AN ANGLER'S YEAR

FOUR GOLD MEDALS FOR SPLIT CANE RODS AND EXCELLENCE OF TACKLE.

HIGHEST AWARD, ROYAL AQUARIUM. TWO MEDALS AND TWO SPECIAL MONEY PRIZES.-FISHERIES EXHIBITION, 1883.

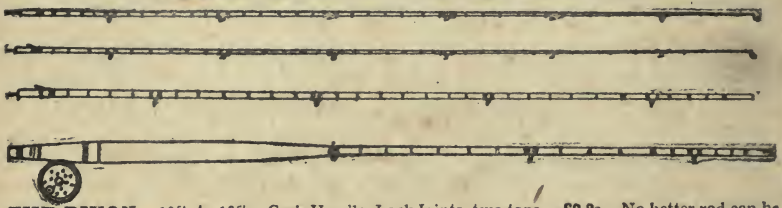
A. CARTER & Co., LTD., Fishing Rod and Tackle Manufacturers,

137, St. John Street Road, and 1, 2 & 3, Rosebery Avenue,

Telegraphic Address— FISHGIG, LONDON. *Telephone*— 1129 CENTRAL. *Timber Stores*— PENTONVILLE.

LONDON, E.C.

CANE BUILT TROUT RODS.



THE DIXON. 10ft. to 12ft, Cork Handle, Lock Joints, two tops. **£2 2s.** No better rod can be obtained. Equal to any on the market, irrespective of price. **THE ITCHEN.** Dry Fly Rod, 9½ft. and 10ft. 3in. An ideal rod for dry fly. Price, **£2 10s.**, with two tops, fitted as above.

THE CORFE

FISHERMAN'S COAT.

Three Styles—
GREY TWEED,
DRAB PROOF,
BROWN TWEED.

***Price*, 21/-.**

Indispensable for showery weather.

Will fold into a small compass capable of going into the pocket.

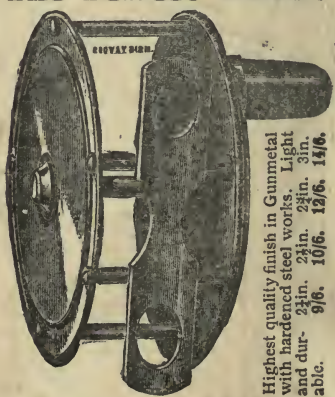
Fitted with inside pocket for fly book; also with hooks to shorten for wading.

Full length, 35in.

Shortened for wading, 27in.

Illustrated Price List containing all up-to-date Novelties post free. (Mention Publication.)

The Perfect REEL.



Highest quality finish in Gunmetal with hardened steel works. Light and durable.
2¾in. 3in. 15/6.
2½in. 2¾in. 12/6.
2¼in. 2½in. 10/6.
2in. 2¼in. 9/6.

The Latest and Greatest Improvement is the **R.B. Marston Celluloid Patent Bodied Fly.**

The most perfect imitation of the natural fly. **2/6** per dozen, mounted on Hall's Hooks.

CARTER'S Latest Specialities for SEA FISHING.

THE NEMO ROD.

SOLE MAKERS.

THE LIGHTEST AND BEST SEA FISHING ROD OBTAINABLE.

Fitted with special Duplex Winch Fittings, Dale Porcelain Rings and Special Loop, made of best selected Greenheart or Lancewood, rubber button and corked stopper.

PRICE, **22/-**. Length from 6ft. to 7ft. 6in.

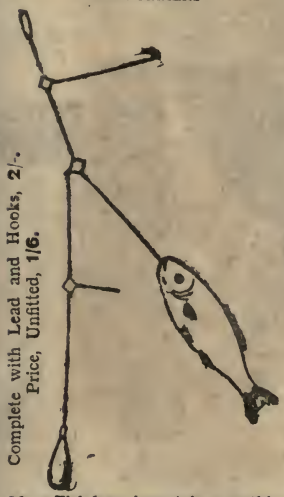
Fish of over 20lbs. weight have been taken on NEMO 6ft. 6in. ROD, which weighed but 12 ounces.

BATES' NEW PATTERN WATERPROOFED LINE. The strongest and best Line ever made. Price, Fine, **4/6** per 100 yds.; Medium, **6/-** per 100 yds. Samples post free.

The Best Sea Paternoster EVER INVENTED.

The Diamond Straight Pull Patent.

SOLE MAKERS



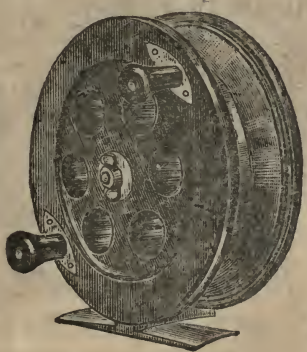
Complete with Lead and Hooks, **2/-**. Price, Unfitted, **1/6**.

