

THE PLAGUE OF FLIES

To A. N. G.

When trouts of Test decline the classic samples
Culled from the list of learned Mr Halford,
Wise men of Houghton counsel you to try a
Gilbey's Extractor,

"See, where yon fish put up, with maiden coyness,
Scarce half a head, and sucked a floating fly down—
Just half a yard beyond the broken circle
Pitch your Extractor.

"Deftly it's done! Be ready for the strike now!
Down comes the fly; it's passing right before her,
True to an inch. By Jove, it's mighty strange if
That don't extract her!

"Trout of a temper sullen, irresponsive!
Deuce of a sign she gives she ever noticed
How o'er her head most beautifully glided
Gilbey's Extractor.

"Try her once more, or court another maiden
Less coy to woo." . . . By dusk I've courted twenty:
Proffered to each a singularly life-like
Gilbey's Extractor.

Still every fish, unworthy such an offer,
As they were swine before a pearly banquet,
Looks at the fly—then says, as plain as may be,
"D——n your Extractor."

Kin to no decent lineage of insects,
Flat-winged and red-breeched, vacant-faced delusion!
You may be Gilbey's—jolly well I'll swear you're
Not *my* Extractor.

Nor was this the single occasion on which I, unworthy, had to myself a niche in that Sibylline book. There is one entry which I never think of without a retrospective grin:—"Mr Hutchinson tumbled into the river."

Now here I may take the opportunity to proffer you yet another maxim for your guidance:— "When about to step into the water from the bank, ascertain before doing so the depth of the water. If you defer this inquiry until after you have made your step, it is possible that you may find the answer rather damping."

The fact is that if you are looking down on the water, and the bottom is at all light coloured, you are apt to underestimate the depth considerably. It was just this underestimate that caused my misadventure as noted in that book of doom. I went down, with my right foot, into what I guessed to be water of 12 in. depth: it proved to be water of some 24 in., with the result that my other foot, left behind on the bank, completely overturned me and in I went, after the graceful manner of Arethusa, "her billows unblended with the brackish Dorian brine."

That classical simile is my own; but the note in the book did add a further detail to the simple comment that "Mr Hutchinson tumbled in": namely, "and found Lunn's clothes rather small for him."

The explanation of that cryptic addition is that it was in the neighbourhood of the cottage of Lunn, the keeper of the lower water, that the mishap occurred, and after I had been hauled out, like a drowned rat, by old Grist, I went to Lunn's house and borrowed dry garments from him. Now Lunn is a short man, and I, with the aid of a tolerably fat sole, can just touch 6 ft., so that all the rest of that day I went about looking like the pictures, by Cruickshank, of the boys in Mr Squeers's school, with jackets very short and skimpy, and trousers coming down but a little way below the knee.

Stockbridge, that evening, as I walked up its long street, was edified.

And once more, and only once, I earned special notice in the book. It was the "Honourable Gibbs," I think, who did the annotating on that occasion:—"Mr Hutchinson went to church." I mention this, not so much to extol my own piety, as for the light that it throws on the general spiritual condition of the Club members, so satisfactory that the one single occasion on which one of them deemed that his soul was in need of "making," was so remarkable as to be worth entry. There was, I believe, an unwritten tradition out of the dim past that Mr Birbeck also had once been to church, but it was not supported by documentary evidence.

Until the war there was no Sunday fishing. Part of the water was rented from a lady who had conscientious objections to Sunday angling. When the war happened, and members were very seldom able to get down, it was represented to the said lady that it was hard on them not to be able to fish on the "week-ends," when only, if even then, they could leave their jobs; and she was liberally-minded enough to agree. Therefore the Club now fishes on Sundays as on week-days—only, it carries its own luncheon, lands its own fish and so forth, on that seventh day.

On the whole there is much to be said for that angling by oneself, with no gillie watching, all circumstances favouring that "contemplation" which is great part of the charm of it all, and with the fun of landing your own fish added to the fun of hooking and playing them. But these diversions of Houghton I best like to recall as they were in those blessed days before the dreadful war came

to spoil them, as it spoiled so many other pure delights.

Our very headquarters, the Grosvenor Hotel itself, was for a time taken from us by the Government and occupied by officers of the Air Force, who came flying in their aeroplanes so perpetually over us while we fished that the trout, as Lunn maintained, would rise at them, thinking the thing with spread wings up in the sky was a spent fly floating on the water.

Such comment, at least, was attributed to Lunn. But then, what did not one or other ingenious fabulist relate of him? He was really so remarkable an observer of the happenings in the river that he had very many quite incredible and perfectly true tales to tell us. And he loved telling them. To surprise Lunn, to give him a bit of news, about anything in or about the Test, was an impossibility. He had always seen it first. As some one said of him, if you were to tell him you had seen an alligator in North-head (North-head was the beat where the river widened almost into a lake before dividing into three streams) he would be sure to say: "Oh, yes, that must be the one that I saw down at Bossington"—the mill pool two beats below.

Lunn has rigged up for himself a miniature aquarium in his house beside the river, where he can observe the habits of the water insects in which the trout are interested. He has a little trickle of fresh water always going through it, to keep them healthy and happy. He is fond of coming in on them at all hours of the night and flashing an electric torch on them, when he surprises them at all kinds of wicked and cannibalistic work. The larvæ of the silver sedge he tells me are real tigers in their preying on weaker brethren.

But you need not go all the way to Houghton in order to see something of Lunn's ingenuities. Go only to the Fly-Fishers' Club rooms in London, and there you may see a case of insect forms which are those of the Welshman's button as brought up by Lunn through all its stages and encased by him—highly interesting. Mr Halford and the entomologists distinguish the caperer from the Welshman's button, actually assigning them to different genera of caddis-fly ; but on the Test we commonly regard the two names as signifying the same insect. In any case it is a big fly which you see in June coming down with a plop on the surface of the water and cutting antics all about it —whence its name—till some appreciative trout snaps it up, and after a few more capers cut in the trout's interior the activities of that particular specimen of its kind are finished.

The caperer is one of the caddis-fly tribe—that is to say, a species which has the tribal habit of making for its house or its protection a caddis, or case. Of course it does not need this case or protection while it is an egg, nor again while it is a flopping and capering fly, but it is a shelter invaluable to it while it is a larva—the stage of its development which lasts by far the longest and in which it does its growth—and also during that curious pupal trance or sleep which many insects undergo in passing from the crawling to the flying phase.

What is remarkable about this tiny larva of a few days from the egg, as seen through the microscope, is that it has already, baby as it is, formed itself its swaddling clothes, has already made its caddis, it is as wise now as it ever will be all through its long life, and it lives for more than a twelve-

month. How long did it take man, after he had begun to be worthy of that distinctive title of Homo Sapiens, to learn to build himself a house? We do not know. Nor even now will a human baby, left to his own devices, build himself a house or a suit of clothes at the age of three days, or of three years. But a caperer baby will. It is true that the human baby will have, before they both come to an end, the better of him. For the human will learn, and the caperer will not—that is, in part, the difference between the reasoning and the purely instinctive animal—but the caperer baby is far better fitted at the outset with weapons and will and wisdom to face his world than the human child. It is the natural condition of the caperer to be an orphan: both father and mother are dead before his birth, and he knows nothing of them. He has to fight with his own hand from the start.

I have written of the inability of the human child at three—whether three days or three years—to build either house or suit of clothes, because caddis insects, the tribe to which the caperer belongs, may be said to do either the one or the other. There are species which make to themselves a case in which they move about, carrying it with them, as a snail his shell, so that a person who does not know the ways of aquatic things, looking at a clear pond, or an aquarium, may be a trifle startled, and may think that the foundations of his round world are becoming a little insecure, as he sees what looks like a small longitudinal section of the floor of the pond beginning to move about.

This is the caddis, a case compounded of an envelope, spun about itself by the larva of one or

the other of the caddis-flies, and strengthened with any trifles of woodwork or masonry, vegetable matter or mineral, which may be lying about handy for working in with it—a kind of reinforced concrete. The creature's head and shoulders, with some legs, protrude from the front of this case, and by its leg action it moves itself about, taking the case with it. The case, because of this mosaic of little pebbles and the like, looks exactly like the floor on which it rests, and so, when it moves, creates the illusion of the floor's moving in small sections. It looks quite uncanny. But the value to the larva of this caddis is manifest : the caddis protects the inmate, both by making him so inconspicuous that only his movement reveals the case when it is lying among the precisely similar debris on the bottom, and it is also a stony and strong integument which is a sufficient shield from animals that are not big enough to swallow it whole. Even so, it may be somewhat hard of digestion, though we do find, by *post-mortem* examination of trout, small pebbles and grit inside them which probably come from the greedy habit of gulping down caddis and all for the sake of the larva within, as though a man should swallow oyster shell and all for the succulent bivalve's sake.

A travelling caddis, thus used and worn, is to be regarded rather as a suit of clothes than a house. It has frequent additions tacked to it, as the inmate outgrows it, but otherwise its inhabitant does not quit it. There is another use of a caddis, however, and it is this that our friend the caperer makes—its use as a house from which the occupant goes forth on his lawful occasions, to get his meals, and so on, and returns to it when these are accom-

plished. That sort of caddis is a fixed residence, its foundation secured by attachment to a relatively large stone.

And even as the baby caperer was wise, so soon as ever he came forth from the egg, and set immediately to work to make just that sort of home for himself that fits his need best, so, too, he shows a wisdom no less remarkable at the final stage of his larval life when he is full grown and is about to pass into the pupal sleep. He acts as if he knew that he was the inmate of an unfriendly world, in the midst of foes. He closes up the aperture of his caddis, seeing that in the quiescent pupal condition he will have no occasion to be going out and in. But it seems that even for the pupa, as for the larva, it is necessary that there should be an inflow of fresh water between his person and the walls of his house. So he does not close the door hermetically. He constructs it rather in the likeness of a grating, with interstices wide enough to allow the free play of the water, but small enough to debar the passage of any hostile creature big enough to do him harm in the defenceless state to which he is about to be reduced.

From what I have been told from those who have kept these and other creatures of their kind in aquariums (or aquaria ?), and have reared them through their various stages, it is no superfluous precaution that the caperer takes, thus closing his doors before he falls into his trance. Lunn told me that when he was rearing these caperers he was surprised to find a large number of empty pupal cases. The doors which had been closed had been reopened, and the inmates had vanished. There were none but their own kind in the aquarium, and

no witness was yet forthcoming to make them suspect of cannibalism. But he had that way of stealing in on them at night, flashing an electric torch on them, and thus catching them red-handed in their deeds of darkness. So doing, he detected one of the larvæ, not yet turned pupa, engaged in the very act of battening on the pupa within a caddis of which it had, doubtless, forced the grating. Acting on the hint, he began to separate pupæ, as soon as they assumed that stage, from larvæ, and there was henceforth no further trouble with forced doors and empty houses.

There is a striking diversity, among the aquatic flies, in their manner of committing their eggs to the water. Of some species, as the May-fly, we see the mothers come down and dap their eggs, so to speak, on the surface of the stream, just touching it with their bodies, then up and off again for a little flight, and returning to repeat the operation.

There are others which have quite a different habit : the egg-bearing mothers of their kind crawl down the posts of a bridge, the stalks of the water-plants, or any convenient ladder of the sort, into the water's depths and carefully distribute their eggs on that which has served them for ladder. When the grannom are thus putting down their eggs, a man wading in the stream will come out with his waders encrusted with the eggs. It is a very curious sight the first time, or even every time, that it is seen, this of the delicate-winged flies crawling down out of what seems so essentially their own and only element, the air, into such a weighty and strong fluid as the water, and sometimes a tolerably fast-flowing and rather tumultuous water. It seems as if such tender creatures, with

wings so gauzy and limbs so slender, must inevitably be broken up in the turmoil of the comparatively dense medium. Besides which, they are air-breathers ; they require air to keep their life-pulse going.

That they are not broken by the water remains a wonder, and we can suppose only that they are far less fragile than they appear ; but, as for the air-breathing difficulty, they get over that by taking down their air supply—a little bubble of atmospheric air—into the water with them. It is not a very large reservoir, but it suffices for their immediate submarine purpose, and before it is exhausted they have laid their eggs and are ready to come up again. Some do a little further fluttering and aerial dancing after this emergence from the stream, but many are too wearied and too water-logged, and give up the ghost then and there on the river's surface.

And there is yet another principal way in which the eggs of the aquatic fly are confided to the water which is essential to their development. It may seem the way of a sinfully careless mother, but at least it achieves its primary great end, the propagation of the kind. Sometimes, on a still evening in July, you may be surprised to see the surface of the water broken as it were by drops of small rain falling upon it. Yet the sky above is serene ; there is no apparent cloud from which rain might come. It is likely, however, that there may be above you something like a cloud of insect-hawking birds, with swifts in preponderant number. The explanation of all that you see is that a great rise is in progress of the blue-winged olive. It is this fly, in its multitudes, that the sickle-winged birds are pursuing through the air, and it is this fly, or the

mothers of its kind, that is producing the illusion of fine drops of rain. The drops are not of rain, but of the eggs of the olive, which the blue-winged mothers are casting down thus heedlessly. Yet these and all the others deposited on the water's surface are heavier than the water itself ; therefore they sink to the bottom, and the larva, when he hatches forth, finds himself in the environment suited to all the needs of his baby days, and soon grows fat and lusty.

Chapter XII

SOME FISH TALES AND A WONDERFUL BOOK

Who is there that shall account for the extraordinary vagaries of fish ?

The question is not here put for the first time of asking. As many times, and more, than there were tales told in the "Arabian Nights," it has been asked—always with the same answer by implication embodied in its form, that there is none who shall presume to give account of this unaccountable.

I sit, as I write, beside the very troutful River Test, and on a stretch of it perhaps troutful above all others. From Stockbridge Church steeple the hour has just struck—2 P.M. I was on the water by ten, and for all the fishing I have done I might have been sitting here all the while, for though rod has been jointed together and soaked cast fastened to the line, no fly has been tied on, for the cause that no fly to speak of has appeared on the river, and no fish has put up his nose to speak to what few flies there are—save one. Under the far bank of a neighbour, and in a place where you might as well throw stones as flies at him from this side, because of the absolutely certain "drag" caused by the strong mid-stream current, a trout was rising steadily at 10.30 A.M. He was also rising steadily at 12.30 P.M. and he is rising steadily now. What he is rising at is another and almost more puzzling question than why

he, of all the fish in the river, should be thus on the feed all those hours long, and no other trout be taking a mouthful.

For I have perambulated two miles of water and kept all most likely stretches under zealous observation, and not seen another fish break the surface. It is a day of bright sun—that would not matter if only it were fairly calm, but there is a strong down-stream wind which would make fishing a much finer art than the present scribe could expect to take a successful hand in, even if there were rising fish to try for. But, seeing that there are not, the wind also is an affair of no importance. Nothing matters, and there is nothing to do except to pen these lucubrations, and to wonder at the spectacle of that steadily rising fish, monopolising, as it might seem, the whole flotsam of the river ; only that there is not to be seen a sign of living flotsam for it to monopolise.

We may be sure that the aspect of that seeming fishless stream would be wholly different were a big lot of fly coming down the river, even if it were but the spent fly which have finished their air-dance and are flowing down helpless and moribund, the varied cycle of their life-story finished. If that were happening the fish would not be neglecting such fat opportunity ; the water would be dimpled with the circles of their rising to gulp down these pleasant things ; but now there are none of them, and what that strange fish may be doing, alone of all the trout population for the best part of two miles, rising at invisible food, is open to any conjecture that you please to hazard, seeing that there is a beautiful absence of any indication to point your guessing faculty this way rather than that.

It is a commonplace of the angler's experience that it is extremely difficult to delude a fish thus rising at an apparent nothing into accepting as an equivalent the something of feathers and barbed iron that he shall present to it. Of course, as a matter of fact, no one believes that the fish is so rising for the pure pleasure of breaking the silvery surface of the stream. It is recognised that it is partaking of some very minute creatures which the angler will call, in despite, "curses," and perhaps it is just because these are so very small that it is only one fish, of the hundreds that are in the portion of the stream under the "extensive view" of the angler, that is hungry enough, or that has an appetite so abnormal, as to deem it worth its while to be thus assiduously gulping them in. It is as if a man were to be fed with a dish of green peas, one pea at a time. Excellent vegetable as is the pea, it is perhaps one man only out of a hundred who would take the trouble to convey them thus singly to his mouth; and this one inordinate human lover of the pea is probably analogous to that trout exceptionally rising at trifles which the fish of normal and sane principles do not deem worth while.

Certainly it is only when the big flies are on that we often see the big fish feeding on the surface. The May-fly will bring up monsters to whom the whole of the smaller specimens known to entomology make no gastronomic appeal whatever. In some part the reason why the fish feeding on the creatures of exceeding smallness so generally defy the best efforts of the angler for their illusion is that any imitation that he may contrive of the almost microscopic insects is so minute that all likeness to the live original which it otherwise

might display is distorted by the disproportionate size of even the smallest hook, and also that the entire insect is so very little larger than the diameter of the gut to which it is attached, that the eye of the fish set to such focus as to appreciate the former is nearly sure to catch a clear sight of the latter also —which it is equally sure not to appreciate as a natural or an attractive appendage to the insect. A common blind cord tied to a medium-sized salmon-fly would be in about the same proportion as the finest gut fastened to these minute morsels.

The angler, therefore, taking one consideration with another, will, perhaps, not be ill-advised, after making his addresses (seeing that there is no more promising object to invite them) to this eccentrically feeding fish, and finding them, in accord with all reasonable expectation, rejected, if he gives up the business as a bad job for the moment and retires to his ease at his inn, or in whatsoever quarters the opportunity for ease occurs.

He may thence go forth again later in the day, when it is not at all impossible that an entirely different aspect of the river's face may be presented to him. Instead of the absolutely blank expression which it showed him in the morning, it is not at all unlikely that he may now find it enticingly and ubiquitously dimpled with the rings of the rising fish. They may be so numerous as to be constantly intersecting, and he will be consumed with wonder, unless experience has made the phenomenon familiar to him, that the river can contain so many fish as they seem to indicate. In the vernacular, the river is " a-boil " with them.

In all probability there has been a large rise of duns since he last was at the riverside, or else, in the still hours of evening, the spinners have been

up for their amorous aerial dance and are now drifting down exhausted in the water, an easy prey to the eager fish.

Before such a spectacle as this the temperature of the novice races up to the fever point. He is absolutely certain of a fish at almost every throw ; for, see, every throw that he shall make, even with his novitiate skill, cannot fail to bring the fly floating over the head of one or more rising trout, and, moreover, the face of the waters is so troubled by their perpetual rising that it must surely help to conceal any difference between the natural fly and his unnatural. Can it be possible that it is coming back to him without being seized by one or the other of those extravagantly greedy fish ? It is so, and again and yet again it returns to him without having done that which it was despatched to do, and which it seemed certain that it must accomplish. He will, indeed, be not unlucky if, out of such a frenzied rise as this, he succeeds in hooking and landing a single trout. The veteran, whom repeated sad experience has taught the lesson which the novice has now to learn, may bethink him that when fish are so many and so freely rising it is evident that the fly are coming down in those stupendous numbers which appal us at the prodigality and waste of Nature's ways, and that his own artificial fly is but one out of these countless myriads.

However, on this particular day of the one, and one only, rising trout, and of him rising at apparent nothings and in a spot where obviously his capture was impossible, I did not go the length of retiring to take my ease at my inn : I took it in my hut instead.