More Fish have been taken on this pattern than all others put together.

NEVER FAILS.

THE NEMO SEA REEL.

SOLE MAKERS.



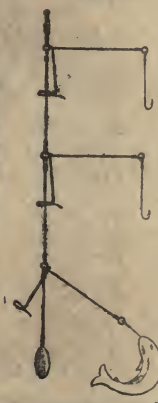
5in.	5½in.	6in.
15/-.	**16/-.**	**17/6.**

The NEMO is the most practical Sea Reel on the market. There is no part of the Sea Fisher's kit which has to do so much work as the reel; it behoves everyone to have the best. The NEMO cannot be surpassed. Try one and you will admit this.

THE NEMO Straight Pull Paternoster

(Reg.)

SOLE MAKERS.



Price, Unfitted, **1/6**. Fitted with Lead and Hooks, **2/-**.

This Paternoster does not drop until a fish is actually struck; it is a great boon for fishing from piers and rocks, and should be tried by all sea fishers.

Send for our Illustrated Price List. It is right up-to-date.

(Mention this Book).

N/-

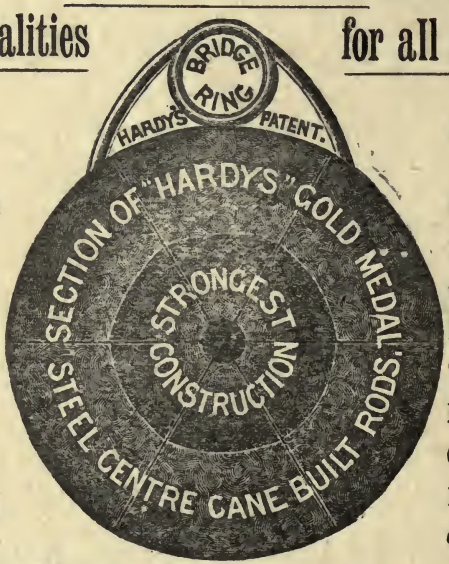
READ THIS

The Field.—"It ought never to be forgotten that it is to Messrs. Hardy, of Alnwick, that we owe the supremacy we have achieved as rod makers." "They have left all competitors hopelessly behind." "HARDY'S rods, in these days, like the good wines of the proverb, need no bush."

Thirty-eight Prize Medals.
Highest Awards in the World.

Specialities for all Parts.

RODS
for
Salmon
Trout
Pike
Roach
Sea
Lake
River
Fishing



REELS
for
Salmon
Sea
and
Brown
Trout
Flies,
Casts,
Lines,
etc.

Hardy's Rods are the lightest, strongest, and most powerful.

Catalogue over 325 pages & 500 illustrations *Free!*

HARDY BROS., Alnwick, England.

Retail Branches.—**LONDON:** 61 Pall Mall, S.W. **EDINBURGH:** 5 S. St. David Street. **MANCHESTER:** 12 and 14 Moult Street.

AN ANGLER'S YEAR

"ARCHER" BRAND

(Registered Trade Mark.)

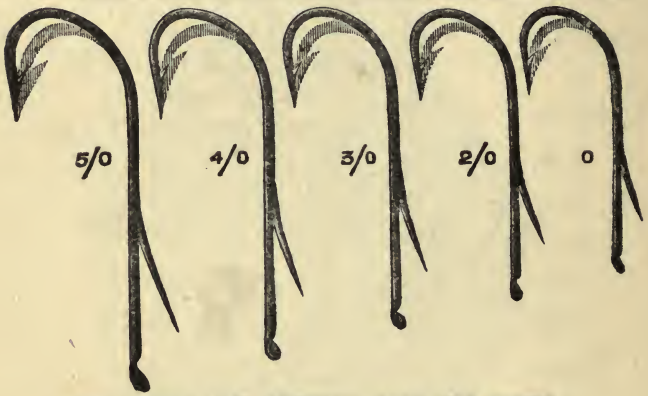
Tested Quality

Fish Hooks & Fishing Tackle

FOR RIVER, LAKE, OR SEA.

LATEST NOVELTY, FOR SEA FISHING,

. . "*The Spica*" *Hook*



WILL HOLD BAIT SECURELY UPON THE SHANK.

HOOKS, FLIES, ARTIFICIAL BAITS, RODS, CASTING LINES, &c.,

Suitable for all parts of the World.

WM. BARTLEET & SONS,

Abbey Mills, REDDITCH.

Obtainable only through Dealers.

AN
ANGLER'S YEAR

BY

CHARLES S. PATTERSON

M.B., M.R.C.S., F.Z.S.

Curator (late Hon. Sec.) British Sea Anglers' Society.

Late Curator Piscatorial Society.