And there, drawing forth from my pocket a very small, but a very rare, book, I found excellent

entertainment for the passing of the time, and certain hints for angling, which I might perhaps have put to the trial, though as matter of fact I did not.

When a book is so full of virtue, as was this, that it is able to give you no less than twenty-seven "new and approved" receipts for the catching of fishes, ducks, and birds with the hands, rods, nets, baits, etc., it seems almost sinful that there should be no more than two known copies of it in the whole world. Yet no less and no more is the world supply of this small and quaint booklet written in old French and printed at Lyons by Jacques Moderne about 1540. This is the date given for the publication of the booklet by those who are learned in this archaic French and are able to ascribe it to its approximately exact time. Of itself, the little book does not give us any information on a subject so delicate as its age, designating itself merely as a "Livret nouveau, auql sont contenus XXVII. Receptez nouvelles et approuvez de prendre poissons, cannez, et oyseaulx avec les mains, moclars, filets et mozses, etc."

"Mozses," apparently, is to be rendered "baits," and "moclars" are "rods," but there are here and there a word or two to be found in this rare and ancient little pamphlet which defeat even a French scholar's learning. The two copies, which are all that are known to be extant by the authorities of the British Museum, appear to be of different editions. This, above-mentioned, with the twenty-seven receipts, is in the library of Mr A. N. Gilbey, whose collection of books relating to angling must be almost as unique a possession as his marvellous skill as an angler. Whether it is his fishing library, and perhaps some few of the "XXVII.

Receptez nouvelles," that contain the secret of his past-mastership of the angling art it might be difficult to determine. The other copy in the original French is in the library of Baron James Rothschild, and contains but " twenty-five receipts," according to his catalogue. Whence it would seem probable that Mr Gilbey's may be a second edition, " greatly enlarged," as it is possible that the publisher's announcement ran.

The modern angler may be surprised to hear that a large number of the receipts are for catching fish with the hands. Apparently that was a mode which appealed to the anonymous author with more attractive force than any subtle and delicate methods with the rod or than the more wholesale capture which might be achieved with the net. Thus the very first receipt of all, according to the table of contents, is " To make a mixture to catch quantity of fish with the hands."

The translation from which these extracts are taken was made by a Frenchman learned in the archaic language of his country.

Receipt No. XIX. is one which has a peculiar interest, being no less ambitious in design than " To catch fish with the hands in a deep river." This may seem to savour not a little of the miraculous ; yet when you read the title of the receipt immediately following, " How to make all kind of fish come near your hands and let themselves be caught," you begin to understand that the writer has subtleties which are not likely to suggest themselves to the modern fisher.

The very first receipt of all is full of edification : " Take one ounce of camphor, one ounce of white wheat flour, and one ounce of the grease of an Aigron, the bones of which you grind to powder,

and all these things you put together and make of them a mixture to which you can add one ounce of olive oil. And when you want to go fishing anoint your hands and legs, from the knee downwards, before and behind it, and you shall see great marvels."

The conclusion is rather a heavy, though truly magnificent, lapse from the virtue of attention to fine details which is so marked in the instructions for the making of the ingredients. It is, however, highly artistic in leaving so large a scope for the imagination : " you shall see great marvels."

Presumably, though the writer does not make the point quite clear, he intends that you shall wade into the water with your thus ubiquitously anointed legs, from which the aroma would doubtless be most attractive. It is rather reminiscent of the bouquet which old writers have supposed to flow naturally from the legs of the heron as he stands in the shallows, and by which the fishes are induced to approach within stabbing range of his great bill. There is, however, one lamentable fact in connection with this otherwise so invaluable receipt, and that is that no one at this time of day seems to know exactly what animal is meant by the " Aigron," of which it is no doubt essential to have the grease and the powdered bones. It is one of those lost possibilities which we have eternally to regret.

That, at least, is the melancholy condition of mind to which we are reduced by the consideration of receipt number one. But if we will but persevere with our study of the work—and it is so altogether delectable that we are not likely to lay it down, once having started on it—we may find hope revived by the reading of Receipt XX., which is entitled " Another receipt how you can in winter make all

sorts of fishes come near your hands." "Take," it says, "in May, some of the first honey of young bees, as much as you will have, and take some red slugs in their little houses, also as many as you want; put them in a clean bowl and join some ammonia salt or ordinary salt; with these take half-pound of those worms that glisten in the night (glow-worms), and when you want to use it join the new honey twice as much as of the slugs, also the half-pound of glow-worms, mix it well together and keep it in a well-closed box. Anoint your hands with it when you go fishing, and you will see great marvels." So, after all, it is not impossible that our eyes, too, may be gladdened with those great spectacles which the author seems to despair of describing in any detail.

I, however, most unfortunately, had no pounded bones of the Aigron, nor any red slugs in their little houses, not even any first honey of young bees. I could only sit on after reading, disconsolate, because trout refused to rise, when suddenly it happened to me to see swimming, more or less towards, but a little below, me in the stream, a juvenile water-vole. It was hardly a baby, and yet certainly not more than half-grown. Perhaps we might call it a big boy vole—or perhaps girl, for the interesting question of sex remained undecided. I sat quite still, and I think it was the keen sense of its nostrils rather than its eyes that told it of some trouble near at hand, for about half-way across the river it made a sudden down-stream bend. And that departure from its straight course was its undoing. The river was high and full. Only a little below the course which that young and ill-fated water-vole was first steering, lay a weir, partially holding the river back, although its

hatches were open, and letting it rage and play tumultuously in boiling waves below. Towards this torrent the little vole, after the deflection from its first course, was carried. By instinct it seemed to realise a peril in the great force of the current that it began to feel. It made a turn again straight up towards me. But the power of the water gained on it, and grew too strong for it. The struggle was very pitiful, but it could have but one end. Swifter and swifter the little beast was taken to the weir and the open hatches. Through one of them it disappeared, and, amphibious by nature though it was, it is hardly to be thought that it can have lived more than a few minutes in that race of water below the weir. It must have had all the little air it held pressed out of the small lungs—drowned by the very element in which it was most at home. Its fate deepened my depression.

There was no great flood at the moment of this tragedy, cutting, untimely, the life-thread of the promising young water-vole, but the strength of the current that overwhelmed it was a legacy from the great floods of winter and early spring. If you should happen to be well acquainted with the aspect of a river bed, and should revisit the river subsequently to so large a deluge as this, you would not fail to realise that it must have changed more than a little the conditions of life for its inhabitants. It is, in its own essentials, greatly changed. Here and there, where, last year, you had a shallow on which you might wade out in your thigh boots, you now find a depth that would take you in over the head. All that gravel bed has been shifted further, perhaps round the next bend which has broken the full current, and you may now wade there where you would have gone in overhead

before the flood came to alter things. Then at a place where, last year, there was a thick forest of underweed, trailing dense tresses, you find now a gravel floor all swept clean and naked.

If you think for a moment you may realise part of what this means. This aquatic undergrowth was no empty place, void of life : it was teemingly alive. The molluscs and larval crustaceans, nymphs of various kinds, the insects that make for themselves the different forms of caddis, the May-fly grubs which live grubbing at the roots of the weeds, these and scores besides were inhabitants of that undergrowth and slime which the flood has carried clean away. You may say, perhaps, that these are such little creatures—you may class them altogether, perhaps, in your mind, though not with scientific correctness, as insects—that they do not come within the category of things that seem to count for anything in the river. Even so, though it is rather a narrow view, they are creatures that count for much in the estimation of other creatures which you esteem highly. They are the essential and necessary food of the trout. If they are carried away, the trout go hungry. For the trout the worst moment for a flood to befall is that when they are weakened after spawning. In this condition, or lack of condition, they are very helplessly swept down by the heavy water, and there is many an angler on the trout streams this season who is deploring blank days which, whether he knows it or not, are due mainly to this cause.

But it is not altogether for ill in the lives of the river-dwellers and riverside people that the big floods come. Besides the peaceful population of voles, strict vegetarians, to which the small unfortunate belonged whom I had agonisingly to see

fatally carried down the weir, the banks of the stream are commonly frequented by a race of small carnivores—stoats, which live there, and bring up their families of babies as fierce and bloodthirsty as themselves. They dine mainly, as I suppose, on water-voles, both old and young. They are of smaller diameter than the voles, with more sinuous bodies, so that they can go in and through the burrows of the voles with the greatest ease ; nor does it incommode them in the least to find themselves in the water. They can swim as fast as the voles themselves. They are at this disadvantage, however, with them, as I think—which must be the salvation of many voles—that they cannot dive as easily or quickly. Let it be said, at least, in order to keep on safety's side, that they do not dive nearly so readily or frequently. It has never happened to me to see one of them dive at all, but they may do so, for all that—the negative is always hard to prove.

Be that how it may, and whatever measure of protection the water-voles find in having the entry to their dwellings beneath the surface of the water, it is very certain that the stoats are far less of a menace to their domestic peace in the days subsequent to the big flood than they were before. Whether they have been drowned outright, in numbers, or whether the rising waters have merely driven them back off the water-meadows to the higher lands, it is sure that they are not there, by the riverside, in anything like their former force. The little vole may now chew his stick of succulent white water-celery in a peace unbroken by fears of the stealthy assault of the snaky, sharp-toothed stoat. Doubtless their legions will soon return, for young water-vole must be a very pleasant dainty.

For the time being, however, the riverside is tolerably free of their menace. The great floods are not without their saving mercies.

I grew wearied then of waiting for the rising fish. I wandered up to see how the angler on the beat above, one very much more accomplished than I, was faring. Him, too, I found disconsolate. But I had also found on his beat, as I worked up, a rising fish, but rising in such a place that no mortal man, as it seemed to me, could ever bring him to net, even if he did hook him. So, "There's a fish," I said, "and a good one; but you'd never get him even if you were to hook him. He'd be sure to go to weed."

Thus I spoke in my haste and folly, introducing the fish to one of the most passing artful anglers of my knowledge. I would like to see him catch that good fish; but it seemed scarce possible. He would be able to put the fly to him—that I knew well, albeit the long spears came up around the fish so that he seemed to be rising in a kind of private miniature pond of his own, with a zareba of these spears for its defining marge. But my friend had skill to give the fish the offer of his fly, and he now proceeded to do so—said fly being a blue upright, of grey hackle and slight body. With an underhanded flick he sent it out just above the points of those spears, and softly it dropped, like a falling feather, precisely right, just one foot above that rising fish's nose, within the marge of his guarded pond, with line so slack that there was no pull nor drag on the fly even when the cast was caught and held by one of those many spears—no pull, at least, until the fly had come to the fish and had done its business well.

For he rose—what else should he do, and that

image of an insect so beautifully placed before him?—he rose, and he was struck and hooked; but now for the bringing him to net—that seemed a problem quite beyond the solving! For there, nearly surrounding him, now that he was come down, on his first plunge at feeling the hook fasten in his jaw, below the marge of spears, there were weeds of another and a worse sort, lace-weed or ribbon-weed, trailing snakily in the current. Into one patch or other of these he must inevitably dart, or so it seemed to me inevitable, and be lost.

But no, by some marvellous leading, inexplicable, like very magnetism, my angler friend—I have said that he was past-master—led down that fish—by pure kindness he seemed to lead—led him into a clearer place, where I at length allowed myself to have a hope of him; finally, and after no long struggle, had him weary and weakened so that he might be directed in towards the bank. And there—a smooth dip into the water of the net, a lift, and he was on the bank—to weigh within two ounces of three pounds!

"How was it done?" I put it to my friend, that master-piscator, then. "What magic had he worked?"

Whereat he laughed. "No magic, but a little trick." That was his modesty. But then he did expound, in measure. "It never seems to me," said he, "of use to hold a fish tight just at first, when he's among the weeds. Some, I know, say, 'Pull him down stream at once.' Very well, if you have big gut and a small fish—but with a big fish and small gut, no. A strong fish, at his first rush, if he means to go to weed will go there, you cannot stop him, with ordinary rod and tackle; but the reason why a fish goes to weed is commonly

that he is scared, and what scares him worse than anything is not the hook in his jaw—he does not mind that a bit, as is shown by his often beginning to feed again directly after you have broken the gut and left him with the hook—but he is scared by the continued pulling on him. Therefore, don't pull at first, or only very lightly, and enough to prevent the line going slack, if you are afraid of his going to weed. He is far less likely to 'weed' himself if you treat him gently. After he has tired himself a little, then you may begin to pull him where you will. You are his master then. But on first hooking he is yours, and the wise fisher is the man that knows it and deals with him 'according.'"

Chapter XIII

"BETTER TO HAVE HOOKED AND LOST THAN NEVER TO HAVE HOOKED AT ALL."

I was furious, raging, near to tears with wrath and disappointment.

Some silly would-be epigrammatist—as a matter of fact, it was myself—had written once : "It is better to have hooked and lost than never to have hooked at all." I execrated that imbecility ; for here was I—there had been a great rise of the blue-winged olive, and the fish seemed well disposed to accept my orange quill, a useful imitation of one phase of that insect—here was I, and now one, two, three, and even four fish in quick succession had I hooked, and after a run and a moment's play had lost ! Intolerable !

Old Grist, torn between sympathy, at the four-fold loss, and shock, for he was a good old man, at my profanity, ventured timorously, though still in tones that shook the skies, "Can there be anything wrong with the hook, sir ?"

"What the devil should be wrong with the hook ?" I answered, irritably.

And now here, before going further, I will provide you with yet another maxim for your use. It is indeed but an extension, or a rider, to a more ancient maxim enshrined in that book of wisdom of the Club, wherein one has noted that if, towards

the moment of the evening rise, when dusk is falling, we have doubt whether the fly has or has not been snapped off from the cast, it is a doubt which may quickly be dispelled by drawing the end of the cast sharply through your fingers once or twice. The writer adds "especially if you are not wearing gloves."

This mention of "gloves" serves to date the entry as belonging to the age at which men went a-fishing in top-hats, for gloves no more than "toppers" are the vogue to-day.

Whatever method you may think best to adopt, it is certainly advisable to make sure, if there be any reason for question, that the fly is at the end of the gut. If you are one of those who are in the habit of striking vigorously when a fish rises to the fly, you are apt to find that not infrequently the fish takes the fly away with him, instead of the fly bringing him to you—which was your intention; but there is nothing to inform you immediately whether the fly has parted company with the gut or the hook has merely parted company with the hard bone or gristle of the fish's mouth with which it has come into contact. In these circumstances it is as well to draw back the fly, if there, or the loose end of the gut, if the fish have taken the fly with him, before recommencing to lay a perhaps flyless stretch of gut upon the water.

I am well aware, of course, that there is a definite division of opinion among anglers on this matter of striking. Some are of the "half-volleying" persuasion, who catch the fish, if they are quick enough to do so, in the very instant of his rise, so as to give him no time to reject the fly—"when he finds it does not answer his purpose, before it has answered yours," as the great book says. There

are others, like the famous Mr Halford, who would maintain that you should always count three, when fishing with a small fly, and with a fly of the size of the May-fly, or possibly even of the grannom, should count up as far as six, after the fish has risen, before striking him. Mr Arthur Gilbey, on the other hand, believes in striking as quickly as possible, especially, as he tells me, when the fish are inclined to come short and not to take the fly properly. His theory would seem to be that when the fish are thus disinclined to take the fly well down it is the more important to be quick in striking before they discover that the artificial affair is not all that they had thought it. Counsel on the other side plead the argument that the less eager the fish are to take the fly, the more necessity there is to allow them time to receive it well into their mouths before giving it that jerk of which the result must be to snatch it out of their jaws if it fail of its desired effect to drive the point of the hook firmly into them.

While then the masters differ, it is not for the pious disciple to determine. He is not called to judgment. But, differing as they do in their views of the right moment for the strike, both Mr Halford and Mr Gilbey and all the best dry-fly fishermen that I have seen agree both in their theory and in their practice respecting the manner in which the strike should be delivered—that it should be decisive. I have seen Mr Gilbey's astonished trout perform something almost like a somersault at the shock of the stroke that it receives from him at the moment of its rising ; and Mr Halford was scarcely more gentle. That means, for one thing, that neither of these past-masters was a believer in the use of the very attenuated casts of fine-drawn gut by which lesser men imagine themselves aided in the enticing

of the fish into the basket. Thus striking, they would infallibly surrender fly after fly to the fish if tied to the end of the ultra-tenuous filament, and, even with that relatively stout stuff which they oblige themselves to use, the fish is often the only and the doubtful gainer by his rise—in the ornamentation of his jaw by an artistic representation of the fly on which he is feeding.

It is easy, therefore, in this manner to lose your fly from the cast. But there are many other bodies, besides that of the fish, in which you may unintentionally leave it, such as your own body or that of your gillie, and such insensitive and what we may almost call " foreign " bodies as the reeds and sedges by the water's side or the overhanging trees and bushes. After contact with any one of these it behoves you to look to your fly carefully to make sure that it is still at the end of the cast, and further—and this is the maxim which, as said earlier in this chapter, I wish to impress upon you at the present moment—it is well to be certain, not only that the fly is there, but also that the hook has a point to it and also that the point has a barb.

It happens now and again that in striking at a fish the hook is driven on some hard unyielding bone, and if moving with the vigour which the great masters put into the stroke, it is not unlikely that the iron may snap in two at the bend or, failing that, that it may be straightened out so as to be practically useless for the capture of that or of any other fish. And this is also a possible happening as a consequence of the contact of the hook with one or other of those that we have called foreign bodies just above. For all these reasons therefore it behoves you to make a sufficient examination from time to time, and especially after these violent contacts of your

fly, in order to determine in the first place that it remains steadfast in attachment to your line, and in the second that it is in good order for the job which is the final purpose of that attachment.

Nevertheless, knowing all this so perfectly as I did, and capable of preaching so sapiently on its text, I could yet say in my haste to the unfortunate Grist : " What the devil should be the matter with the fly ? "

So I said, but yet I had to confess to myself that there was more wisdom in the old man's suggestion than I would admit to him. Quietly, almost stealthily, then, I did draw up that fly to my hand, and I found, as he had in effect suggested, that, though the hook was still there, a tiny bit had been snapped from it. It was pointless.

I might, I know, have gone on fishing, after changing the fly, with an outside chance of Grist's not noticing. I might, and was sorely tempted to try the chance. But I could not bring myself to it. I had to do the old man some show of justice. I believe it was ungraciously enough that I grunted at him, " You were quite right—there's no point to the hook," and I hugged myself self-righteously for my candour, so beautiful a thing is human nature—my own at least !

I did catch one fish, a poor one, at the end of that rise ; and then the rise petered out. Of course I had lost all the best of it ; and of course I deserved to lose.

But do you, who read, take this maxim to mind, and examine often, and whenever there is the least cause for suspicion, and prove that not only has the cast a fly but also that the fly has a hook, and that the hook has a point and a barb.

And what are we finally to say about it then—

that epigram of the superior blessedness of hooking and losing over entire failure even to hook? It is a sentiment with which perhaps the angler is more likely to agree than is the trout. We strive to appease any prickings of uneasy conscience with the comfortable conviction that the little fishes for which we angle do not suffer anything approaching the same degree of pain as we might feel if pricked, in a like manner, by the jaw and hauled about as though in the grip of a giant dentist. Still, we can hardly make things so pleasant all round as to suppose that the fish does not endure much inconvenience.