LONDON

W. R. RUSSELL & CO., LTD

5A PATERNOSTER ROW, E C

Contents

THE ONE

AND

ONLY COAT

FOR

Boating,

Fishing,

OR

Yachting.

THE "NORE" COAT.
WEIGHT 3½ LBS.

SILK
FINISH

OILSKIN.

MANUFACTURED BY . . .

Johnson & Son's, Ltd.,

GREAT YARMOUTH,

and 10 GUTTER LANE, LONDON, E.C.

Obtainable of all the Leading Outfitters.

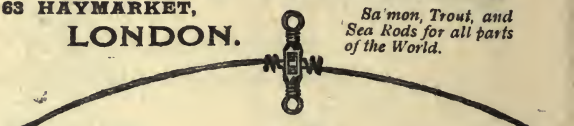
G. LITTLE & CO.'S

Special New Goods for the Season.

ALL THE LATEST NOVELTIES IN STOCK

63 HAYMARKET,
LONDON.

Salmon, Trout, and Sea Rods for all parts of the World.



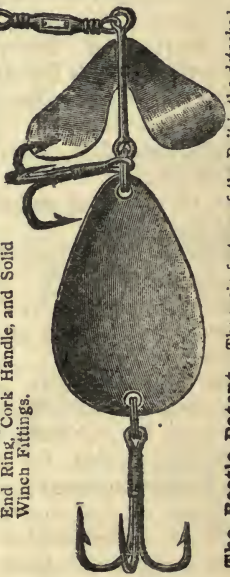
OPEN.

Wire Sliding Sea Boom.

CLOSED.

Little's "Anti-Kinker" Sea Lead. All sizes from 2-oz. to 2-lbs.

The New Sea Rod. Price, 27/6. Can be used in 1, 2, and 3 Lengths, with Swing Pulley End Ring, Cork Handle, and Solid Winch Fittings.



The Beetle Patent. The main feature of the Bait is the *detached* Spinner, connected with the Spoon by a *flexible* joint, thus combining elasticity with strength, and giving a life-like appearance to the bait when set in motion, which makes it deadly. The combination of Spinner and Spoon imparts a brilliant spin to the bait.

Unbreakable Straight Pull Sea Paternoster.

The Paternoster being made of all wire and extra swivels, it is impossible to break or twist; there is no whippings to come unfastened through the effects of the sea water, and will stand any strain. Price, 2/- each. Leads, 3d. to 1/- each. Hooks Mounted on Wire with Detachable Swivels, 3/- dozen.

Preface

OF the writing of books—especially angling books—there is no end. From the day when Dame Juliana Berners perpetrated her "Treatise on Fysshynge" down to the date of the issue of the latest prose idyll by Sir Edward Grey on "Fly-fishing," every department of the sport has been treated of by a multitude of writers. The necessity of apologising, therefore, for adding still another book becomes apparent, and the excuse offered is briefly that the contents consist of practical experiences which may be of some benefit to others.

As we all know, angling as a sport has wonderfully increased in popularity during the last few years and—thanks to railways—has changed from a truly rural amusement to one of the favourite recreations of the town-dweller.

Some years ago, also, anglers were essentially men of leisure, who could afford themselves ample time and opportunity to slip away to some rural retreat, far from the madding crowd, for somewhat lengthened periods. Some, indeed, devoted nearly their whole lives to one or other form of this sport. Thus, when a friend once asked Stewart, the author of "The Practical Angler," as to what he was at that time doing for his living, he replied, "Man, I'm an angler," judging this evidently an occupation requiring all his talents and energies. Nowadays, however, things are much altered, and the great multitude of rod-fishers are working men whose only chance of sport is an odd day snatched now and then from a busy life. By "working men" my readers must not think that I mean alone the horny-handed sons of

toil who have arrogated to themselves the title. I refer rather to the men who constitute the backbone of the country, the busy workers with either hand or brain, or both, who tend the great machine which goes to keep our Empire in the forefront of the nations.

To these men, angling comes as an engrossing recreation which, taken in small doses, tends to relieve the monotony and strain of modern existence. Such have but a limited time for the enjoyment of sport, and from that must be further subtracted the time taken up in reaching the scene of action and returning: therefore, the places that they fish must be easily accessible.

The busy angler has but little leisure to search out waters for himself, learn new methods, or try strange lures; but little information on these points is given by the average book on angling, and can indeed be only learned in the first instance by experience.

The experiences of others, no matter how limited in extent they may be, are always of some value as teachers, and indeed, as Sir Edward Grey says:—

"Even a little imperfectly told becomes interesting, and weak words stir kindred memories."

It is in the hope that this may prove the case that this little book is put forward, and the writer will be perfectly satisfied if it should, to some extent, meet the want for others which he has so often felt for himself.