Pain, in any acute sense, it is mercifully certain, both from its organisation and from its behaviour, it does not suffer. It will often resume feeding immediately after a life and death struggle, in which it has broken the angler's tackle, and it is evident, from the renewed energy of its efforts to escape as soon as it is persuaded near enough to the bank to catch a sight of the fisherman, that terror at his apparition is the emotion which masters every other, even while the hook is still firm in its jaw and the drag of the bending rod is playing all its supple strength upon it. Without any question, the pain, if any, is but slight.

Anglers, no less than fish, have their idiosyncrasies as touching this matter of hooking and loss. These are, indeed, those to whom the day at the riverside and the delightful face of Nature are so dear that it is nothing, in the comparison, whether the fish are or are not deluded by their lures.

But for those who are deadly keen on the bag, provided always that it be filled in legitimate fashion, there is delight in the rise of a fish to their fly, even if he rise so indifferently and so slackly that he never

takes it at all within "the hedge of his teeth." That is the first delight, and the least thrilling that their angling can bestow on them. Second thereto, in the ascending scale of thrills, is that which may be won from the fish turned over, but never fairly stricken, by the catch of the wrist that lifts the rod point. And, after that, a long stretch higher, comes the joy of battle with the fish who strives by all the wiles he is master of, such as rushing to weed, leaping in the air, and a thousand and one antics, to break the hold—whereby, at the last, just as the net is being extended for his reception and his extraction from the water, he wears away the bite of the hook, and is free after a great fight which the fisher had confidently believed himself to be winning.

The satisfaction of the angler in the hooking of a fish which he may lose, inexplicable to the sentimentalist who has no human sympathy with sport, has a double source. The very rise of the fish to a thing so little life-like as the confection of feather and steel which man is pleased to term a fly, is a compliment in itself to his skill in representing it. He is gratified with this tribute. Then the fight which ensues, no matter what its termination, is delicious in its manifold uncertainties.

For the fisher in that most delicate of all modes, the angling with the dry-fly, it is possible to enjoy moments of delighted satisfaction with self and with his own talent, even though no fish at all show response to the fine art with which the lure is offered. As a matter of fact, if a palatable fly be proffered, with all due delicacy and precision, by means of so well made a cast as this, over a rising trout, it is seldom that he will be irresponsive. But even if he should be obdurate, even if such deftness be all wasted upon him, yet it is not wasted on the spirit

of the angler. He has his innocent pleasure in the fine work of art perfectly executed. Now and again, if he be humanly keen, he will desire the reward and the thrill of the " tight line." Whether the fish shall actually come home to net and to dish is, perhaps, of less importance, but from time to time we do have need of the zest and the glorious uncertainties of the battle.

I am free therefore, after such argument, to maintain it still, the sentiment of that silly epigrammatist, that it is better to have hooked and lost than never to have hooked at all—and that, even in face of the bitter experience of my evening with the " blue-wing."

But as for the hooking and the losing, please to observe that it is no good thing for the sport of other anglers on a club water. Do not forget that. And much hooking and much losing are, no doubt, the result of that extra-tenuous gut of which I have spoken. Therefore for the sake of all, and of good sportsmanship, eschew it. At the Houghton Club we passed a rule against its use, because a certain member offended against good sportsmanship and good fellowship in just this way. But a rule ought not to be needed : good feeling ought to be better and more compelling than a rule.

For though a trout will sometimes take another fly immediately after hooking and breaking, it is not often that it does so. More often it is made a gut-shy and an angler-shy fish for all the season, and perhaps is never seen to rise again.

Chapter XIV

THE PINK-FLESHED TROUT

I am down again at Stockbridge later in the year, for our second merry meeting.

Like other animals, members of the Houghton Fishing Club have continued habits once useful to them in course of evolution long after the motive for their use has disappeared. Thus we still come down towards the end of April for a fortnight, which is the season at which the old members used to assemble for the grannom fishing ; and again, after an interval, towards the end of May, for another fortnight for the May-fly fishing.

Those noble insects disappeared, but the noble members of the Club continued to gather together at their seasons none the less, faithful to formed habits. These were still, these are still, the two chief meetings of the year ; but all through the summer, be it understood, members turn up at odd and off times just as here and there you may almost always find an odd fish rising, even on a day when there is no fresh rise of fly.

" The Bends " was my beat that morning, just above the town. The river there goes in two arms, and " the Bends " is the eastern arm. On the western arm, the just-above-town beat is " the Doctor's Meadow," and, next again, " The Mill," as shown in the pictures. Almost as soon as I came upon the water out of the high street I saw what

looked like a good fish rising. I cast for him. I had him !

And now that good fish took me, not sporting much, not playing any antics, but at a steady determined walk, right up the whole length of that straight run of the river which goes up from the weed rack, to the place where those "bends" in the stream begin from which the beat has its name. Those who have fished at Stockbridge will know the length of the pedestrian exercise that I had to take.

Right away up to the beginning of the first bend he took me, old Grist following behind, breathing very hard in his excitement, as always when I was playing a fish. And then he turned. He grew tired, I think, of so boring up-stream and against such strain as I dared put upon him. He turned and came right down again the way he had come. At just the same steady pace, deep in water and never showing himself, he brought me down again almost exactly to the spot where I had hooked him. And there he seemed to think that he had done enough for glory. He gave up, he came into the net. He let himself be taken out. A glorious fish !

Now it so happened that on that day I had gone forth with a new spring-balance—weighing machine. I had lost my old one the week before while fishing on that excellent little river of Norfolk, the Wissey. We set to to weigh that good fish with the new balance, and, behold, he was too good for it. It would not weigh him. It was only arranged to weigh up to 4 lbs. This fish went more than that. How much more ?

Well, he had taken us down close home again, so I sent Grist (very willing, for he did not want to

carry an unnecessary 4 lbs. about with him all day) to take him to the hotel. 4 lbs. 2 oz., he reported him to me when he came back. As a matter of fact he had lost 1 oz. as he naturally would, in the drying, when Goddard came to weigh him for the official record in the evening, so he goes in the great book as 4 lbs. 1 oz.

What had happened previously—why he took us that long and steady walk—was that the men had been weed-cutting during the interval between our two statutory meetings. They had ousted this big fish, no doubt, from his home somewhere about the first bend. He had come wandering down-stream a quarter of a mile or so. Then, when I hooked him, he went, as all harassed animals are wont to go, for his home. He tired just before he got there, and thus, like "the noble Duke of York, with his thirty thousand men," who first marched them up the hill and then marched them down again, he returned, having accomplished just as little as that Royal commander.

And of course I thought that now I had that new spring-balance I was never going to catch a fish so small that it could be weighed on it. I think the next I caught was three-quarters of a pound!

Now this big fish, as so happened, was the biggest caught that season; and it so happened too that I caught the biggest grayling also—an ounce under three pounds—recorded that year. I never caught the biggest of either kind in any other year of my fishing, but I intend to swagger until the day of my last cast about these two.

Of course it is nothing to swagger about. It is all a bit of luck getting the big ones. There

is a mistake, rather a singular mistake, in a published record of the catches of the Houghton Club. It is a record extending over very many years. It appears in a handsome volume which Sir Herbert Maxwell put together about twenty years ago from those record books of the Club. It is a volume that embodies much of the original wisdom and many reproductions of the original portraits and other sketches. But in an appendix giving the bags for the different years, the biggest fish of the year 1903 is repeated, by some mischance, as the biggest for the year 1904 also. And the mischance matters the more because 1904 saw the killing of the biggest trout that ever has been caught by fly by any member. Its captor was Mr Page, to whom be some little amende honorable made here in small compensation for that grievous lapse from perfection in Sir H. Maxwell's book. He caught it in "the Garden," as the pleasant spot is known, just below Stockbridge road bridge, on a sedge-fly, in the evening. It weighed 6 lbs. 9 oz.

This, as I say, is the biggest fish ever taken by a member of the Club with the fly. Others, the monsters that adorn the walls of the Club room, have been taken with minnow, with bits of meat, with anything that such cannibals, useless and worse than useless in a river, may be tempted by. Fly, they will not look at.

One great trout, within an ounce or two of Mr Page's, was indeed taken by Mr Newman—in Park Stream of course. I say of course, because, in spite of what I have written about the manner in which our daily beats were allotted to us, by mutual agreement at breakfast time, while each man modestly declined to be first in making choice—in spite of that general custom it had an exception,

namely, Mr Newman. For he, it was an understood thing, must always go to Park Stream in the day, and to the Bends in the evening—that is, at the season, later than that of our first meeting, at which we went out after dinner to fish the evening rise.

Always, he went to those two beats. He has been a member of the Club nearly as long as any man now in it—I think only Mr Gilbey and Mr Page have longer membership—yet I do not believe that he knows anything about any part of the river except these two, "Park Stream" which is right down at the bottom of our water, and "the Bends" which goes right up to the top. All the rest is *aqua incognita* to him.

No one minded: no one thought of contesting the choice with him: partly because no one else cared for one beat more than another, and partly because Mr Newman came down very seldom and only for week-ends, being a very busy man and Deputy-Governor of the Bank of England, partly because he was a very good fellow, whom every one liked, and partly because he was a very very big fellow, and could knock you down quite easily if he chose.

Now and again, when he was there, and the question of beats was raised, one or other would say, "I should like to go to Park Stream," just to see Mr Newman's face assume exactly the expression of a baby's working itself to burst out into a first class cry. Of course it was impossible, it would have been most improper, to force so lofty and stalwart a pillar of finance, Deputy-Governor, moreover, of the Bank of England, to the actual bursting point; so it always was explained quickly that the choice was but a joke. Park Stream was

Mr Newman's as surely as the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street herself.

Now as for that great fish that he caught there, it was on a blusterous rainy day. Mr Newman made confession that he had, that day, been fishing wet-fly, down-stream. It was an awful, a most daring confession, to make in such a company all reputed purists of the pure. But its effect was singular. Several, quite unsuspected persons, dared to confess, the lead being given, that they too, in such circumstances of weather were not above the use of the wet-fly and the "chuck and chance it." For my own part, I am free to confess myself by no means so very pure that I would not chuck and chance if I found it of any effect; but on the few occasions that I ever have tried it on the Test or any other dry-fly river I have never had any response to encourage me to persevere with it. More's the pity.

But it was not altogether "chuck and chance it" as between Mr Newman and his big fish; for he had marked the trout down before, seeing him in the water on a calm day. Singularly enough he had forgotten to say anything about this remarkable fish to any of the other members. It is a lapse of memory touching exceptionally large trout with which we all are apt to be afflicted at times. So, coming to the spot again on this day when all the winds of heaven, and a good deal of its water, were loosed, he chucked over that great trout I know not what strange thing, say March Brown or small Jock Scott, and up the monster came and had it. Of the battle that followed I know nothing, except that the Bank of England, as always, had the better of the fight at the finish. One does not go March Browning or Jock Scotting on a blustering day with

very fine tackle, so I daresay that the poor fish found himself "up against it" from the start. At all events, he had to come to net, and from net to Stockbridge Town and to the mortuary slab in the Grosvenor Hotel—a handsome corpse !

Now I have spoken of that Norfolk river, Wissey. It is small, but its trout are the pinkest fleshed and the finest conditioned I ever met, or ate. I was talking about them to Goddard, our keeper, as I went down with him past our nurseries on the evening of that day on which I caught that fish which behaved with me like the noble Duke of York.

We fed our fish with mussels, mussels ground to morsels in a mill. Time was when we had fed them on horse flesh. They liked horse and throve on it ; but their own flesh, after this horse fare, was, humanly speaking, abominable, uneatable. Mussel-fed, they became very good table fish, and pink-fleshed withal ; though neither so good nor so sweet as the Wissey trout.

What is the meaning and what the cause of this pinkiness ? It has been the topic of some familiar classical discussion—as thus :—

"The good qualities of a trout," said the little friar, "are firmness and redness ; the redness, indeed, being the visible sign of other virtues."

"Whence," said Brother Michael, "we choose our abbot by his nose.

"The rose on the nose doth all virtues disclose :
For the outward grace shows
That the inward overflows,
When it glows in the rose of a red, red nose."

THE MILL.

A few lines later a special reason is given for the exceptional redness of the flesh of the trout in a certain lake called Kingslea Mere. It all occurs in that most charming of all Peacock's tales "Maid Marian," and there is a note by Dr Richard Garnett as to this Kingslea Mere that it is "probably one of the small meres in Delamere Forest, Cheshire, most of which are now dried up." The explanation of the pink hue of the trout in the lake goes like this :

"The damsel stood to watch the fight
By the banks of Kingslea Mere,
As they brought to her feet her own true knight
Sore wounded on a bier."

Then, after some endearments and binding-up of wounds, which was really rather a waste of time and trouble, seeing the step which she finally took :

"She drew him to the lake's steep side,
Where the red heath fringed the shore ;
She plunged with him beneath the tide,
And they were seen no more.

"Their true blood mingled in Kingslea Mere,
That to mingle on earth was fain ;
And the trout that swims in that crystal clear
Is tinged with the crimson stain."

These poetical quotations are suggested in the first instance by a question of "the little friar" as to "the reason why lake trout is better than river trout, and shyer withal." Sir Ralph Montfaucon replies, with some good sense, that he was not aware of the fact. Brother Michael, coming to the aid of his

clerical fellow, stigmatises this as "a most heterodox remark," and adds that the knight should take the word of the friar as to the fact, since he is "most profound in the matter of trout. He has marked, learned, and inwardly digested the subject twice a week at least for thirty-five years." So they pass on from the point of fact to the question of cause or reason, and conclude by saying that "the inference is most consecutive, that wherever you catch a red-fleshed trout, love lies bleeding under the water; an occult quality, which can only act in the stationary waters of a lake, being neutralised by the rapid transition of those of a stream." "And why is the trout shyer for that?" asked Sir Ralph.

"Do you not see?" said Brother Michael. "The virtues of both lovers diffuse themselves through the lake. The infusion of masculine valour makes the fish active and sanguineous; the infusion of maiden modesty makes him coy and hard to win; and you shall find through life the fish which is most easily hooked is not the most worth dishing."

Maybe "the little friar" is right, but the modern fisherman commonly attributes this colouring of the fish to the presence of many fresh-water shrimps, on which the fish feed. The finest ruddy-fleshed of all trout of which I ever heard were taken from some disused clay pits. Therein it does not appear that there was any particularly large store of the shrimps; but there was undoubtedly a very large concourse of frogs inhabiting the ponds and their borders, and at certain seasons the water was thronged with tadpoles. A post-mortem examination of some of the fine trout therein caught showed them to have feasted largely off these

tadpoles—an artificial fly tied on the spot in resemblance of a tadpole proved a most killing lure—and it seemed reasonable to attribute the pink hue of the trout to this unusual feeding. Perhaps, however, it is less unusual diet for a trout than we suppose it.

Chapter XV

FISHERMAN'S WEATHER

"When the wind is the West,
Then the fishes bite the best;
When the wind is in the South,
The bait is in the fishes' mouth;
When the wind is in the East,
Then the fishes bite the least;
When the wind is in the North,
Then, O fisher, go not forth."

That is the jingle that our old masters in the gentle craft used to teach us, and, as they spoke it, there was a great deal in it that was wise and prudent, although of latter years the opinion has gained ground that the fishes are not quite so much affected as those old fellows thought, in their appetites, by the exact quarter of the wind. At all events we have to admit with sorrow that it is not on every day of the south wind that we find the bait in the mouths of the fishes, nor is it always that they prove as eager as this poet would have them when it comes from the west.

But if we have thus learnt to deem our success in angling not so dependent on the wind's quarter as our fathers have taught us, it is sure that they, in their turn, had freed themselves from the trammels of a yet earlier faith, according to which such success was a matter which turned very largely on the moon's

age. That is a belief which must have kept many a credulous yet keen fisher at home on days which might in all other regards have been just what he would have desired for his sport.

In that exceedingly quaint volume the "Saxon Leechdoms" there are set forth, under "Prognostics from the Moon's Age," certain days of the lunar month on which you may go a-fishing with especially high hope. The first of these days is the third, in respect of which it is written, "When the moon is three days old, then go to your land, and you will manage it well; and seek your friends and they will be merry. Also when the moon is three days old it is good to fish." The next of the favourable days is the seventh, of which it is said, "The seventh day of the moon's age is good for fishing; and for taking a nobleman's blood money." Of all the auspicious angling days, however, perhaps the choice is the eleventh, for "When the moon is eleven days old, go to what quarter of the world you will, nothing shall harm you, neither man nor beast; and it is a good day to kill big fishes at sea." This is evidently a most highly favoured day in all respects, though, as it would seem, rather for the sea-fisher than for the angler for trout and such small fry. The fifteenth is also a promising date, seeing that "On the fifteenth day of the moon's age it is good to fish, and with hounds to seek harts and wild swine."

All this weather wisdom came to my mind because I had happened, on that day, to put a small volume of Calverley's into my pocket, by way of pastime. There is a moment in the golden days when spring is blending into summer at which we almost need some aid towards the wasting of the passing hour, just because it is an aid which the trout do not often give us—say in the hours between

2 and 4 P.M. Fish and fly alike seem to be taking their siesta then, and it is a dead though always beautiful river that is our outlook.

And why C. S. C. thus brought this ancient weather lore to my mind is that I read him too writing in the same vein as the less scholarly versifier above cited; for he tells us that:—

> "'Twas a day of cloudless skies,
> When the trout neglects to rise,
> And in vain the angler sighs
> For a bite."

One does not lightly disagree with so exceedingly pleasant a fellow as Calverley, but just in this particular instance it is possible that the dry-fly angler may take exception to him. I suspect that he was writing as a wet-fly man. We know that "the southerly wind and the cloudy sky" were no less valued for their fishing than for the fox-hunting favoured by our angling forefathers, and doubtless are considered still very essential to his sport by him whom the dry-fly man terms with disdain "a chuck and chance it" fisher. Be it said to his credit, however, that far more skill in throwing and far more knowledge of the habits of trout are needed for the success of this apparently fortuitous method than the man of the dry-fly at all suspects. The "chance" is not a great one unless the "chuck" is fairly accurate, and accurate not only to the spot that the chucker intends, but also to the spot where feeding fish are likely to be—and this is a spot which is only ascertained after much faithful observation of their ways.

Leaving, then, with this encomium, our angler of the fast streams in his favourite south-westerly

weather, and wishing him the best of sport, we may still ask " C. S. C." why it should be that fish " neglect to rise " beneath the clear sky. The rise of fish depends largely on a rise of fly. There are exceptions, no doubt, but the common rule is that when fly rise fish also rise to feed on them. And fly will rise beneath a clear sky as well as beneath a cloudy one. It is true that they are surprisingly capricious in their rising, and often prefer for that process a cold and stormy day to the weather in which it seems to us that we, were we of their tribe, would be most inclined to wriggle up from the depths of the water, to shuck off our nymphal integuments, and to spread ourselves out as winged and more or less perfect insects. We should choose a warm and sunlit day for such an apotheosis as that. But the aquatic fly seem to be influenced by other than human motives. They come up in all sorts of weather, the iron-blue dun, exceptionally, showing a great liking for a cold wind. But they do not shrink from the sunlight. They will rise, on the whole, nearly as freely in the one weather phase as in the other. A change of weather, curiously enough, encourages their rise, but whether from cold to hot or the reverse hardly seems to signify. And if they rise, the fish, in normal circumstances, will come up to catch them at it, without troubling themselves greatly about the conditions of the atmosphere overhead.

On the whole, and giving discount to Calverley for the poetic licence that he may very justly claim, it is likely that what he meant was that he found the fish hard to catch on the cloudless day. In common with all of the wet-fly school he thought it scarcely worth while to flog the unoffending water on a day of this kind. Therefore he may have had the

illusion that no fish rose, since they did not rise in any manner of practical use to him angling for them. He left his angling and listened to the cuckoo instead —to which listening we owe the poem that he opens with the words quoted—but if he had been on a chalk stream of Hampshire, or of any other shire where the rivers flow clear and equable, and heavily food-laden, from the chalk hills, we do not think that he would have relinquished the quest of the trout so lightly, merely on account of an absence of cloud over the sun's face. In fact, he would have known a thing that was hidden to those of his forebears who never thought of the dry-fly fishing—that for an angler of skill in this mode it is easier to catch the trout on such a day than in some other conditions of sky and of light which might seem far more promising to the fisher of the olden time.

Experience shows us that although all may be shining bright overhead, the fish do not see an object on the bank as plainly, or as far off, on a cloudless day as on some days when the vault of heaven is much darker. The condition of sky in which the fishes undoubtedly have the best and farthest vision of the angler and his waving rod and all the apparatus devised for their allurement to their doom is that of a dark cloud mass overhead with a light coming in below it from the horizon. The general aspect of the above-water world in these circumstances is dull, but let the angler try, in the most stealthy and serpentine manner, to approach the rising trout, and he will be taught his lesson in piscine optics in a moment—the fish will cease to feed, probably he may see the "V" shaped wave caused by its affrighted departure, and he may wonder. He may wonder, but if his wonder lead him to any intelligent observation he will not fail to observe

that not only has his fish seen him with abnormal clarity, but also that to his own human optic things in the water are being revealed in quite uncommon definition and colour.

On a day of dazzling sun, such as Calverley indicates this to have been on which he heard the cuckoo, the fish appear to suffer dazzlement almost as severely as the angler. If he is careful in the manner of his approach, so that no shadow or glint of his rod catches the fish's eye, and in the placing of the fly just right, without a splash, on the still surface, there is no reason why he should not have sport, no matter how blue the sky or brilliant the sunlight. Opinions differ, but for my part I have a liking for fishing with my back to the sun's light, so long as the orb itself is above the horizon. When it sinks, in the evening, behind the hill, then, of course, seek the opposite bank and take advantage of its afterglow by which to see the rising fish, but until that disappears take advantage of the dazzle that it casts equally in the eyes of fishes and of men—always with an anxious heed to keep all shadows from the trout's ken.

Just this far have I come in my reflections when they are broken by the glimpse of something slipping into the silver-flowing river with the silent ease and grace of long practice—a brown creature that ninety-nine men out of any normal hundred will call a water-rat. It is carrying in its mouth what is relatively an enormous stem of some aquatic herb. There are herbs with very succulent stems on this, the side of the river which the creature is entering, and there are none on the other side—that for which it is making. The inference seems to be that it has its home on that side of the river, and comes over to this to seek its dinner. That found,

it returns, as we see it do now, to the further side, taking a portion, at least, of its dinner (or possibly a provision for a late supper) with it.

As it goes, I observe, that though it swims strongly, yet, with this gigantic slice of dinner carried in its mouth, it is gradually washed down the current, so that it comes out at a point far lower, the better part of twenty yards lower, than that on which it slipped in on this side. For all that—the subtlety of the little beast is admirable—it appears that it is landing precisely at his home port. It has not to toil up against the stream with its meal, nor to attempt the even more troublous land journey through the thick sedges that would bring it up short at every step and knock its branch of succulence out of its mouth. It is evident what it has done. It has hewed down the stem it needed and has launched itself into the water with it at a point on this side very nicely calculated so that the current shall bear it down to the convenient landing-place on its home side, and the dainty piece that it is carrying back is just a beautiful slice of water weed, clean, fresh, and crisp as it were a stalk of celery. That really is the point to make, that this brown furred swimmer is a vegetarian, and particularly scrupulous and delicate in regard to the quality and freshness of its fare ; and, having made that point, it indicates at once, even in itself, the injustice and iniquity of the statement made in his haste by Calverley in this booklet of his verse, that " she was a water-rat." Here again we have to lament a lapse or a lacuna in the river lore of our so admirable C. S. C.

For, of course, she was nothing of that base and nasty kind ; she was a water-vole. If anyone would assert that this is a distinction without a

difference he must very gravely misunderstand the meaning of words, or the nature of rats and voles respectively. A vole is no more a rat than a dromedary is a kangaroo, and from the point of view of all qualities which we, humanly speaking, should call agreeable there is very much more likeness between the latter than the former pair of animals. The rat may have its virtues, though perhaps they are rather far to seek, but he cannot fail to be associated in our minds with much nastiness—foul feeding, dirty living, reprehensible habits. The water-vole, on the contrary, is most cleanly in all its ways, perpetually bathing in quickly running streams, a vegetarian, most nice in the selection of its vegetable diet. It takes the greatest pride in the tending of its ruddy fur, and lives altogether a life above reproach. What makes it the more hard that it should be stigmatised with this offensive name of rat is that there are, in fact, a number of the real rats, real noisome vermin, that do at certain seasons make their home by our Test side.

If the water-vole is at all sensitive to the opinion of man it must very justly be hurt by the frequent confusion of its own nice identity with that of the real rat which has taken to a riverside existence that is hardly proper to it. There ought to be no possibility of confusion. The rat rightly so called is clad in a grey coat, not in the warm russet of our vegetarian friend : it has a long and naked tail, which in itself is of distasteful aspect, whereas the vole's tail is stumpy and well furred. Moreover, it is only likely that the vole regards the rat as one of its most deadly enemies, for the rat, though a land animal if he kept in his proper place, is almost as fine a swimmer as the vole himself, and though somewhat larger can probably penetrate his burrows.

It is hardly likely perhaps that a rat, unless sharp-set with hunger, would willingly attack a full-grown vole, but there is not a doubt that he would glut his carnivorous maw freely and with delight on a nest of young voles—even on a half-grown vole, going at large, if he could catch him. The escape of the vole, even of youthful age, is probably best effected by a quick dive, for though the rat is so fine a swimmer on the surface he does not seem to have the vole's talent for under-water locomotion.

The life of the young vole is beset by many enemies. Not the least formidable of them are the pike, in waters where those murderers abound. No living thing is safe from them, and they will snap up young birds, such as ducklings and small moorhens, as readily as a minnow or troutlet. Fur, fin, and feather are alike agreeable to them. And along the river bank, working in and out of the tall flowers with a quick glide that is almost snake-like, you may occasionally see a little creature slimmer than the vole, yet his dire enemy and killer, the stoat.

I spoke of the stoats before as dire enemies of the vole people, what time I was lamenting that young creature of the vole kind carried over the weir. The stoats can swim the river with perfect ease, and take to the semi-aquatic life of the waterside as readily as the wicked grey rats themselves. They will even make an attempt at diving if you come on them unawares when they are swimming. But they are not proficient at it, and it is rather a dip under water and up again, than any length of under-water travel, that they accomplish. In the spring you may sometimes see the mother stoat going with a baby in her mouth, moving house, and this especially when the water rises so that the nest that she had

thought safe is swamped. The stoats, with their slight sinuous bodies, can pass through the burrows of the vole with inches of space to spare. From the grey rat the vole has some defence in his smaller bulk which lets him live comfortably in tunnels that the rat can hardly, or not at all, squeeze through; but he has no defence of this kind to avail him against the snaky-bodied stoat.

On the whole the life of the vole is diurnal, lived in the light of day, far more so than that of the rat, after which the poet has miscalled her, but it is pleasant, no doubt, if you are a little vole, to sit out on the bank, or on a bed of cut and stranded weeds, and munch your celery, or the like crisp fare, in the evenings when the dusk is falling. And just at this time there are large silent flying terrors, which men call owls, flitting over the surface of land and water. Unquestionably these, too, are among the menaces of the life of the mother vole, which are many in the total account; and it seems hard we should add to them, inviting human persecution also, by misrating her among the rats.

Our poets should be more careful.

Chapter XVI

THE BIRDS AND THE WATER INSECTS

"Oh, it'll be fine, sir," said old Grist, with cheery confidence, as I expressed the fisherman's usual anxiety about the weather. "Don't you see how the skylarks are coming down, right down flat to the ground?" "Is that a good sign?" I asked, in my ignorance. "It's a certain sign, sir," said he, with a confident optimism that carried a rebuke, and a broad smile of indulgence, at my childishness in not knowing this elementary truth, tempering the rebuke. "If you see them going down like that with their wings spread out all the way till they come to the ground, you may know it's going to be fine weather. But if you see them come down with a quick kind of dart like, the last twenty yards or so of their coming down, then you may know it's going to be bad."

As a matter of fact I had noticed that the skylarks, of which there were many on the water-meadows, were descending right into the grass in just the manner he described. It was not the faculty of observation, but of drawing the inference, that had been denied me. Nor have I had opportunity to confirm, by further observation, the truth of the inference which the old man drew with such exceeding conviction: "It's a certain sign," he said.

You cannot go further than that, and in a matter

so chancy as our English weather, that, even, seems far to go. He said it, moreover, in his best Boanerges voice, which seemed to make all his assertions so much the more convincing. I believe that he had a deaf wife at home. Certainly he had a most powerful pair of lungs that he did not leave at home; and certainly, too, his stentorian confidence was justified for this once at least—after all, this thistledown-like alighting of the skylarks was only one among several weather signs that were good—for the day was perfect.

Of course, it was not precisely such a day as that which the fish would esteem perfect for affixing themselves to the angler's angle: that is perfection of a kind which has never yet been achieved by our weather bureaucrats, despite their best endeavours; but nevertheless all did really go very well for a while, according to the modest measure of things angling. For my beat was wide, and though for the best part of an hour there was little look of either fish or fly on the water, yet after that time of waiting, a ring and a bubble, as of a trout rising very quietly, but with a settled purpose which was convincing, began to show in the still water under the bank. It was just such a trout as the fisher with the dry-fly particularly loves, for there he could get right behind his fish, with one wader-clad leg down in the river and the other kneeling on the bank, and so could cast right up-stream to the fish. And the water came down placidly all the way, so that there was no fear of that fatal drag, making the best-laid schemes of the angler "gang agley," which happens when there is a swift current running between him and the spot where his fly must float. Over the head of that trout went a "ginger quill" smoothly gliding—not at the first

offer exactly ; that would be too much to expect of the none too expert hand of this writer. But the next offer, the first being wide enough to cause him no tremors, he could not resist ; he accepted, and after a decent show of reluctance was brought to net. Proving well over the 1½ lbs. minimum, he was given a quick death-blow with the "priest."

Things did not continue to go with a like smoothness after that. When, indeed, has it been known that they do ? And if they did, what, we may wonder, would become of that most subtle charm of fishing with the dry-fly which defies analysis, but of which a large element, beyond question, is its glorious uncertainty ?

The rising fish were few, and they were shy. There seemed to be some clear slant of light by which they were enabled to see, afar off, the most cautious approach, or, if this were executed without raising the alarm, then the first lift of the rod and its glint in the movements of the cast caught their eye and they were off, with the "V" shaped hump of the water indicating the direction of their going, into deep hiding-places.

Whereupon the barometer of the fisherman's mental disposition indicates deep depression, and the sapient gillie evinces appreciation of it by maintaining a distance and a silence very different from the genial affability on which he ventures when sport is good.

So luncheon is eaten in dejection, and with no rise of fish or fly to distract attention from it. There is comfort only in recalling the beautiful outline and colour of that single fish which has, at least, averted all apprehension of that fearsome calamity, a "blank day."

Boot Island from Boot Meadow.

After luncheon, the beat, as said, being extensive, a move is indicated to another part of the water to see whether there be not more active happenings on its bright surface ; and for once, at all events, the wandering tactics are justified. There is a cheerful dimpling here and there of the river's face as the fish rise to take the spent fly, invisible without careful inspection, which have been coming down during much of the morning. But there is on the water, also, but far more occasionally, a big fat fly, which one who was neither fisherman nor entomologist might be tempted to miscall a moth. It is that strange insect named the Welshman's button, of which Lunn, as aforesaid, made a pet. We miscall it, perhaps, on our river, the caperer, but the fitness of the title must be evident at the first look, even to the least learned, for there the creature is at this very moment, executing his capers, dancing a whirling *pas seul* which seems as if it must be most provocative of the appetite of a feeding fish.

It is a hint, a big, broad hint, and it is quickly taken. Already to-day the caperer has been put on its trial and has been found badly wanting. A few of the fly had been seen on the water two days before. There was a division of opinion as to whether trout had fed on them at all. But in the morning of this day, and on that other part of the stream not a fish had responded to the presence of the artificial caperer sailing over it, unless it were to fly from it, terror-stricken. But the caperer has this essential characteristic, unlike any other fly on which trout feed, that on one part of a river the fish may be going "mad-keen" after it, and on another will not look at it at all. I and my Boanerges have already suffered our experience

of the former state. It is well worth trying whether we may not now be happening on the other.

For a moment the verdict is uncertain, even promising to be adverse, for the first two fish to whom we make the offer have no use for this species of lure, and the one which took the natural caperer is in a place impossible of fishing owing to present condition of wind and bushes. But about the third fish to whom the invitation is sent out there is no hesitation ; and at the worst there is this excellent fact to be recorded to the caperer's credit, that when you have made a nice and delicate proffer of him twice or three times to a trout there is no use hammering on over the head of that particular, fastidious fish, even if the said fastidious head is not withdrawn. The fish usually know their own mind about the caperer. Either they want it badly, and will come at it on the first chance, or they do not appreciate it at all, and cannot be persuaded into the mistake that they do, as you may persuade them, very often, when it is some form of smaller fly on which they are feeding.

So now this third fish comes at it with a rush and a spring like a tiger. The strike meets a solid resistance, the hook is home. The fish runs out the reel with a scream, as if he were a salmon. There is some steady determined cruising, with a great deal of line out, along the further bank. "He must surely be foul-hooked, sir," says the weather prophet, with stentorian pessimistic augury, as he stands ready with the net. "Not at all," I say, having felt the solid weight of the great body that took out the line. "He's a heavy fish—that's all that's the matter."

It should be but a question of time—with a

THE DOCTOR'S MEADOW.

caperer a fish is generally well hooked, and only a fool would use small gut with so large a fly—and so it is ; the reeling in brings him nearer and nearer ; he makes one dash more, his last. Then he comes quietly, though still with some weighty remonstrance, to the net. A tap on the head finishes him. The balance shows him to weigh 3 lbs. 10 oz., and he is a deep fish for his length. It is no wonder that he was a fighter. And the day is still young enough for lots more luck with many caperers. The skylarks were of good omen.

Birds always have been man's omen givers. Was it not Cicero himself, in the days of Ancient Rome, who said he could not think how any two "auspices" or omen tellers from the watching of birds' flight, could pass in the street without a grin to each other at the beguiling of their clients ?

We read those omens still. "See, the swallows are down over the water ! They are after the fly. The trout will be rising to them soon."

Thus often have we heard a fellow angler say, what time we kept anxious watch on the chalk stream still unbroken by the circle of a rising fish. A fond illusion, we have often found it. Those swallows go chasing ; but still no fish rise. And, though we look ever so closely, we discover no rise of fly either, to explain this hawking of the swallows. There are few days and few moments of a day, when you may not see here and there an insect hovering or darting over the water's surface ; and the swallows, with eyes more microscopic, surely find many invisible by us. It is in quest of these flies, humanly invisible, that the swallows are about the stream now. That is a different story, however,

from what we call a "rise" of fly, an upgoing through the water of the insect throwing off the fine nymphal vesture—which is the only kind of rising that interests the trout, because it is a rise through their own native element, where they can make the risers pay heavy toll. Otherwise the presence of fly on the water is due to a fall, rather than a rise—the spent insects or the egg-layers coming down from their air-dance.

The reason, then, why these swallows are thus here now, though there is no "rise," in true sense, of fly, is that there are these occasional insects to be found just here, whereas there are few or none elsewhere. That is the right conclusion, I am very sure, to be drawn from the coursing of swifts and swallows and martins over the river's surface on a dour, hard day—not so much that there is any positive abundance here, but, more negatively, that there is nearly a complete lack of insect life everywhere else, whether it be in those high solitudes where only the swifts weave their mazy flight or on the lowlier planes where swallows and martins are the hawkers. It is no generous act thus to dash the anticipations of young angling innocence, but hopes of fish based on the swallows glinting over the stream are fond, vainly imagined, and ripe for no other fate than dashing.

But, understand—I am very far from meaning that a rise of fly does not often tempt the birds, swifts, swallows, martins, and insect hawkers of every kind, to be about the water's surface in their myriads. I have seen them so, the swifts especially, on that river most prolific of the May-fly, the Kentish Stour—have seen them chasing over the stream in such numbers that it seemed incredible

that they did not continually dash upon one another in their flight. The face of the river was so covered with the discarded nymphal weeds of the fly that the water which carried them could scarcely be seen beneath it, and even this mask itself was but mistily visible through the bewildering fog of birds. So, too, but in far less numbers, I have seen them on many another stream when the March Brown was " up "—up later than his name suggests, observe, for otherwise there would be few of the professional insect hawkers arrived in England for his hawking.

When the flies are very many, the catchers chase them in no ordered manner ; they turn this way and that and every way, as the quarry is viewed now here, now there. But on days when the insect food is not ubiquitous, you will see them following a drilled order in the chase. Evidently, from the manœuvres of the birds, though the flies may be invisible to human eyes, they are over one stretch of the stream more numerously than elsewhere, for here you see the birds beating up against the wind, casting to right or left as they go, with a sharp snap of the beak, which means the snapping of a fly, at each turn. Thus they work up to a certain point, which we may take to be the up-wind limit of the stretch over which the insects are abundant. That limit reached, up goes each swallow into the air, and quickly, without pause, down-wind drifting he comes, not turning to right or left, not bothering about the flies. So he lets himself be carried right down to the lower end again of that fly-bearing stretch. And there he turns. He begins once more his up-wind beat, his hawking to this side and to that. And every swallow, if you keep him under observation, is working the beat in like

manner. Of course, the reason jumps to the eye : seeing that the fly borne down-wind must almost jump to the up-wind gaping mouth. There is wisdom in this windward hawking of the swallow, even as in the windward nosing of the dog.

Chapter XVII

DO THE TROUT COME UP TO LOOK?

You who are an angler know that moment of ecstatic thrill when you have floated the fly, well cocked, exactly over the rising trout, and he has come for it, has taken it, and you have struck! That is the moment of the keenest thrill, the thrill of anxiety. It is succeeded by another, scarcely, if at all, less poignant, the thrill of delight—that is, on the only tolerable presumption that both you and the fish have done that which, respectively, you intended to do, that he has effectively taken the fly and that you have effectively stricken the barb into him. There is the alternative, the thrill of disappointment, the line flying back to your strike with no resistance at its end. It is an alternative too painful for contemplation. Let us forget it.

But it was the former, the ecstatic thrill, that had just come to my hand on a morning of June, low down towards the bottom of the Cooper's Meadow beat, and the resistance at the line's end was of that solid, weighty character, from the very first, which tells of a heavy fish. So all was fulfilment of the angler's highest ideal of bliss, save for the one circumstance that just below, say thirty yards or so, a footbridge spanned the river. That was the one disturbing factor, the one handicap in the trout's favour, of the whole scheme. And very well did that fish seem to know it. Boring deep in the water, so that his strength was greatest

and my power over him the least, he persisted, in spite of all I dared in way of "giving the butt" and straining the gut, in making downwards towards that bridge.