Most of the experiences given are records of single day's angling within easy rail of London. As a sporting centre the Metropolis would hardly be chosen by many —most of the great centres being more, or at least as, favourably situated in that respect. It has, however, been my fate to live in the great city, and therefore the localities described are within a moderate railway journey in the Southern, Eastern, or Western counties. Equally varied and excellent sport can be obtained, no doubt, on other and more northern waters, while the methods given may be practised with as much or even greater success on lakes, rivers, and seas, within even easier reach of those whose occupations require their residence in the Midland or Northern counties, in

Ireland or Scotland, or in those Greater Britains across the seas.

It has been my endeavour, in the opening chapter, to give, not a systematic enumeration of the different varieties of tackle, but rather a description of certain general modifications which practical experience has shown to be specially useful. The remainder of the book is divided into months, in each of which (excepting March, the silly season of angling) a description is given of some kind or kinds of rod-fishing, in the practising of which at that time of the year I have enjoyed the greatest success. It is not suggested for one moment that these forms of angling should be only, or chiefly, practised during the months under which they are here given; but merely that such months have in the past afforded to the author the best sport with those kinds of fish in that special locality. In each chapter an endeavour has been made to describe—firstly, the haunts and habits of the fish; secondly, the special tackle and methods used; and thirdly, an actual record of a day's fishing.

In speaking of tackle the names of makers, patentees, and sole agents are mentioned, as sometimes the most useful forms are but little known. Consequently, should the would-be purchaser ask for them from some rival firm, he is apt to be supplied with an inferior imitation.

Some of the matter in these chapters has already seen the light in the pages of the *Field* and the *Fishing Gazette*, but has now been to a great extent re-written and thoroughly revised. Where such matter has been used, my best thanks are due to the proprietors of those papers, who have kindly permitted me to use the whole or a portion of such articles, as and how I may feel disposed.

It will be noticed that the scope of this book is not confined to any one form of rod-fishing. I have always felt that for a record of angling month by month to be of any use to the angler of moderate means, as general and comprehensive a view as possible must be taken.

The including of sea rod-fishing as an angler's sport

needs no justification nowadays, as the introduction of modern tackle and improvements has resulted in the fact that as much, if not more, sport can be obtained in the sea as in the river or lake by an equal or less expenditure of time and money. When sea-fishing meant pulling out fish by brute force it was excusable that the true angler should refuse to include such in the category of sport; but nowadays such primitive fishing, even for the largest and most powerful sea-fish, is rapidly becoming a thing of the past, and monsters of 400 pounds and upwards are taken on rod and line.

In conclusion it is hoped that a lover of fishing may find within these pages matter which, when he is on angling holiday bent either in spring, summer, autumn, or winter, may contribute something to make that holiday a period of enjoyment while it lasts and a pleasant memory to look back upon. Should this prove the case, no matter to how limited an extent, the author will feel his time has not been mis-spent when writing these pages.

CHAPTER I.

On Tackle

Dry-Fly Fishing Tackle.

So much has been written on this subject that it may be thought that nothing remains to be said. Such is not the case, however. Every year sees changes occurring in the minutiæ connected with the apparatus and its manufacture. Thus in the last forty years—indeed, ever since the publication of Stewart's "Practical Angler,"—the fly rod has grown shorter, stouter, and more powerful, and the casting lines heavier and thicker. As most are aware, the heavy-line system has been, as regards trout fishing, a thing of modern growth. This heaviness has been obtained by using a boiled-oil dressing applied to a double-tapered silk line, *i.e.*, one which is much thicker in the middle than at the two ends. This tapering has in recent years been carried to a ridiculous extent in this country, so that in casting competitions rods specially built like weaver's beams are necessary to stand the tremendous strain of the heavy double-tapered lines used.

That rod and line must fit each other is a fact which has been brought prominently forward by many writers, and very full details have been given on the subject.

But this is only half-truth, and it must not be forgotten that the resiliency of a light rod is often permanently damaged by the use of a heavy tapered line, and that a light line will not bring out the full spring of a powerful rod.

The Harden rod, built by Messrs. Hardy for our

Southern dry-fly rivers is an interesting commentary on powerful rods and heavy tapered lines. (Fig. 1.)

Fig. 1. The Harden Fly Rod, 10ft. 3in.

It is a limber actioned rod, giving a peculiar broken-backed sensation in the hand, and casts a remarkably long and delicate line with a moderate taper and the minimum of work.