So I called to my small gillie, a youth just beyond his "standards," whose function was to carry landing-net, luncheon, and all impedimenta—for Grist, my old son of thunder, was with Power, his proper master, who always had first claim on him—"Get on the bridge; get on the bridge and frighten him up."

So to the bridge he got him, and once there he stood and shouted to the fish "Shoo! Shoo!" "You little donkey," I yelled at him. "D'you think the fish can *hear* you? Splash in the water! Splash!" So splash he did, at length, with the net, as he should have done at the beginning; but whether he had left it till too late, or whether the fish was down too deep to heed him, in either case the trout had the better of it. Under the bridge he went, and for me all that was to be done was to follow after. And this following could be in one way only: serpent-like, prone upon the bridge, I lay, while beneath its plank I transferred my rod from the right hand, up-stream, into the left hand below, and so I was again in the trout's company below the bridge. But was he "keeping company" still? That, of course, was the question cruelly demanding an answer, as I reeled up all the long slack of the line which had inevitably run out as I did my gymnastics upon the bridge. Happily the hook had a good hold. He was there still, and the battle was resumed, with no undue handicap to his advantage.

I do not wish to carry the reader through all the varied details to its dénouement—the bringing

to the net of a fish which dipped the scale to within an ounce or two of four pounds. But, then, of course, commenced a lecture to the boy, of the folly of supposing that the fish could hear him as he stood on the bridge and cried "Shoo! Shoo!" Fortunate it was for that small youth that the encounter ended as it did, in mine, not in the trout's favour. Had it been otherwise, it is likely, such is human nature, that my words would have been even more winged and stinged. But all their edge was tempered by the mental vision of that lovely fish by this time safely packed in the boy's basket. Still, youth must be admonished.

And then, in the evening of that delicious day, mentally rehearsing its happy and also its disappointing incidents, I went back over that of the boy "shooing" on the bridge, and laughed. And after the laughter came consideration, and I began to ask myself whether I was really quite so sure, as I had confidently asseverated to the boy, that "the fish can't hear." Cannot they? We know, at least, that they are extremely sensitive to vibration, even if they have not the ears which are for most land animals the specialised organs of hearing. They have, at all events, otoliths, which may serve the purpose. And just where we should be right in asserting that sensibility to general vibration ceases and specialised hearing begins, it might be hard indeed to say.

We well know that fish may be stunned by vibration set up by a violent explosion in the water about them. It is a curious thing, as those who have made the experiment on the two kinds will confirm, that the tough pike, whom we regard as the type of all that is hardy and unfeeling in the waters, is more sensitive than the trout to this

stunning effect of vibration. The pike can be killed by the impact on the water close to him of a rifle bullet, or bullet from a large-bore revolver, at considerably greater depth than a trout.

Of course, this mode of dealing with so game and gallant a fish as the trout requires apology and justification. It is to be resorted to only when other methods fail and when the victim is some old and cannibal rascal who has deserted the proper ways of his own trout kind and taken to the evil living of the pike itself. In that decadence he becomes an outlaw from all the privileges which good sportsmanship otherwise accords to him, and has to be dealt with as a common enemy.

Now, explosion of this stunning efficacy differs, I suppose, in degree only, and not at all in kind, from that which a Boanerges of a shouter might produce upon the water's surface. It is not only the under-water explosion which can stun the fish—a violent gun-fire above has a like result, in its slighter measure. Had my small boy, whom I lectured, been a trifle more learned, he might have posed a difficult question or two. Why is it, he might have asked, if fish do not hear, that we have a whole group of fishes—the Drum fishes or Grunt fishes of American waters—which undoubtedly make noises? Of what use are sounds, whether martial or amorous, if there be no organs of sound, whether ears or otoliths, to receive them? There are questions to be asked; fortunately, my boy did not know enough to ask them. And, at any rate, he was no Boanerges Grist, and "shooing" is not the way to keep a fish from passing under a bridge.

Doubtless the principal reason for our inability to understand the senses of fishes is the folly of

man. These are censorious words that carry a heavy indictment. I do not for a moment presume to claim for myself a place outside its scope. Now and again it has happened to me to regard myself with the greatest wonder, that I should be capable of the folly of treating the senses of fish as if they were non-existent, and forgetting that most fundamental of all maxims, that if we are to judge a fellow-creature—whether fish or human—properly, we must do our best endeavour to put ourselves into his place and look from his point of view. It is thus that we fail so often to appreciate how things appear to the fishes, and consequently fail much more often than we need to induce them to attach themselves to the hooks we offer them : we do not consider sufficiently how we and our lures appear to them, nor realise adequately how necessary it is that we should not appear to them at all.

The way of a salmon, with a fly floated downstream to him, is very different from that of a trout with a fly floated to him from above. Often the salmon will follow the fly round, with his nose a few inches away from it ; and when he does so this deliberation generally, though not always, saves him from destruction. And, watching the fish thus with their noses at the lure, one is much disposed to think that they may be bringing another sense than that of sight to its investigation—that they may be smelling it.

I was rash enough once to write an article under the title, " Do Fish Smell ? " and in consequence it happened to me also, not once but many times, to be assailed by friends with rude jokes about " smelly " fish. My retort was quotation of that rebuke of Mrs Thrale by Doctor Johnson when the lady commented, in a manner which modern

delicacy forbids to be printed, on the unpleasant condition of heat in which he returned from a walk. The sublime "Bozzy" repeats the story with all his inspired unconsciousness that he has stepped right across the threshold of the ridiculous.

That an eel, which is at all events very like a fish, can smell, I had as direct proof as can well be had on a day when I was sitting at luncheon beside the North Esk River and had thrown a chicken bone into a still and shallow backwater. Presently, out of the depths came the long lithe body of an eel, turning its head this way and that, most obviously drawing up to the bone, most evidently attracted by the smell, and following the smell to its source by aid of its olfactory sense. It turned this way and that, just like a dog following a line, coming back, after each turn, to the true median track again which should bring it to its quest. Arrived there, it seized the bone and went off with it into the dark depths of the water, as a dog takes home a bone to gnaw in his kennel. I have told that story before, and do not apologise for its repetition. I shall tell it again, for it is worth the retelling often. It gives new light, and it seems not impossible to me that it may offer an explanation of our salmon thus nosing along behind the fly. May they not be testing it by the olfactory sense, and might we not capture them much more freely if we gave our lures the right smell? This suggestion, however, has a savour of the poacher, which may offend the delicate conscience. After all, I do not presume to offer any dogmatic answer to the interesting question, "Do fish hear?" They have no external ears, but they have otoliths, which may serve as audition organs. The evidence of anatomy is not conclusive.

But suppose that, as we lie with our head over the bank above the river, we call down our friend, the angler, from above. Let us presume that the fish have not had a chance of seeing him; let us ask him to come to us making a circuit so as to keep out of their sight, but let us also ask him to walk down with a fine, firm, manly step. What shall we see? That all those fish take the alarm, precisely as if they had caught sight of him, and dart up swiftly into their dark refuges beside the bank.

Have they heard him? Whether we call the sense impression that they have received hearing, or anything else, it is quite certain that they have been impressed by the vibration that he has set up, and know that something unusual is going on. The ease with which the vibration caused by a man walking on the bank is communicated to the water, the difficulty a man finds in approaching the river so quietly as not to communicate this vibration, is seen very strikingly when there is a fringe of ice, to the extent of a yard or two from the bank, out over the stream. It is almost impossible to approach the bank with such stealthy and Agag-like steps that they shall not communicate a tremulous movement to the ice, which is made manifest by a series of semicircular waves eddying out from its edge over the water. Seeing these, we shall wonder no longer at the sensitiveness of the fish to these vibrations, and may realise more fully the necessity of "going delicately" if we are to catch unawares anything swimming in the water.

There is a section of the great book of the incorporated wit and wisdom of the Houghton Fishing Club which has for title: "Maxims and Hints for an Angler." It begins as follows:—

"(1) Are there any fish in the river to which you are going? (2) Having settled the above question in the affirmative, get some person who knows the water to show you whereabouts the fish usually lie; and when he shows them to you, do not show yourself to them." The author's third maxim is of no less incontrovertible wisdom, to the effect that the coarsest fishing when the trout do not see you will succeed better than the finest when they do.

It is well to understand, so far as may be, just what is meant by keeping from the fish's sight. What is most evident, in the first place, is that the fish obviously cannot see you if there is something solid between you and him. This is such a plain statement of fact that any elaboration would only tend to obscure it. What is more helpful is to indicate to the angler how he may obscure himself from the fish when there is no such solid body intervening between them. To be sure, he will cultivate the intervention of the solid as much as is possible, will raise his head as gently and as little as may be in order to peep over the intervention and inspect what is on its further side. It is scarcely feasible for him to keep his eyes below its level or below a line from the fish to his eyes, for it is rather essential for him to look before he throws, so as to give himself at least a chance of throwing so that the fly may pass over the fish. All of us, it is to be supposed, have caught fish now and again that we have not seen, and of which we have not even seen the rise, but these happy accidents are to be reckoned among exceptions proving a rule. The solid body most often intervening is some portion of the bank, and the angler, prone, after the fashion of the serpent, will use its height to

THE STOCK BRIDGE AND GARDEN BEAT.

THE SHEEP BRIDGE.

shelter his body or the greater part of it, from the fish's view.

The bank, however, will do more for him than this, for it is seldom a perfectly naked bank. It usually has its fringes of herbage. These break the vision of the fish very considerably. Experience proves to us that a screen of this sort, dividing the continuous person of the angler into little sections, obscures his approach from the fish much more than we should expect. Even a very flimsy screen of the kind appears to deceive the eye of the fish much more than it would the eye of a land animal. Perhaps this is in part due to the medium, the water, through which the image has to pass to the fish's eye, or perhaps it may be due to the formation of the eye itself. At all events, what is of practical interest and of much assistance to the angler is the simple fact ; and, realising it, he will do well to avail himself of any, even the slightest screen, though it may seem to him so inadequate as to be unworthy of consideration.

Owing to the refraction of the rays of light as they pass through the water, the angle at which the fish, stationary in the stream, can see you or any less noble object on the bank is rather different from that at which he would see you if it were not for the water, and this angle has been calculated elaborately in one or two excellent works on the gentle art. Unfortunately, all inferences as to your invisibility depend on the trout's remaining stationary, and this you cannot rely on him to do. It is further to be said that it is not exactly what you desire of him, for the stationary trout means a trout which is not rising, and a trout not rising to the natural fly is unlikely to be tempted by the imitation which you are proposing to pass over him.

It has often seemed to me—and I hazard the theory with some diffidence, because I have not read or heard of its being advanced by other anglers —that the fish very often catches sight of you at the moment that he has taken the fly; more strictly, perhaps, the moment afterwards, just as he is preparing to sink again to his former observation post. The probability of his seeing you just at this instant depends somewhat, as appears to me, on the manner in which he is feeding. If he is lying in a placid and slowly moving stretch of a river rich with food, duns passing over his nose, and his action in sucking them in confined to a gentle elevation of his head to receive a fly which he has noted an inch or two before it arrives, then he will turn but little, the angle of his sight is hardly changed, and there is no great probability of his getting a sight of you as he resumes his station. On the other hand, if he is in a more quickly moving stream, and is turning to right or left to take the fly, then there is a much increased probability of his seeing you as he goes down.

I have spoken of this as a theory, but it is a theory based on observation of facts. Again and again I have suffered the pangs of disappointment at finding a fish go off the rise when I knew that it was virtually impossible for him to have seen me or my rod or anything that was mine except at that very instant of his last rise. I have waited patiently for the rise to be repeated, but that welcome sight has not been vouchsafed, and the inference has been irresistible that it was at the moment of rising that he apprehended his danger. This ceasing to rise, for no other apparent reason than that which I suggest, has always followed one of the sideways rises, never one of those which have

been made with the head right up-stream. The inference of practical use to the angler is that it behoves him to be particularly on his guard against any movement of his arm or of the rod at this particular and crucial moment. It is a caution which is the more necessary, because we are rather disposed to think that when the fish's attention is thus concentrated on the fly he would be least of all likely to take note of his surroundings, but it is a supposition which does not seem to fit observed facts.

All this elementary wisdom, which is the common property of all anglers gifted with any faculty of observation, is endorsed by the very ingenious under-water studies of Dr Ward. But those studies have also proved certain facts unsuspected by the angler, especially in regard to the mirror-like reflection given off by the water's surface to the fish's eye of objects below it—including the floor of the river and possibly the angler's own legs, encased in waders, if he happen to be making his approach to the shy trout in this guise. Moreover—and all this is outside that upward spreading cone wherein the vision of the fish at any object within its circumference is direct—he has to learn that the fish has a vision, indistinct, and blurred, of objects above the water, and seen through it at angles from its eyes very much wider than that of the limited cone of its clear sight.

The distance at which objects are thus dimly apprehended is quite surprising ; and the practical lesson seems to be that the angler, in walking round a rising fish, and also in his approaches to get into position for casting to it, should keep further away from the river's bank than most of us deem at all necessary, and that he should begin to assume the

crouching or kneeling attitude at an earlier stage than that at which this undignified pose is commonly adopted.

One of the photographs which Dr Ward reproduces is surely a very remarkable one. In the first place it shows the waders on the legs of a man right up to the thigh, as seen in their real position under water, and on top of them come these same wader-encased legs displayed upside-down on the mirror formed by the water's surface. Beyond these, again, comes the indistinct dark apparition of the angler's head and body, seen through the water. Thus there are these three modes of apparition, as it would seem, to the camera, and likewise to the eye of the fish, although none of them have come within the direct line of vision in the cone. It is little wonder, therefore, that the fish is frequently scared by the angler even when the latter is not very conscious of giving it cause for alarm ; and the wonder rather seems to be that we are ever able to come within range of a fish at all. It is a point in the angler's favour that any, even a very slight, troubling of the waters, whether by current or by wind, thus breaking up the reflecting surface, causes an obliteration of the objects to an extent by which Dr Ward confesses himself to be much surprised.

This fact, of the water surface serving as a mirror, will probably serve also as explanation of the fact by which many of us have been astonished that the fish are " much more shy," as we say, and see the angler, his rod, his line, and all the engines of his craft far more clearly on a day when there is a dark cloud above them, especially if there be light coming in below it from low down near the horizon, than they do in the brightest sunlight.

Heretofore we had generally been satisfied with explaining to ourselves in a vague way that they were "dazzled by the sunlight" on these bright light days. "Dazzled" in some measure they possibly may be, but we, illuminated by the work Dr Ward has done for us, are able to understand the better how it is that the dark cloud above aids the mirror to give back the reflection. When we look out through our windows during the daytime we see clearly what is going on out of doors; when we strive to look out similarly into the dark, what we see is the reflection of the lit room within. I hazard my guesses at the truth with all the confidence and with all the ignorance of an utterly unscientific person. And, knowing my opinion to be worth nothing, I will hazard it even to the making of this further quite monstrous suggestion, that the trout will sometimes deliberately "rise," that is to say will lift his head out of the water, in order to have a look round and see what is happening on the bank.

"At all events," I said, one evening in our Stockbridge club-room, "I don't know why it should not be so. I don't know why it should not be possible that the fish come up to look."

It was the conclusion, or very nearly the conclusion (and my friend's final comment on the intelligence of a man who could seriously put forward such an opinion was not worthy of either of us and is quite unprintable) of a long discussion arising out of that common habit of trout, which seem to have had their suspicion aroused by being cast over, of rising once again, when the angler has given them a few minutes' rest—once again, and no more. Surely it is an experience which must have befallen every angler with the dry-fly,

and a disappointment which few will have been so unobservant as not to notice. It is a most exasperating habit for, of course, the fisher thinks, having once or twice sent his invitation, only to be declined without thanks, over the fish's nose, and then having given that fish a minute or two to recover—he thinks, fond man, when he sees the trout, which he feared he had put down, raise its head once more, "Oh, that's all right. He's noticed nothing. He's on the feed again."

But is he? That is the question. And it is a question which seems to be answered in the negative almost as often as in the more agreeable sense, so frequently does it happen that this once-again rise is the last that is seen of the fish. He comes up that once only. What is the meaning of it? Had he been badly frightened he would not, of course, have so showed again at all. But if, after some doubtful suspicions, he had regained his confidence so far as to think all was well and to begin feeding again, then surely the one rise, from which no harm came, would but increase his confidence. A second rise, and a continuance of rising, would seem almost certain, provided there were fly to tempt him to the rise. And yet—he does not rise the second time! Why is it?

I do not know. The more I fish for trout and the longer I study their ways, the more surprisingly I am convinced that their ways are hard to understand and are little understood; but it does seem to me very much as if the fish made this "once-again" rise merely, or chiefly, in order to have a look round and see that all was right. I say "merely or chiefly" because there seems no particular reason why he should not combine the rise to suck in a fly with the rise for the look about, if indeed

the "look about" rise is a possibility at all. That, of course, is the hypothesis which the angler of any ordinary robust common sense will deride, and in reference to which he will speak of me in terms such as those, wholly unfit for publication, employed by my familiar friend.

Yet, again I would ask, Why not? Wherein lies the impossibility, or even, I make bold to say, the improbability? Surely it is a very natural thing to do! It is what a man would do, or a bird, or a beast, in like circumstances—why not then a fish? I do not even see the reasonableness of the difficulty which the man of robust common sense makes over accepting the hypothesis. The mechanics of the fish's vision, as explained by Dr Ward, in the water and on the water's surface —which last is equivalent to out of water—are all in favour of it. When a fish is below the water's surface its area of direct vision, as distinguished from what it sees reflected, is limited by a cone which has the fish's eye for its apex and a circumference which contracts more and more the nearer the fish brings its eye to the surface.

How then, if not in the manner that I suggest, can we explain why it is that a trout so often catches sight of us at the moment of making its rise? We all know the quick splash which indicates, as it goes down, that it has seen us, and will spare us the trouble of fishing for it any more. Obviously, when its head comes right out of the water, it can look around, unimpeded, like any other creature with a similar optical arrangement. When a dog in its kennel, or any other animal living in a hole of the ground or of a tree, hears a noise, its first impulse is to put out its head and see what is going on. On my supposition, this is exactly what the

once-again rising fish does. Why should it not? It may be objected that this is not a rise, in the angler's acceptance of the word, at all—not a feeding rise, for fly. That is admitted. If we looked carefully and the light was good, we should perceive, if my idea is right, that the fish did not actually take anything into its mouth when it thus rose, but unless our observation was much more than usually close we should not notice that this rise differed from any other. The fish would break the water's surface: we should at once mentally register that break as a "rise," and think no more about it. It is possible enough, as I have suggested, that the fish might snap a fly at the same moment that it took its look round, in which case its action would have all the aspect of the ordinary feeding rise, even to the most microscopic observation. So we need not quarrel over this.

Really the only surprising feature about the speculation is that it should cause any surprise. Why should not the fish act thus, as every other animal similarly placed would act; and why should it surprise my friend, the angler of the robust common sense, that it should so act? I believe I know the answer. We are accustomed, and rightly enough, to regard the fish as so much the creature of the water, and of no other element, that it seems to us, on first thought, inconceivable that it can voluntarily and for any ordinary purpose of its life, put itself, or any part of itself, out of that, its native, and its only natural, element. Nor perhaps do we quite sufficiently take into account that the fish's direct vision of objects on the bank is scarcely possible, unless it lifts its eye above the surface of the comparatively dense medium in which it lives.