In the United States heavy double-tapered lines are not used, but on the contrary the weight is obtained by using a thin closely woven line, of which the weight is great though the calibre is but little; consequently the American fly-rod is light, and strength is not so much sought after as resiliency. How these fine lines would act for dry-fly work I cannot say, but for the American wet-fly trouting they are perfect if fitted to a suitable rod. They would certainly require a thorough dressing of beeswax and vaseline twice a day if not oftener, as their weight causes them to sink. During the last few seasons I have adopted—when the day has been at all propitious—a level dressed G. line, and have found it excellent, both for mayfly and other dry-fly work. Of course, I use with it a very light springy rod, preferably an American-built cane ten-foot rod made by Leonard, or the Gem, made by Messrs. Hardy, Alnwick. (Fig. 2.) Should there be a heavy down stream wind, I carry a lightly-tapered line (H.E.H. or I.F.I., Fig. 3) and use a three-piece built cane ten-foot rod which is wonderfully powerful. I find, however, that with the wind blowing

up-stream it is exceedingly difficult with the tapered line to drop the fly upon the water sufficiently delicately,

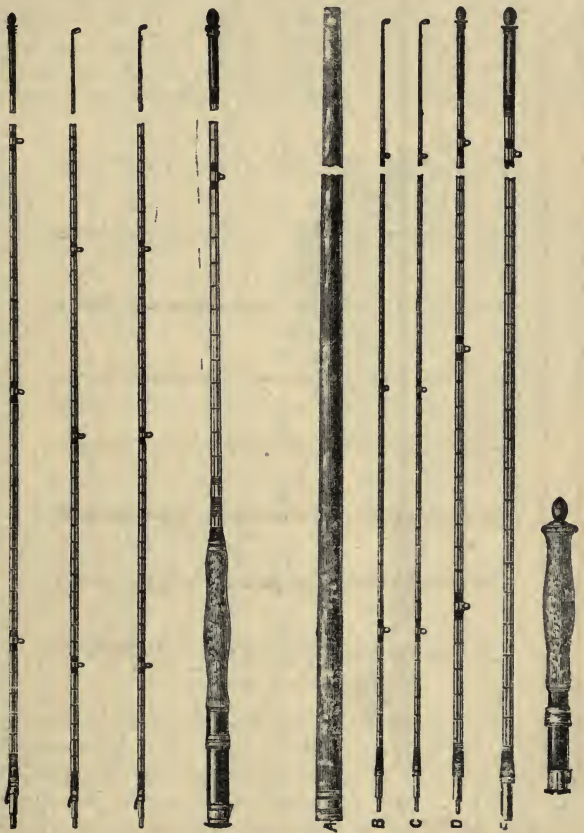


Fig. 2. The Gem Featherweight (2 patterns).

whereas, with the thin line, the whole affair settles like thistledown.

It has been objected by some that it is too much trouble

to carry two rods and winches when on angling bent. Surely the gentlemen who carry a different shade of fly for each day in the season and hour of each day, would not find a second winch much extra trouble, while the second rod need seldom be unpacked; so seldom indeed, that it comes as a revelation to the fisherman that use and wont render the apparently difficult easy. If the

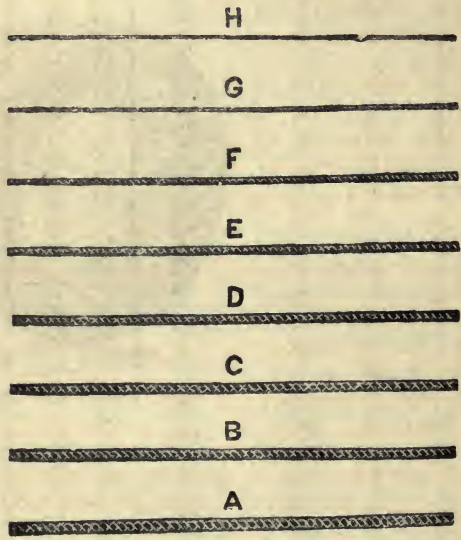


Fig. 3. Sizes of Dressed Lines.

dry-fly amateurs of the chalk streams would one and all try a light, resilient rod with a thin level or lightly tapered line, there is little doubt that the skilled fishers would never return to their present whip-lashes. For delicacy of casting and ease of recovery, with a properly fitted rod, such lines are, to my mind, infinitely superior to those now in use. Dogmatism on any fishing subject is quite out of place, and it is impossible to state definitely what will or will not suit any other angler; these suggestions are therefore put forward as a result

of personal trials which may or may not be borne out by the experience of others.

A word on winches may appropriately be said here: for weedy waters, the present winch does not recover line quickly enough, and consequently the writer has been in the habit of, if possible, running down stream; or, if wading, pulling the line down through the rings. A friend, however, pointed out to him the benefits of Coxon's Aerial* for such fishing, as it allows the recovery of nearly a yard of line by three revolutions of the winch.

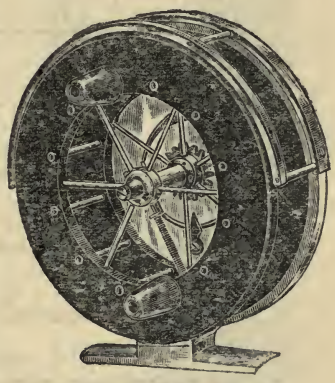


Fig. 4. Coxon's Aerial Winch.

As regards rods, individual tastes differ, while as to fixed or swinging rings there seems to be a tendency for the fashion to again revert to the old free rings, especially for the top-joint. As far as practical experience goes, all that can be here said is that one system seems as good as the other for fishing purposes, while the loose ring does not tend to get injured in the carriage as the fixed upright form does.

Most dry-fly fishers have experienced great difficulty in getting a reliable method by which to carry their landing nets. How often has one discovered after hooking and playing a big trout, that either the landing net has dropped from its sling, or is so firmly fixed there that the angler cannot detach it with one hand. This has been obviated by the invention of a little sling-catch designed by Mr. C. H. Bywaters, and made by Cummins, of Bishop Auckland. The net is firmly

* Messrs. Alcock make two forms of this winch: one with and one without an aluminium back. The latter alone is to be used for sea-fishing.

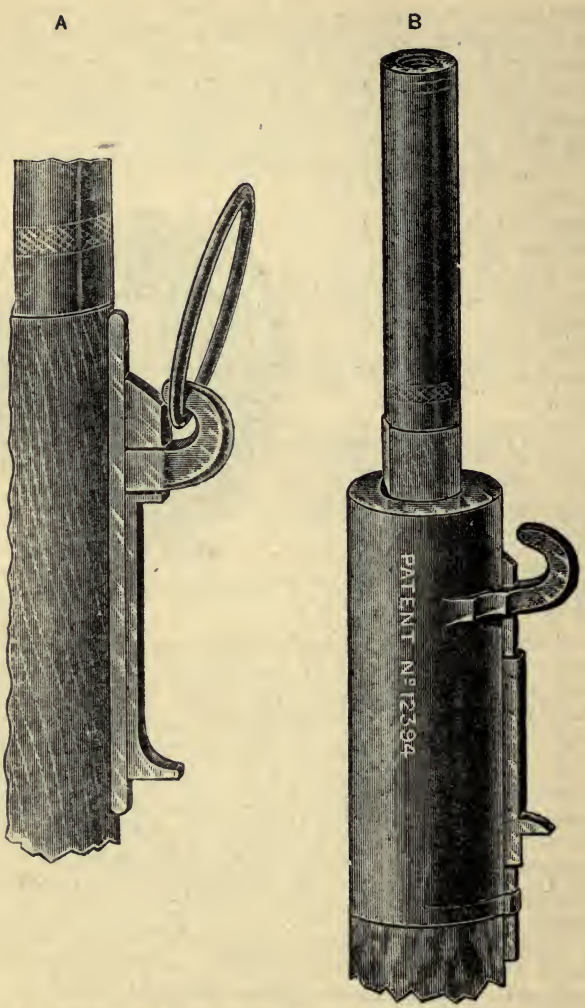


Fig. 5. Cummin's Landing-net Catch. A. Closed. B. Open.

held till it is required for use, and then one hand easily releases it; kneeling and creeping, operations necessary for success in well-fished waters, do not tend to dislodge the net; and the detachment by the hand is instantaneously accomplished, so that the attention is not taken off the fish.

As regards waders a word or two may be said: In hot June or July weather it is, perhaps, as well not to use them, but rather to wear a pair of flannel trousers and light tennis shoes, and wade in, all standing. If waders are worn, they should be kept turned down when not in the water, and it is advisable to wear an extra pair of socks *inside* the waders to catch the moisture condensed upon their *inner* surface. In this way the feet are kept dry and chill avoided. As regards brogues, for chalk stream work the rubber brogues are very comfortable, but should be got to fit snugly over the outside sock, or else gravel works in and spoils the wader. The large studs in the soles also tend to work out, and the vendors refuse to repair or make good the damage, for some mysterious reason best known to themselves.

As regards the mysteries of flies, I am neither competent nor anxious to write; the subject has already been voluminously treated by others; I would only therefore say a word or two on the cast and the knots used. Of course, at this time of day, it is unnecessary to say eyed flies should be used, because hardly any dry-flies are made on gut. As regards the cast, this in my opinion is usually made too long, and this length has come into vogue because the reel line has been hitherto used too thick. With the thin lines advocated I have found a shorter cast much more convenient, and now prefer a six-foot length tapered to finest natural gut, with an 18-inch single-drawn point for mayfly or heavy fish, and a 14-inch XX for ordinary work.