And yet, though the fish is a water-dweller, and though it cannot live long in any other surroundings, it does on certain occasions quit the water altogether, for a moment. When we hook a fish, we know how often it jumps high above the surface in the effort to free itself. We may see it jumping, without that barb in its jaw, in order, as we guess, to shake off leeches and other parasites by which it may be attacked. Again, when trout or salmon are ascending a fall, they will leap high in air to evade the force of the cascading water. We are not, therefore, supposing a fish to be doing something quite alien to its nature if we imagine it to put its head up in order to have a better view of its surroundings. For it really has the habit, on special occasions, of hoisting, not its head only, as it does indeed whenever it takes a floating fly, but its whole body high into the air.

And now, if we are able to accept this theory —which, in spite of all this most beautiful argument I still do not expect to appeal to my common-sensical robust friend—here is a practical lesson for the angler attached to it. If the fish really does thus come up to look, it is evident that it behoves the fisherman, who wishes to be unobserved, to keep himself as invisible and, above all, as motionless as possible at the precise moment of the trout's scouting inspection. Unfortunately, we never know when this moment will be: he gives no warning. But usually it happens within a very few moments of his ceasing to feed steadily. If he is not wholly scared away from his dinner we may expect him not to keep us waiting very long. I would suggest then to the angler, in the event of the fish for which he is casting thus ceasing its taking of natural flies, that he will do wisely to go

a few paces backwards, to take advantage of any kindly concealment of sedges or other herbage, and, so hidden, to "bide a wee." Then, having bided until the first "look-out" rise, so to call it, has happened, still to be patient and let the fish have yet another succulent insect or two to restore its confidence, and then, and not till then, to proffer it his barbed *simulacrum*.

But I know I shall be laughed at, by all those of any "robust common sense," for this suggestion. If I were not far too old and wicked to mind being laughed at I would not make it.

Chapter XVIII

BY AID OF VOLE AND DABCHICK

I will venture on another maxim now, and that is that the moment at which a fish is the least keenly watchful is the moment at which it is most likely to mistake your artificial thing of fur and feather for the natural insect.

A truism, is it not ; and for its usefulness dependent on your own knowledge of that least watchful moment ? And is that knowledge possible ?

I think so ; but it does not come by study. The occasion for its use in practice comes only by casual opportunity. It is your part then to be ready to take the opportunity when it comes.

And it comes in this way, as I think. Now and then, as you crouch or lie casting, or preparing so to cast, for a rising fish, semi-camouflaged by the high herbage from the creatures of the stream, there will " bob up serenely," and with a suddenness that is almost alarming, a dabchick out of the water's depths. Pursuing its lawful occasions below the surface it had not seen you ; now it may see you or may not ; but whether it does or not it is likely quickly to dive again on its under-water quest. It has left a commotion on the surface, a current, a disturbance.

Or it may be a vole that has come swimming

across and whisked down with a splash as he caught sight of you. Either of these, and many another happening, may break the silvern monotone of the water. And the fish continues rising unperturbed.

He is more than unperturbed, as I imagine—so at least agreeable experience has now and again suggested ; for it seems to me that I have more often had luck with a rising fish just after some such little troubling of the water than at any other time. I conjecture the reason to be that the fish has been distracted from any too critical an inspection of the passing fly by these other small disturbances, and is ready to accept, without too careful a scrutiny, the next at all fly-like object that comes into its view.

That, I take to be one part of the reason ; and for another, there is, of course, that little current or wave which the dabchick or the vole has caused. Such break of the too perfect mirror is all in favour of the trout's suffering an optical delusion. Therefore, I say, be on the lookout, and take what fortune the gods give you, at a moment of good omen such as this. Show your fly deftly to the fish, as soon as possible after the passing of grebe or water-vole, and, as that pleasant old French book says, " You shall see great marvels."

Such little breaking of the surface as this the fish will not mind. It is well used to most of the commotions caused by its fellow-people of the river. But now and again it has to be confessed those fellow-people act so outrageously as altogether to upset a trout's nervous poise, and to put it off the feed completely.

Just opposite a big tussock I had marked down a rising fish. I had made my way, now, opposite

the spot, and was stealing, serpent-like, over the grass with rod held low, that the eyes of the fish might not catch the glint of the sun from it. Already I was almost within casting range of where I reckoned the trout to be, and raised my head cautiously to peer through the fringe of rushes along the water's side. At first my eyes sought the placid-flowing surface of the stream, but before I had seen that wished-for break in the surface and the widening circles that would mark the rising fish, they were arrested by a movement much nearer them, only just on the farther side of that big tussock which I had chosen at once as a guide and a stalking-horse.

The movement, as I perceived in an instant when I had adjusted my focus to the right range for observing it, was of a moorhen busy in her nest on the part of the tussock which leaned over towards the stream. She was busy, but the exact nature of her business I was not, for a moment, able to realise. As soon as I did so, it engrossed me with such a preoccupation of interest that I even forgot the rising trout. The bird was standing on the edge of the nest, so that I could see, beneath her body, that the eggs had just arrived at the critical stage of chipping. A tiny moorhen was coming from one, while the shell fell this way and that, in fragments, to let it emerge ; from another, no more than a tiny beak appeared as yet. Some eggs—the moorhen is a prolific mother—were still unbroken, and there were in evidence all the intermediate stages between the complete appearance of the young bird and the first peck through of a callow beak. What the mother of them all was so busy about was giving them assistance in this process.

So far the comedy was interesting, but it was hardly worth narrating ; now, however, began a development of the drama which really was noteworthy. We have often seen the little moorhens cruising about a pond or lake in convoy of their mother, and may have wondered at their venturing to make the move from the nest while they were so tiny. The operation with which this particular mother moorhen now began to occupy herself indicates that it is not altogether of their own venturesomeness that the young ones take to the water at a tender age.

With an energy which did not seem altogether tender she inserted her bill behind the youngster that was perfectly free of the shelly covering, and, giving him a hoist, tumbled him right out of the nest into the river. Another quickly followed, helped out in the same ungentle manner, and soon, working now at aiding to chip away the shell from one that was struggling out, and now at hoisting another out of the nest, she had all her family, except four eggs not yet broken, in the river. Then, giving a last look at those remaining, as if wondering whether they were hopeless cases or merely rather late in their development, she herself flopped into the water after her bravely swimming little brood, and took command of them as moorhen mothers do.

But in the meantime that trout, which was making those seductive rings on the placid surface of the chalk stream, has been quite put off his appetite. He is far too shy and sophisticated a fish to go on with his breakfast at his ease while his dining-room is being pelted with a whole nestful of young moorchicks. I must wend my way further and seek another rising fish.

Thus it is not all the antics of the feathered and furred things of the river that will help the angler to catch those that wear fins. They can set up too much of a commotion. But he should be prepared to take all advantage of their aid when it is given him.

Chapter XIX

THE ARTIFICIAL RISE

I have written both of our lost, yet in some measure unaccountably returning, May-fly, and also of the grannom, which certainly, until last year, we seemed to have regained. Last year I am told that very few were seen, and no mother grannom working their way down, with their egg-bags, into the water ; so that it is feared that no next year's stock at all has been provided.

But it was arctic weather at the latter end of April, which is the grannom's normal season, in 1924. The negative—such an absolute negative as " no grannom "—is hard to prove. I am still in hopes that they will better expectation this year—for which, as a late Prime Minister has it, we must " wait and see."

I wish to say a word about the value of the grannom, and of the ease of its transportation and planting in a water where it has not been ; because it is a fly which many fishers seem to know nothing about—nothing about its way of life nor its value in a trout stream.

The reason why it is such a good insect for the angler is that it comes up early—in April, as I indicated. It is a large fly, so that it brings up the good fish and sets them surface feeding earlier than they will come up to take the olives, or any of those " small deer." And then it has a pleasant

way of going on rising, patchily, all the day through. If it be a day of alternate patches of cloud and sunshine, as very often happens in April, then each sunny patch is likely to bring up a little colony of grannom. They are among the few flies which really do seem to like the sun, for rising.

So that is one merit. Then, as to the ease of planting them in—they, that is to say the mothers of their kind, have the way of crawling down into the water, with a little green bag of eggs packed behind them, and sticking this on reeds or posts or any like support that they find under the surface. You may come out with your waders covered by them, if you go a-fishing when they are at this nursery work. And they seem very appreciative of an artistic pattern and careful arrangement in so sticking their eggs. If there is a gap left anywhere in a mass of eggs they will come back and fill it.

See, then, what a far better chance this gives of collecting the eggs, than there is with eggs dropped on the surface and sinking into the mud. It is almost a hopeless task to import May-fly or olives ; but where the grannom abound, all that is needful is to go into the water, pluck out the reeds, or whatever there be that is pluckable, on which the eggs have been laid, set them into big cans in a motor by the river's side and drive off with them to the place where you want to make a colony. There implant the reeds in the river, with some wire netting round, if you please, to keep them safe from fish and water-birds and rats, and then, again, next season " you shall see great marvels."

That is to say that you may reasonably hope to see a few grannom. I would not say more than a few just the first year. But you may import some more the next, and so on until you have a self-

supporting colony able to give you very good sport and to bring up very good trout early in the year. Believe me, for I have seen it done on our Test. And he is a great and good fly, the grannom ; not like the May-fly, whom most of us would rather be without, because he is a spoiler of the all-the-season-through fishing, and the very angling with him—gigantic insect !—is not the finest of fine arts.

And let no one say that there is anything "unsportsmanlike" in thus interfering with the natural resources of a river—in thus improving the angling. I write this, because it is unbelievable what things of the kind are said. Now what, for example, are we to think of the following device, practised by an ingenious angler ? I have heard it severely criticised as "not quite cricket." Nonsense, I call such criticism. But judge for yourself.

Away down on Black Lake, one of the lowest beats of our water, and that on which a few sparse May-fly appeared even in the very leanest years for that insect, an angler "spotted" a trout, and a good one, lying in the mouth of a carrier where it entered the main river. It was the May-fly season, but the fish was not feeding ; he was in the depths, wagging his tail gently to keep himself in position against the current. There was none of the great flies coming down to him. They were not on the water, but they were on the meadows, in fair abundance, by its side. They had come up from the river, had fluttered forth to the banks, and were there waiting until the spirit moved them, or the weather favoured them, to rise up in their amorous dance.

Therefore this ingenious angler, having no immediate prospect of successful angling, amused himself by going fly-catching in the meadows.

He captured a dozen or so of the May-fly, resting among the grass, and proceeded to place them on the stream, at convenient intervals of five or six feet apart, some forty yards above his friend the trout. To the invitation of the first one or two that floated over him the fish was unresponsive, indifferent. The fourth he rose at, and inspected ; the fifth he gulped down, and found to his liking. His appetite was roused now. Of the succeeding dozen he missed scarcely one. Then it was that the angler began to deem the moment ripe for ringing up the curtain on the final act. He stole down below the fish, and, being a practised hand, at the very first cast put the fly deftly over the fish's nose. He rose, was firmly hooked, " and so the fight began."

Of the further progress of the drama, as narrated by its hero, there is no need to tell. It followed the classic lines. There was the magnificent rush of the fish, the subtle and discreet hint of the immense skill of the angler in guiding him betwixt the Scylla and Charybdis of weed beds and other perils, the final bringing of him to the net and estimate of his beauties and his ounces, which never grew less with the retelling of the tale. All this came in order. What was peculiar and interesting in the story was the device by which the fish was induced to think that a fine rise of May-fly was in process, and that it was worth his while to be on the surface of the water, looking out.

And, why not ?

" The whole art of angling," the epigrammatist has written, " is comprised in making a fool of the fish." This may be admitted, without prejudice to the equally obvious truth that a good deal of the practice of angling consists in the fooling by

the fish of the angler. It is a hazard which you invite and dare as soon as ever you set forth on the adventure of matching your wits together. But why my friend of the Test should be criticised for this successful matching of his wits against that good fish in the mouth of the carrier is more than I can conceive. It is much of a piece with the criticism—very foolish, as I deem it—which would take objection to the introduction of the invaluable grannom.

The Grosvenor Water (looking down).

Chapter XX

THE UP-STREAM FLIGHT

Certainly it does seem as if the May-fly, after some years of very nearly total disappearance, has re-established itself on those stretches of the Middle Test which are in the occupation of the Houghton Club. Just as certainly, it is a reappearance which is not entirely welcome.

Naturally the angler takes all advantage while he may of the rise of this great fly, for it is the occasion which tempts to the surface and to fly-feeding larger fish of the trout kind than will be so tempted at any other time. As a rule, as the trout grows bigger he feeds more and more on the shrimps and molluscs, the minnows, and even the babies of his own species, and does not trouble himself to come to the top of the water for the small mouthfuls that he may find floating there. But if the May-fly rise thus gives the fisherman his chance of the year, it also means that it exhausts for a while his chances with the artificial fly. After the fish have been at their May-fly feast for a week, let us say—giving it fairly full measure in that estimate—they are not eager for any diet of flies for several weeks to come. Perhaps they are not very eager for food in any form ; because that is rather the way with fish—they put no faith in the copy-book maxim of feeding little and often. Their idea is the more primitive one of a big gorge while

the material for it is there ready to their jaws, and then a holiday to give their digestive organs a chance with it. On that account the May-fly is not an unmixed blessing for the angler on the rivers where it occurs, for although it entices up from their depths and lairs, and induces to feed on the surface where they will encounter his flies, these monsters which are not surface-feeders in a general way, still it has the effect of giving the fisher a very idle time after the May-fly rise, whereas, but for that great but brief business, fish of a moderate size might have been rising to his flies all the while.

It is, further, a curious thing that when you get a large number of May-fly you do not seem to get as many of the smaller flies—the olives and all the rest of them. And this has led to speculation whether the May-fly larvæ attack and eat the larvæ of some of these smaller species. That does not seem to be at all their way, however, according to the testimony of Lunn, who has a special talent for making friends with every kind of aquatic insect and studying them in all their phases. He studies them, as I have already noted, in his aquaria, both by day and by night ; and his plan is, since the night is the time of the fiercest activity of many of them, to intrude upon them with an electric torch. Flashing it on them of a sudden, he surprises them in whatever enterprise they happen to be engaged on. And nearly always it is found to be some terrible deed of blood, for most of these larvæ are voracious and carnivorous, but the May-fly larvæ, exceptionally, he has never caught at any more dreadful deed than nibbling at the roots of the water-plants. Therefore, he judges them guiltless. But the May-fly larva itself is often preyed on by another

larva, that of a sedge-fly, known to the angler as the silver-sedge. This will attack the bigger May-fly larva ferociously and make a meal of it.

At first thought it seems singular that a river, or a particular stretch of it, should lose a certain species of fly, after being thickly peopled with it for years beyond memory ; but if the life-story of the fly be recalled, it is not difficult to imagine how this might be. They ascend for their bridal dance, and when it is done it is essential that they should get back to the river again, for it is a condition to the success of their domestic business that the egg should be laid in the water. Some, such as the May-fly, lay on the surface, and the egg sinks to the bottom, there to develop into larva and go through the further processes. The mothers of some species crawl down the weed to lay their eggs, and so they have, perhaps, a better chance. Some drop their eggs from the air. But, whatever their habit, it is apparent that if a strong cross-wind prevails at the time of their aerial rise they will be carried far from the river, since they have little wing-power, and will not find themselves on the water at all when they sink down again. Thus the ultimate purpose of individual life—to prolong the life of the species—is defeated.

A great deal of potential fly life is no doubt destroyed, too, by a lack of discrimination in weed-cutting, but the wind is probably the strongest agent of destruction, acting as described ; and for this reason it is not quite a wise move, in order to make the angler's throwing easy for him, to cut down all the trees beside the river, for trees may give a useful shelter for the fly when the wind blows.

The poet, and the person who wishes to make

appeal to the tender feelings, find a pretty subject ready to their hands in these delicate insects spreading their wings for a bridal flight of an hour or two. It is a touching emblem of the brevity of life. The poet forgets, however, while it serves his purpose, and that of his readers, perfectly, that this life of a day has been prefaced by a term of keen, voracious, often carnivorous life perhaps enduring for a year or two. It is thought that the May-fly passes three years in its growth from the egg to the perfect insect. Of many kinds it is known that they complete the whole cycle in a single year. But however the poet may stir our pity for these poor things of a day, the naturalist may comfort us with the story, often filled with fierce drama, of their life in earlier phases. They bear witness to Nature's prodigal plenty, the lavishness of her life.

There is another aspect of the scene—the relentlessness of Nature, the prodigality of death. There is death below the surface, as the nymphs in the semi-final metamorphosis rise up through the water, entangled in their rending garb like a man who cannot free the arms of his coat as he hustles for his train. There is death in the air above, as the flies in their ultimate wedding garment gracefully soar in the light breeze. Gleaming shapes of death in the water dash at the insects as they struggle up from the river's floor ; the shark-like jaws of the big trout snap on them, while the whole face of the river is broken by the rush of the greedy fish. Dark shapes of death drive furiously through the amorous dancers—swallows, martins, swifts, with sickle-like wings. On the outskirts of the dance hover the chaffinches, the sedge birds, and all kinds of murderers, and yet again, in the last phase,

when the flies fall back in their death-swoon upon the water, a speedier death is given many of them by the still unsatisfied greed of the expectant trout. The bridal dance, with its executioner's attendant, is typical, in vividly concentrated form, of that unceasing play of birth and death of which Nature is the never-resting producer on the stage of the world.

And yet, in the midst of all this death, I doubt whether we have to accuse Nature of cruelty, of that "redness of tooth and claw" with which we often hear the Great Mother of all censoriously charged. That is a reflection and a consolation which was borne home to me very vividly on a day when there was no great evening rise—nothing of the kind that fills the angler's heart with ecstasy and leads him to babble about the "May-fly carnival" and the rest of it. But here and there, in the still air baked through and yet thrilling with the heat of a summer's day, an occasional big spinner of one or the other greater olives danced up over the water, all the more conspicuous because it was not one of a large number. Insect-eating birds, chiefly swallows and sand-martins, were hawking over the river's surface, and now and again, as I watched a spinner weaving its mazy tracks, it would make a sudden vanishing, and be gone. What had happened was that one of these hirundinæ, with immensely open gape, had come along at something like thrice express speed and had gone again so quickly that one hardly realised its passing; yet, in that passing, its gape had swallowed, wholly and instantly, that mazy spinner.

This was the phenomenon which caught and held the eye. Directly you begin to turn any thought upon it the mental impression that it

gives is one of astonishment at the amazingly swift and sudden and unanticipated termination of a vivid life—life just at the moment when it was about, as it seemed, to realise the full purpose for which all the previous days and weeks, perhaps even months and years, of its larval, pupal, and nymphal stages had been spent, life about to achieve the ultimate end of reproducing further life of its kind. All that was engulfed quicker than thought in the maw of the speeding bird.

It was a day or two later in the season than this, and a still warm evening, that I was passing up Cooper's Meadow with Goddard and we saw what struck me as a most amazing spectacle, and which astonished even him, to whom a life-time spent by the river has left few riverside astonishments. As we looked across the river our view was almost obscured, so that we saw things on the farther side as though we were gazing at them through a thick veil, by an immense multitude of aquatic fly of many, or of several, different species and sizes. I marvelled first at their amazing multitudes. They were in number beyond any possible computation or even guess.

And then I began to find another cause for my wonder. They were all, every one of this infinite company, without exception, going the one way. All were heading up-stream, all flying up against the direction of the current with a steady, swift flight, hard as their wings would carry them, as if of a set intention, and as if one and all had an important engagement at some point away up the river which it would not at all do for them to miss. For half an hour or so, while the sun which was sinking towards the horizon went down out of their world, the fly pursued their deliberate, business-

like course. There were spinners of all the olives, sedges, and others which we were hard put to to place. And then the question which we began to ask ourselves—which was forced most irresistibly on our attention—was "Why?" "Why do the insects, in their legions, pursue this undeviating up-stream course?"

For a moment, before attempting to reply to this question, I will ask you to note a fact in natural history which has a certain bearing on it, and may serve as a signal-post in the direction of the answer. The larvæ of all those flies which are truly called aquatic pass their life in the water, some of them in the stagnant pools and others in the flowing rivers. It is a notable thing, and one of significance in the present inquiry, that whereas some of the pool-dwelling larvæ are free swimmers, or hang in suspense, like the larvæ of the gnats, from the surface film of the water, there are none of a like free-swimming habit among the dwellers in the streams. They grub about among the weeds, or the gravel, or the mud, some in caddis, or cases, made of stones, or vegetable material, or mud coagulated with web spun from their own glands; some are carnivorous, some vegetarian, and there are those to whom nothing edible comes amiss. But, various as are their respective ways of life, they all have this in common, that they are quiet, home-keeping folk, and do not continually range through the waters at large.

See what would happen to them if they did. They have considerable power of movement in the water, and are able swimmers; but their own locomotion would be only intermittent, whereas there would be impinging upon them all the while the constant force of the current, taking them

down-stream ; and the conclusion of the matter must be that they would be forced further and further down towards the mouth of their natal rivers, until they came to the great sea itself, or at all events into the brackish water which, before they reached the actual ocean, would most likely prove fatal to them, for comparatively few of the denizens of fresh water are able to live their lives in the salt.

That is what would infallibly happen to the larvæ of the rivers if they were free swimmers, or haunters of the surface. And something of the same sort, even so, would happen to their kind in the course of ages, were it not for that wonderful and necessary instinct which animates the flies, into which they develop, to steer an up-river course in the final flight of their life. Although it is true that these larvæ are a stay-at-home folk, on the whole, still they have to make their excursions through the water at least once or twice in their existence. The parent insects differ much, as we have seen, in the care or carelessness with which they deposit their eggs. Some crawl down the stems of rushes, the posts of bridges, or the like conduits from the upper air to the lower strata of the stream, and there lay their eggs, sometimes with the finest attention to the symmetry of the pattern in which they are arranged. But a large number of the flies lay their eggs on the surface, and some few actually drop them from a height. Eggs thus deposited or dropped have greater specific gravity than water. They sink to the bottom and come to a mooring, but in that process of sinking it is manifest that they must be carried, several feet at the least, down-stream. That may seem a small matter, but the several feet of descent

continued yearly through countless ages could have but one possible dénouement—an exodus of their kind from the river into the deadly brine of the sea.

Moreover, as the developing nymph, when full growth has been attained, makes its way up through the water to seek the air, where it may spread its new-found wings—in this ascension, hardly less than in the first sinking of the egg, it is submissive to the current's unresting influence. Again it is swept a few feet or yards further downwards, again it is moving towards the fatal salt.

We begin now—do we not ?—to see the answer to the eternal question " Why ? " in one at least of its senses. It is necessary that the direction of the flight of the winged insects should be up-stream, in order to compensate for this continual, perhaps very gradual but still ever persistent, trend of the eggs and nymphs down-stream. When the great floods come, and much of the gravelly floor and of the weedy carpet of the river is forcibly swept out, it is always down-stream that it is shifted. Every change of place within the waters has the same tendency, towards the sea and the salt. This up-stream flight of the flies is the one and sufficient counter-agent to keep all, generally, in their right place in the stream. It is evident, indeed, that this final development into winged insects, which might otherwise seem a work of supererogation on Nature's part, is really no more than is strictly needful as a means for carrying up-stream the eggs which are to be the starting-point of a new generation. That, then, no doubt, was the business which the very determined flight of the flies that Goddard and I noticed was undertaking.

And having resolved one aspect of the " Why ? " we may now turn to another, and for my own part

I can dismiss it in very few words, because I am fairly driven to admit that it is quite beyond solution by my poor human wit. How is it communicated to the flies that it is essential for the continuance of their kind that they should go thus persistently up-stream and in no other line? All I can say is that I do not know. It is an inexplicable instinct. Is it conceivable that this too, like so many others, has been acquired by that drastic principle, the survival of the fittest? It is scarcely possible to contemplate the length of time that must have passed and the infinite multitude of the creatures that must have perished before such a race habit could be established in the survivors. Yet it may be thus. But if so, how, we may ask, is the insect guided—to what sense is the appeal made which informs it that this way is up, that other down, the stream? Is it that the appeal is to sight, and that the ripple of the water seen descending towards it starts instinctively the impulse to that amazing up-stream flight? We cannot say. But amazing, after our most intelligent guesses, it ever must remain, amazing both by reason of the myriads that take part in it and of the inscrutable way in which the impulse to it is given.

Chapter XXI

THE FISHERMAN'S TEMPER

I will now present you with one final maxim—for which finality, at least, you will give thanks, for who more boringly dry-as-dust than he who gives us maxims for our better conduct?—and, though final, it is one that you will do well to take to mind at the beginning of every angling day—"that it is better to call the roll, before starting, of the important paraphernalia, and make sure that all can answer *adsum*, than to discover only when you are miles away from home that one of the absolute essentials has been left behind."

I remember an old salmon fisher, who had fished the glorious Welsh Wye nearly all the years of his life, telling me that he had only known one really perfect day for salmon angling on that river, and that was the day on which he only discovered, just as the car which had brought him out went out of sight, on its way home, round the turn of the Builth Road, that he had left his reel in it.

If I knew words that could express that situation I would use them; but I do not.

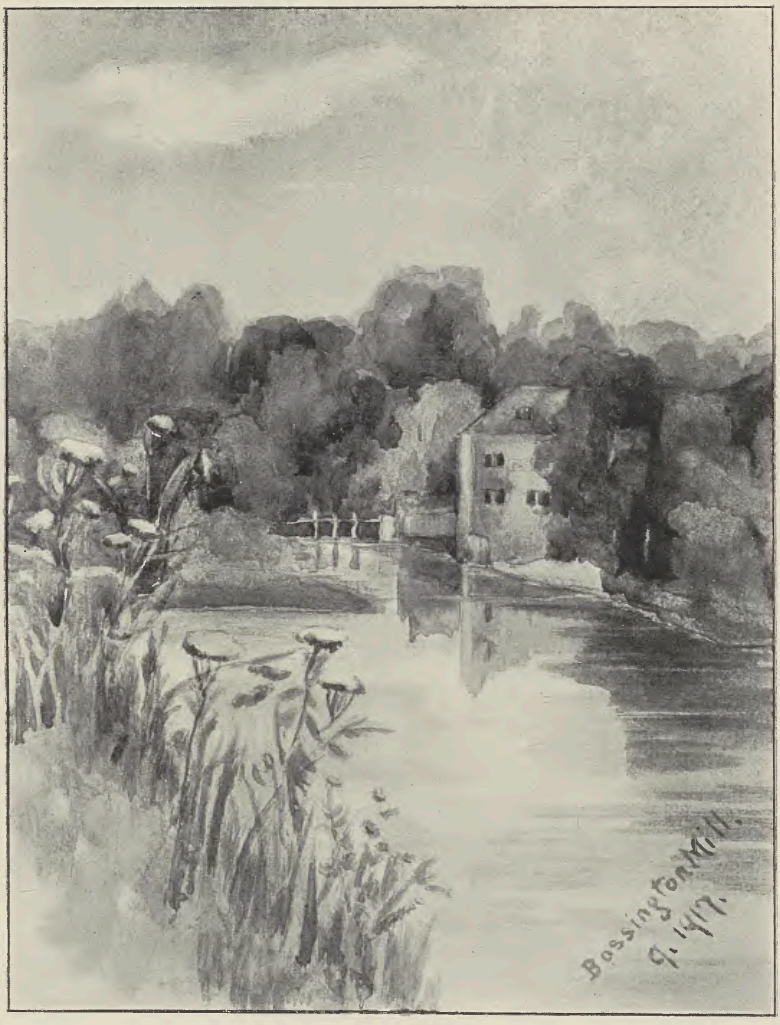
In the muzzle-loading days of old, it may be remembered, by those of us whose years are sufficiently discreet, that when we went a-shooting it was recommended to us by the wisdom of our fathers that we should do the "roll-call," as they phrased it—that is to say, should tell over, whether

aloud or mentally, the various articles of equipment which the much complicated business of loading a gun required at that date, in order to be sure that we had them all about us.

That roll-call of things apt to be forgotten is no longer demanded by the occasion of going forth to shoot, but science has not yet succeeded in reducing to simplicity the paraphernalia of the angler who would go forth fully equipped for the allurement of the chalk-stream trout.

Let the fisherman then note, on the first page of his memorandum book, if he carry one with him, the following items: the rod, the reel (we assume this to carry the line), the casts—both dry and in the damping box—the flies (in these latter days they will most probably be tied on eyed hooks), the paraffin bottle, for the better flotation of the flies and allurement of the fish, the grease, for waterproofing the line, the landing net, the balance, for weighing the fish as caught, the basket in which to carry them, the scissors, the "priest" for inflicting the last ceremonies, the electric torch to aid in tying on the fly when it grows dark, the waders, with stockings and brogues (unless the shoes or boots are attached), and lastly, highly essential to the angler's peace and plenty, even if not absolutely necessary to his sport, the luncheon, the liquid, the tobacco, and the lights.

The roll is a fairly formidable one. Call it again, in brief, thus: the rod, the reel, the casts, the flies, the oil, the grease, the net, the balance, the basket, the scissors, the "priest," the torch, the waders, the luncheon, the tobacco. Probably some quite indispensable article in the outfit has been omitted from this category, but,



Bossington Mill.

even so, it goes to fifteen headings. Better call the roll, then, to make sure. It is somewhat of a bore to go fifteen miles from home and just as the motor is vanishing round the far corner of the hill, not to return for you till nightfall, to find, like my old friend on the Wye, that you are without a reel. It has happened, before now, no doubt, to other good men, but I believe that they have found it very difficult to be good just at that moment.

And, of course, the above is a list that is elastic. It is capable of no little extension, even if compression to a lesser length is not easy, for most men have their own individual and personal angling wants, over and above those which may be arithmetically regarded as the "greatest common measure" of the angling needs of all men. Thus one man will like to sit on a little campstool to await the rise of the fly or of the fish. Another may affect the use of binoculars to look out for a rise far down the river. Or he may amuse himself with a magnifying lens for the inspection of the aquatic insect life, in order to identify the exact shade and size and form of the artificial lure which it shall behove him to use as the most close imitation of the fly in the water. And many a man will like to carry, or to have carried for him by his long-suffering attendant, a spare rod rigged up with a stout cast, and a "Caperer" at the end of it for day work, or a sedge-fly for the dusk. I speak here of the caperer as it is called on the Middle Test.

And now, most important of all, amongst the things that might very well be put down on this long and infinitely expansive list, as very apt to be left at home, or forgotten, is the fisherman's temper. It is the habit of the fisherman to complain volubly

and bitterly of the moods and caprices of the fish, which on one day will "bite like dogs," and on the next, for no obvious reason, have entirely repented of their mordant humour. But does not the fisherman find, if he will but examine his own soul with candid care, that he also has his variable humours, and that on certain days the trivial troubles such as the catching of the fly in the spear-grass, and the blow back of the cast at the end of the throw, when there is a brisk breeze down the river, arouse him to an exasperation quite out of proportion with the cause? It does not seem to be certainly known whether that celebrated Dr Rutty, whose diary gave such delight to the even more highly celebrated Dr Johnson, was or was not an angler, but some of the entries in his priceless journal might well stand as a fisherman's record.

The twenty-ninth day of the ninth month of the year 1753 we find entered as "a dull, cross, cholerick day." Towards the end of the first month of 1757 we find the diarist recording that he had been "a little swinish at dinner and repast," and, whether or no as a consequence of this pig-like behaviour, a day or two later we read him noting that he was "dogged on provocation." Early in the second month he is self-confessed as "very dogged or snappish," and in the middle of that month he notes that he was "snappish on fasting."

His case appears hard, for if the effect of "swinishness" is to make him "dogged," and of fasting to produce "snappishness," it is evident that the exact medium must be difficult to strike. Again, we find him one day entering that he "scolded too vehemently"; on the next is the laconic entry, "dogged again"; and a little later he was "mechanically and sinfully dogged." And

"dogged" is not a desirable mood for the angler when he goes forth on that most temper-trying of all pursuits, the angling for the shy trout of the chalk streams where the water is too deep for wading and the throw has to be made over the sedge-grass and the wild flowers growing head high.

On another and a better day he may endure all such discomforts with a serenity of soul which is altogether admirable, and no doubt his varying mood is much affected by such approach to the extremes of "swinishness" or of "fasting," as his habits admit. But in all good earnest, so powerful is the force of self-suggestion that it is not altogether without value to place this item, the temper, among the list of things apt to be forgotten, by way of daily reminder of its importance towards the successful catching of fish.

The river, especially if it be so beautiful and serene as our beloved Test, ought, of course, to ensure to the most harassed of men the quiet of his soul, and the craft of angling has ever of old been honoured as conducive to the spirit's peace.

In an ancient book of sport, under the head of "Fishing," it is written: "It will not be necessary to trouble the *Reader* with long *Encomiums* on the Delightful *Art of Fishing*, but only repeat the words of a Worthy and Ingenious *Gentleman* that was a great proficient herein, who often used to say that after his Study it was a rest to his Mind, a chearer of his Spirits, a calmer of unquiet thoughts, a Diverter of Melancholy, a procurer of Contentedness and Patience, and a Moderator of Passions."

It is possible that we may think this "Worthy and Ingenious Gentleman" a trifle prosy, if it is a fact, as this recorder has it, that he "often used to say" such a portentous sentence as this. We will

do him what is probably only the justice of supposing that he has been a little misrepresented, and assume that, as he was a lover of such a gentle recreation as angling, he was a good man and good company. This act of justice need not debar us from a little criticism of the various effects which he is thus reported to have ascribed to the innocent pursuit of angling, and it is criticism that seems especially provoked by the very singular statement that he found in it "Contentedness and Patience" and "Moderation of Passions."

That ought to be the gracious influence of all the beautiful surroundings. But as for speaking of the pursuit itself as "a procurer of Contentedness and Patience," we can hardly suppose him who wrote it to be regarding the great craft of angling from the high point of view whence we think right to look upon it. It is seriously to be surmised that he was considering it as an affair of a seat in a punt on a placid river, maybe even a stagnant pond, with a rod in one hand, a pot of beer in the other, and the eye fixed in a dreamy coma on a float which rarely bobbed. In this condition, not very readily to be distinguished from that Nirvana which is the state of supreme blessedness as conceived by pious followers of Buddha, contentedness and patience possibly are to be found, passions may be moderated, the mind may be rested, even melancholy be diverted, but exactly how it is to be truly designated a "chearer" of the spirits remains still a little difficult of understanding, and we may begin to speculate whether all these admirable results are to be ascribed more justly to the rod which is wielded by the one hand, or the pewter which graces the other.

Is there, as a matter of sober fact, a business

or a pastime of common human pursuit which makes so severe a demand on patience and self-control as that of angling in its highest and most delicate form—with the dry-fly, for the chalk-stream trout? I do not think so. I do not think that we have even to except golf, in giving this form of angling first place as a temper-tryer. The occasions for exasperation are so very many. There are the fish which will not rise; there are the fish which will rise, with a freedom that in itself is a deliberate form of insult, to the natural fly but decline to pay the most distant respect to the lure which is offered them by the angler in the fond fancy that it is identical with and indistinguishable from its original in Nature; there are the fish which will rise to the artificial, but again and again evade the hook concealed by it; there are the fish which get themselves hooked, but, by some diabolical device or other, succeed in freeing themselves from its engagement before it has led them to that dénouement in which the angler would make closer acquaintance with them, the landing net.

These may be accepted, perhaps, as a few of the main headings under which may be ranged the exasperations more directly to be ascribed to the fish themselves. But indirectly that craft of their capture, which our old scribe credits with such good influence as a soother of temper, contains infinite occasions for irritation besides. There is the wind, which is apt to double back the cast on itself just at the moment that it seems to be going out most perfectly to cover the fish. At the next cast, to which the angler has applied a little extra energy in order to overcome this evil action of the winds of heaven, those capricious elements for a passing moment entirely change their mood. They

die away entirely for an instant ; and in that instant the cast, urged forward with a strength that the gentler breeze renders quite unnecessary, comes on the water like a slashing whipcord, and the scared fish flees to a place of less alarms.

The banks of the stream, moreover, are not, commonly, as of a river flowing through a featureless plain. Usually they are encumbered by trees and bushes, though our old friends, the " blowers," have felled all the trees along the Middle Test. Even if there be no trees of magnitude, there are sure to be the sword-grass, the sedges, the reeds, the rushes, the thousand-and-one wild flora which enhance, and almost make, the beauty and the delight of the river and of the water meadows. They make for beauty and delight, but they make for bitter exasperation too. Just as the angler has his line flicked out to the right length and is giving an instant's poise and pause, whereby to get a perfect accuracy, combined with beautiful delicacy, of length and direction, in that single moment the end of the cast has fallen a trifle low, it has engaged itself in a light flirtation with one or other of these lovely floral creatures by which you are surrounded ; the throw is thwarted, and all the mental and muscular effort that has gone to its adjustment is so much waste and " scrapped " material ; and, worse than that, the tenuous gut is so spun about the many-spiked weed that goodness alone knows after what nerve-racking expenditure of patient unravelling you may set it free.

Then the whole process of letting out a measured line has to be recommenced from the first start, and again it is no merely human intelligence that can tell you how often the misadventure may be repeated before all obstacles are overcome

and you can finally send forth that small confection of iron and feather which is designed to deceive the fish. If, after such a series of calamities, it can be despatched on its treacherous mission with anything like the equanimity and the deftness that promised to guide the first throw of all, then, indeed, the craft of the angler has been pursued with the result of teaching him a control of his original sinful temper which must surely be the admiration of the very angels in heaven.