The best knot for attaching the point to the eyed-hook, or, in fact, an end to any loop, is one which was shown me by Col. Smythe some years ago, and called by him the Double Figure-of-eight (Fig 6). This is simply made

and simply undone, the loop lying snugly round the eye as in the jam knot, and the turn above preventing any possibility of slipping. The end in the down-turned eyed hook lies between the two wings along the body of the hook, and prevents the tendency which the wings, especially in the mayfly, have to stick together. The flies should be kept in a partition box, not stuck in felt or cork, as the wings should be crushed as little as possible, and nothing should be carried in the box in the way of casts or points. The best pattern I have seen is illustrated

Fig. 6. Figure-of-eight knot.

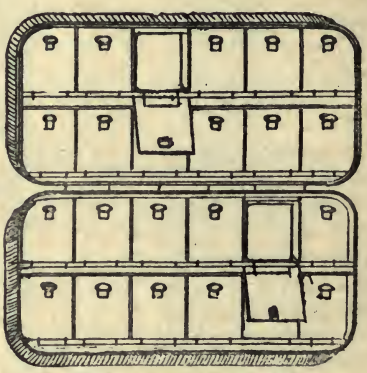


Fig. 7. The Higgins Dry Fly Box.

here, and is, I believe, called the Higgins Eyed Fly Case, after Mr. Higgins, of the T.A.P.S. (Fig. 7.) The best tackle for wet fly fishing has not been here dealt with as such hardly comes within the purview of the chalk-stream fisher. It must be said, however, that there are many waters in our Southern countries where the wet-fly may be used with great advantage. Indeed, I am doubtful if a short course of wet-fly would not be of great benefit to many of our over-fished dry-fly subscription waters, where the over-educated trout have taken to feeding on the larvæ to the entire exclusion of the winged insects. I have long been of opinion that the prohibition of the minnow on some waters has tended to

preserve the overgrown barren trout, one of which, on a good fly water, will do quite as much damage as two large pike. However, this is an academic subject which, though again referred to later in the book, can be hardly adequately discussed here. Suffice it to say, as regards tackle for wet-fly work, that if the thin line is useful for successful dry-fly work, it is absolutely essential for successful wet-fly fishing, as it does not hold the current, and an immediate strike is obtainable. This immediate strike, though it may not be always required with the hungry Northern *fario*, is certainly the only means of hooking his Southern brother when wet-fly fishing.

COARSE-FISHING TACKLE.

This department of rod-fishing tackle has in past years been very fully dealt with in such books as Vol. II. of the Badminton Library, Bickerdyke's "All-Round Angler," &c. It is therefore unnecessary to do more than draw attention to certain forms or modifications of tackle which the author has found generally useful, Special gear suited for each particular class of fishing is more particularly dealt with in the various chapters.

In dealing with the subject of coarse-fishing tackle the chief difficulty which makes itself felt is caused by the great diversity in the tackle used, not only for the different kinds of coarse fish, but also for the same species of fish in different parts of the country.

Take for example the roach-pole and tight-line of the Lea amateur, the punt rod and light dressed line of the Thames punt fisher, the three-drachm float and Nottingham rod and reel of the Trent-sider, or the whippy fly-rod weapon of the Sheffielder—all used for the capture of roach.

Now these varieties of tackle are each specially suited for the capture of roach from, and have indeed been largely developed to suit, the waters where they are used.

It should always be the practice of the visiting angler

to observe the ways of the natives, as that way success frequently lies.

We have all, "even the youngest," something to learn in angling, and that something will remain unlearnt if the angler wraps himself in his cloak of superior knowledge and leans upon that broken reed, superiorly finished tackle.

The countryman with his hazel wand or fourpenny bamboo very often wipes the eye of the noble sportsman with the ten guinea outfit. Local knowledge is the master key to angling success; and this local knowledge can only be personally gained by long experience. A clever angler can however, pick up a lot of useful hints from the local sportsmen if he accepts freely the position of a learner; but let him put on for an instant the airs and graces of an expert and his friendly teacher usually shuts up like an oyster. "Whoi shoo'd oi be a-bawthered teachin' he? He think he know"—as my old Broadman said of a very distinguished and bumptious angler who came to patronise that particular piece of water on which my old eel-catcher made his living.

The universal rule always to be observed is that the tackle should fit the fish from hooklink to winch, and that the best sport is got with the lightest tackle suitable for the circumstances. Some modern or little appreciated forms of tackle universally useful to bottom fishers must here have a passing reference.

Of hooks little here can now be said, as the most useful sizes and forms are mentioned in the ensuing chapters.

In gut, marked changes are yearly being made, and nowadays strands of serviceable material of eighteen inches in length can be reasonably purchased. As regards float-fishing, the idea of making the line practically continuous with the float-tip has been attempted by various patent methods. The simplest, in the author's opinion is the method described by him when speaking of carp-fishing. The entire absence of hitching when drawing the float through weeds requires but one trial to be appreciated. This is, of course, especially required

for lake fishing, but is also a benefit for all float fishermen, if the float is made with the true Nottingham bend to prevent it rotating and hence kinking up the running line.