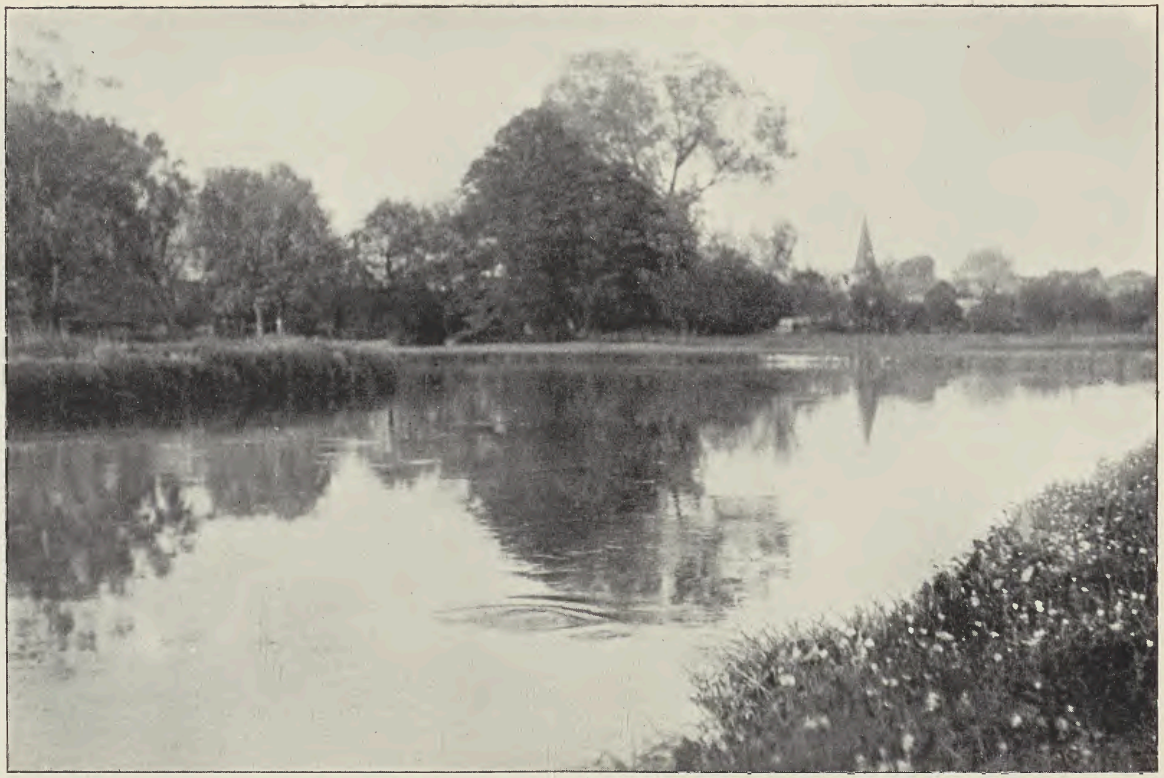
So far, and in this manner, it may indeed be esteemed, as our old commentator makes claim for it, a moderator of passions, and all the rest of it, but it scarcely achieves that good end by the gentle means which his encomium seems to promise. Thus understood, it appears that it has to take its place among the various blessed uses of adversity. It may be claimed that the man who is able to keep the temper serene in the midst of annoyances so many and so diverse is equipped with a noble fortitude which elevates him above all possibility of trouble of soul arising from any terrestrial disturbance whatsoever. He has gained the great reward. But as for the trials through which he has perforce passed to its attainment, they are beyond telling, though some small suggestion of them may be gathered from the hints above.

Chapter XXII

"SHERINGHAM'S EVENING"

Even though the great days of the grannom and of the May-fly are long past, still all through the summer weeks fish will rise on the Middle Test, occasionally in the daytime and more frequently in the evening. The bags are not so heavy, but I am not at all sure that for pure delight the angling and the dawdling are not even more delicious.

When July days are hot and still, the angler who is a lover of all the beauty and interest that Nature has to show him may find full pleasure and content in his saunter through the water-meadows, along the banks of the stream flowing clear and placid from the chalk. The wild flowers have grown to an extravagant height and their umbels are bright and beautiful. The spear-grass is of a stature that incommodes his casting most exasperatingly. He has all the delight of watching his fellow-creatures who love the river and the riverside life—the ruddy-furred water-voles daintily slicing the aquatic herbage as an epicure might take his celery, the wagtails busily searching, the dab-chicks instantly diving at his approach, the reed-buntings and warblers choiring and scolding among the sedges, the moorhens uttering strange and strangely various cries and affecting an alarm which cannot be very real, the swifts and divers little people of the swallow tribe scouring the air, and now and



A Blue-Winged Olive Rise.

then catching up an aquatic fly off the very surface of the stream.

All these and a hundred more pleasant incidents relieve the fisherman's leisure; but as for the actual catching of the trout, or even as for the active casting for them, he is likely to find little of that to occupy him. There is often enough some fly, be it only the spent imagines of the olives or the smuts, coming down the water on these summer days, but the fish seldom seem to be in eager appetite for them. Here and there, once in a mile or so perhaps, in some shady place under the bank, a trout may be found rising, and of these rare risers one or two, by very careful fishing, may yet more rarely be caught. But it needs a very stealthy approach, a fly, with no gut passing over the fish's head, pitched just exactly right, and at the very first offer. Even so it is not unlikely that the trout may have caught a glint from the rod, no matter how low it be kept in the horizontal cast, which is the only mode giving any hope of success, and will be off, or, at least, will cease feeding and be supernaturally watchful for future happenings, even if it do not take itself away at the first alarm. On the whole the fisher will not do ill, on such a day as this, if he find himself, towards four or five o'clock, with a brace of good fish to his credit. They are likely to be good, for at this season there is little fear of catching them in any but their best condition. They should be thick and heavy and give fine sport and several thrilling moments before they come home quietly to the net.

But all this while, in this day of little things, its incidents and its disappointments will be pictured to the angler's mind on a background of pleasant anticipation, for always he will be looking forward

with a subconscious satisfaction to the evening rise. That is the glad hour for which, at this high summer-tide of the year, the rest of the day's twenty-four are lived.

It behoves the angler, for the unspoilt enjoyment of these perfect moments, to frame the arrangement of his day so that nothing shall interfere with them. To the man of cities and of sophisticated modern ways, it will appear as a provision of Nature eminently inconvenient that the trout should select for their own principal meal during the day that hour at which it is incumbent on civilised human beings to dine. It is perhaps not the least of the delights of this evening rise that it almost enforces a temporary sloughing off of those rules of civilisation which bid a man bring all things to conform with his sacred dinner-hour, rather than reduce that great function of the day to the relatively humble rank of the movable feasts and alter it into harmony with other needs.

Briefly, he must here conform his dinner-hour to that of the trout ; and since by no persuasion of his may they be induced to change their hour, he must perforce change his own. That leaves him with an option. He may decide to dine heartily at about 6.30 " summer time "—an outrage on modern propriety and a return to mediæval appetite which will be found surprisingly easy provided nothing in the way of five o'clock tea is allowed to spoil it. If he determines upon this course, he will find that a slice of plain cake and a whisky-and-soda may be taken, without fear of insomnia, after a long day in the open air, by way of final nightcap before going to bed.

Or there is another mode by which he may attain the same great object of leaving the evening

hours—from 7.30 until dusk—free for his fishing, and that is by a solid tea, fortified with a brace of boiled eggs, or even a rasher of that satisfying bacon which the village "public" will be able to provide, about five o'clock, and then a supper of cold meat, partaken of with such restraint of a voracious appetite as his self-control may command, when he returns to take his ease at his inn at nightfall. It is not for me to indicate to every angler which of these two alternatives it would be wiser for him to adopt. His decision is likely to be prompted by local circumstances and by the opportunities of finding the one or the other of the meals suggested, and also in part by the promptings of his own appetite and digestion. The great point is that in either event he is a free man, bound by no convention of civilisation or hand of clock, with the whole long summer evening at his disposal, from seven o'clock, let us say, onward.

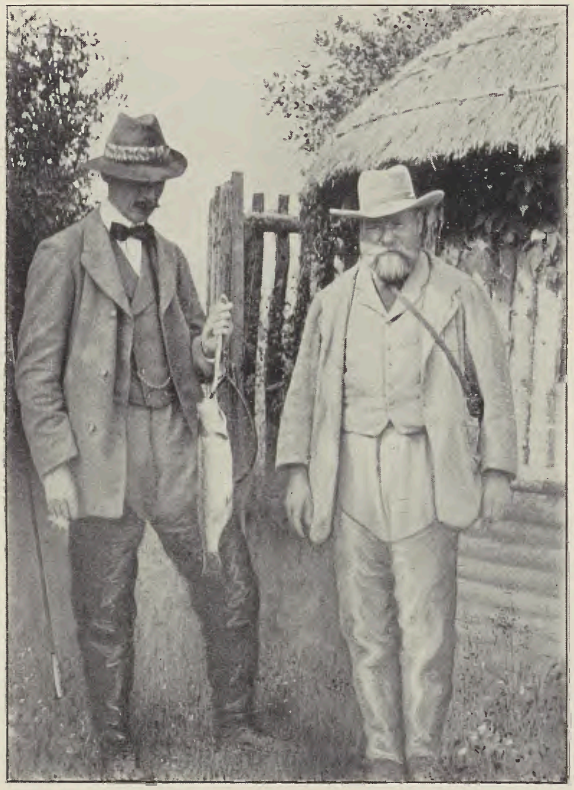
Most delectably has the good genius of the Houghton Club solved this difficulty for us. Upon that "Boot Meadow," adjunct of the "Boot Inn," whither I led you on one of the very first days noted in these veracious fish tales, is pitched a marquee adequate for the dining of a dozen or more. Thither a cooking-stove is taken down, and dinner cooked beneath the hedge. Cold dishes are brought from Stockbridge, nor are cold drinks forgotten, for though we of Houghton fish dry we do not dine dry. All that should be hot is served piping hot and all that should be cold is chilled to the right degree by immersion in the silvern river flowing before the open side of the marquee. All is purely delightful.

This no doubt is the perfect way—Olympian, with a quaffing of nectar and big talk between the

quaffers about what they have done and about the still greater things that they design to do during the evening rise—not at all unlike the big talk of the Olympian gods that Homer sings of.

Thereafter, much at peace with all the world, we take our way leisurely to the riverside, along the lush water-meadows. The birds are very alert in this short hour before the sunset; the reed-buntings and warblers scold at us as we break a way through their fastnesses of sedge and spear-grass, the red-shanks rise from the grass and circle over us with their thin cry; the snipe go "chuck-chucking" away before us and work in great spirals up to heaven, cutting circles upon the sky; the dabchick is feverishly busy covering her eggs with the wet water-weed before she dives off her nest and becomes invisible. All these and many more familiar friends we may see as we stroll towards that bend where we have it in mind to begin—if not our active operations, at least our expectant observations. It is the virtue of selecting a bend for this purpose, that it gives a double outlook, up and also down the river; but we shall, of course, make our point of starting as far down the stream as we conveniently may, for we shall wish to work up against the current, approaching the fish from behind.

It is likely that there will be no definite rise of fly at the first moment of our coming to the river-bank, but all through these summer days there is a little flotsam, an occasional spent fly or insect of some kind or other, borne down by the silvern current, always an excuse for a stray fish to come on the feed if so disposed; and it is probable enough that somewhere, either up or down, we may see that attractive circle, dimpling the water, which gives notice of a rising fish breaking the surface.



CATCHER AND KEEPER.
(A. N. Gilbey and Lunn.)

So, with many pains and keeping very low—for the sun, too, is low, and with this angle of light the vision of the fish is very clear and far-carrying—we may win into position for casting to this occasional riser, and, once there, it is "up to us," as an American would tell us, to see whether we or the fish are the cleverer.

The present odds are rather heavy against us. I am inclined to look at a fish thus rising, at this particular hour, as the most difficult, other things being equal, that we shall angle for throughout the day. This is partly because of that low slant of the evening light, which seems to make all so very apparent to the trout's eye, and partly because the wind has a way of dying off to nothing at this sunsetting hour; and this, naturally, makes the water-mirror, in which the fish has its most extended view, the clearer, because the less vexed by any ripple. It is devoutly to be wished, for our present, or at least our slightly later, purpose, that the normal death of the wind at sunset may happen on this particular evening; for if it do not so die there will be none of that aerial dance of the spinners—the imagines of the aquatic flies in the last phase of their many metamorphoses—on which the true evening rise depends and in which, indeed, it may be said absolutely to consist. If the air be still, we may conjecture with some confidence that they are high in the heavens now, having crawled out from the reeds and grass, whither they had betaken themselves in that penultimate phase in which the angler calls them duns, and are multitudinously busy in their bridal dances. Thereafter they will fall back again upon that stream in which, as larvæ, they came forth from the egg, and it is then that the trout, greedily feeding on them, afford the

angler that sometimes most glorious of all his opportunities which he speaks of with reverence and emotion as " the evening rise."

The evening that I have in mind, as I write, is one of which those of us who were at Houghton at that time talked of for a long while afterwards as " Sheringham's evening "—Mr H. T. Sheringham, editor of " Fishing " for the *Field*, most scholarly writer on the art of the angle, and serving up that scholarship with a taste of the Attic salt of wit which keeps all very fresh and piquant. He was our guest that night, and much we hoped that his evening would be well spent. And was it not ?

Later I have been delighted, reading him more than once in glad reference to it, to learn how richly he appreciated it—as it were right he should. For to Park Stream he went, with Lunn as cicerone, and there he found that good fly, the blue olive, in abundant rise, and the good trout in abundant appetite.

This is a digression. I was leading some friendly angler, Mr Sheringham or another, to the waterside, had brought him to the very bank, had shown him a rising fish which I did not suppose it at all likely that he would catch.

Look now a moment, seeing that the fish that you are in position to angle for has not given you a hint of his presence since that first cast when your fly lighted as buoyantly as a piece of thistledown just before his nose ; accept his irresponsiveness as an inkling that even so he has caught sight of something, the gleam of the rod or the glitter of the gut, and if he has not quitted his place has become watchful and ceased to feed ; and, leaving him to his sulks, glance

up at the high heaven, already turning to a more profound blue. There, if it should so happen that you see the swifts scouring beneath the vault, you may draw good augury of a dance of blue-winged olives, and the pleasant further inference that a little later you will be seeing that large fly in numbers on the water and the fish rising freely to it.

That is agreeable augury ; on the other hand, there is no necessity that you should deem fortune to be your foe even if you should see no insect-foraging birds in the air ; for we have had many a glorious hour or half-hour when there has been none of this bird concourse overhead.

The while that you pass the time in these more or less profound reflections, the reflections on the quiet stream are deepening in their tone. There is a "splosh" behind you. You turn, to see a big ring growing ever bigger in circumference, while it loses height, on the river's surface. "A blue-olive rise without a doubt!" you may say to yourself with some confidence, for this is the manner of the trout at this particular fly—they bolt it as savagely as it were at a sedge. You may begin to move into position for the "splosher," but first must tie on that orange quill which is the approved imitation of the spent blue-wing ; and before you have that knotted securely there is another "splosh" a little above, and the gillie exclaims, excited, "That one's a good fish." Therefore, for that good fish, all being now in readiness, prepare to cast.

The light has fallen more dim and more favourable now : you will, of course, if it be possible, be on the side of the river from which you can cast into the face of the brightly lit western sky. Thus

may you see your fish and your fly the better, and the fish less well see you and your rod and their shadow. Moreover, the fish are eager now—see, there is another riser again with the like "splosh," a little higher—they are intent on watching for the fly and there is less risk of giving them the alarm.

That first cast did not get him, for the very good reason that the fly did not pass over him, and that, likely enough, not from any fault at all of yours, but merely because he had moved a foot or more, so keen and hungry was he, to get that natural fly which came down just in front of your artificial. But now he should see that, as you give it at the second venture—he has it !

An up-stream rush, and a scream out of the reel ! It is good to see a fish go up-stream from your stroke ; it is usually a sign that the hook is well home in him. He tires of that : he tries a big jump into the air. Lower the rod-point to him now, so that the cast may go slack and there be the less danger of the fish breaking if he fall upon it as he comes back to the water ; and now, with that danger past, it is likely that he will change his tactics and will consent to accompany you a certain distance down-stream. A run and a plunge or two more, and he is tired, and you may reel him in for the gillie to extract him with the net. Do not trouble to be too gentle with him, for you will know, unless you be of the number of very foolish anglers, that your gut is good ; and the fish are now rising here and there, in all directions, up and down the river. The rise is well on, and each moment of it more precious than fine gold.

With a few flicks in the air the well-oiled fly should be dry again, and now your trouble is likely

to be, not so much to approach the next fish, as to put your fly well over him because of his quick movement after the natural fly, so that you hardly know whether a foot this way or a foot that will find him. But once you get the invitation to him, he has no doubt at all about accepting it, and he comes for your fly with such fury that there is no doubt about his hooking. You scarcely need to strike, for he will almost fasten the hook into himself, as if he were a salmon, in his dash off to seek another fly.

It is not always so, when the blue-winged olive is on. Sometimes trout are strangely inappreciative: sometimes they are selective and distinguish the natural from what we may call the "unnatural" with extraordinary subtlety. But on this particular evening—"Sheringham's evening"—they were keen and they were kindly. I forget precisely his bag. I know that he did better than any other of us, even than the great artists, Arthur Gilbey (for he was there) and the rest. It was either three brace or four brace (I think—four) of very good fish; and in the space between the sun's decline behind the down and the fading of any sufficient light out of the sky this is good measure to keep a man busy. The time goes all too quickly, until darkness is over the land, and even on the shining river you can no longer see, though you may still hear, the "splosh" of the rising fish.

Unhappily these are not normal, not typical evenings. Or is it really to be regretted, after all, that it is not always thus? If it were, then fishing with the dry-fly would be an affair of less glorious uncertainty and less fine skill, withal, than it is. Often as not the rise will die out as quickly as it

came. On a sudden, as if on some order from a higher power, there is a cessation of the eager sploshes, and the face of the river is serenely unvexed as before the rise began. Again, there are times when all looks well, when the air is calm and warm, and yet, for reasons humanly inscrutable, the insects do not find it suited for their mazy dances. Then there is little fly to tempt up the fish, and scarcely a rise is seen during all those fervently expected moments.

Naturally, should the evening come in cold and windy no expectation will be aroused. You may resign yourself then, with what philosophy you can, to something so like a blank that if you break it with a brace, or even a single fish, you may be more than satisfied. There are indeed days in succession on which the "evening rise" may be no better than a "Mrs Harris," and you will begin to say to yourself in classic phrase that you "don't believe there's no such person." And then, to rebuke your little faith, to restore your lost enthusiasm, comes an evening to be marked with all the letters of the rubric. Most maddening of all, however, yet not most rare of all the varieties of these evening's entertainments, is that on which the fish are rising furiously, not quite with that perturbing "splosh" upon the water which is their special mode of taking the blue-winged olive, but with a swift break of the surface that is not precisely what the angler technically calls a "bulge," and yet is so far like it that it is made by the fish taking some insect just below the surface. In these circumstances you begin with hopes raised to fever-point, gradually sinking down all the grim degrees of disappointment, as fish after fish declines the slightest notice of your fly,

though passing right above their greedily feeding heads, until you reach that depth of stark despair in which an angler has been seen casting from him his ineffectual rod, to take up pebbles from the river-bank and therewith stone the fish, that he may have the moderate satisfaction, if not of catching, at least of scaring them.

That is the evening rise at its worst and most exasperating, even as "Sheringham's evening" is a type of the most blissful. The mean, which is the usual, gives us a fish or two caught with much care and patience in its earlier hour, and then, as the dusk descends, we may fasten a big sedge-fly on a stout cast, and heave it at the fish with almost as heavy a plop as we please. Even so it can hardly make more troubling of the water than do the big natural sedge-flies; and as the darkness deepens the fish seem even to like their notice attracted by the smack with which the fly comes down on the stream. Thus we may catch a fine fish or two; for the big fish deign to rise for these big flies. But it is not the most delicate sample of this most delicate of all forms of sport. The sedge-fly rise is more or less the duffer's holiday; yet perhaps on that very account not to be scorned of the multitude. For duffers, after all, are more in number than the experts, and we live in democratic days.

Now it has grown too dark to see the rising fish: it is long since the light has given us a chance to see our fly, though the sedge is, relatively, a large insect, and the birds have long ceased chattering at the intruder on their homes among the spear-grass. The bats are coursing over the surface of the stream, for a moment visible against a shining stretch, then vanishing into the night:

a bigger body is amongst them—it is the night-jar that we lately heard "churring" in the meadow behind—and as we reel up, after the last of the "positively last" casts, and go our homeward way, we have the occasional ghost-like apparition of the white owl, in silent, soft-winged flight, to bear us company.

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