Of rods and their varieties but little need be said here, save and except that two materials need only be taken into practical account, viz., greenheart and whole-cane.

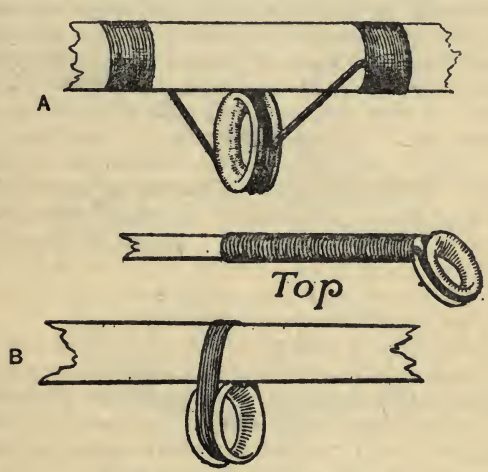


Fig. 8. Dale's Porcelain Rod Rings.
A. Wire mounted. B. Whipped on.

The first material is most durable and the second is lightest.

In the writer's opinion built-cane rods for bottom fishing are not required and frequently are not suitable.

As regards lines, but three classes require any mention here: Undressed Nottingham, half-dressed silk, and pump-dressed.

Of Nottingham lines the genuine Nottingham silk line is twisted, and if such be used from the Nottingham winch in the proper manner, is possibly to be preferred.

The average undressed silk lines in general use are braided round, either with or without a core; they are not to be relied on. A square-braided solid line is now to be obtained, which works and lasts well in all but the very smallest sizes (when possibly the twisted line is safer). This square-braided line is frequently lightly dressed at home either with oil or preferably with Ozokerit (the crude, such as is used for cable work). A simple dressing for this line, which gives it some damp-resisting properties, is to be found in King's Ceroleum. If the line be rubbed well with this substance, and then

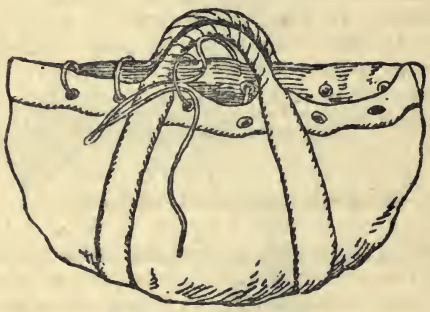


Fig. 9. The Gresham Bag.

exposed to the air for a day or two, it can be used for some months without the need of redressing.

Of pump-dressed lines only a word or two need be said, but that word or two is important A well-dressed flexible silk line of, say F. to special H. size (see Fig. 3) 100 yards long, is worth care and attention, and will repay the angler a hundred-fold. Such can be purchased for a price, and the price must he paid, or else long and valuable time must be devoted to dressing one at home.

The life of such a line is greatly prolonged if bridge, rather than snake, rings be fitted to the rod, as the line is apt to get into the angle between the snake ring and

the rod, thus wearing and cutting the line. Lately a very hard porcelain ring has been introduced which is excellent made up in the bridge form. This is made by Dale, of Hanley.

For many years the author has felt that our winches for bottom fishing have had too small a barrel, and strongly recommends the use of large-barrelled winches of the Coxon and Zephyr type, for all classes of bottom fishing with either dressed or undressed lines.

A word or two may here be said about accessories.

For coarse fishing a canvas bag (Fig. 9) is better than a basket, for more than one reason. the chief being because it can be easily cleansed by boiling. For boat or bank work, waterproof breeches are better than leggings. An air cushion is useful, and a cheap Japanese variety may be purchased for 2s.

(This also applies to sea fishing, especially in small boats with low seats.)

SEA-ANGLING TACKLE.

As most of us are aware, modern sea-angling tackle is mainly an adaptation of fresh-water appliances to salt-water rod-fishing, with the combination of hand-lining methods, so modified as to come within the area of sport. Of course, such changes are as yet, owing to the infancy of sea angling, only beginning to take place. Originally, seabottom-fishing with the rod meant the use of a limber, long, whippy rod; a good, thick, water-cord line on a small winch with a drum of not more than two inches in diameter; a twisted gut paternoster—which would hold a whale—carrying three brass booms (attached to swivels, which always jammed), was the favourite rig, and finally the tackle terminated with a lead varying from half a pound to three pounds in weight, according to the strength of the tide. Yet, in spite of such tackle, the sport flourished more and more, new devotees being quickly added to the ranks, many of whom, with praiseworthy

enthusiasm, might be found at Deal and other places where they fish, heaving their ponderous leads with slender rods that bent, and even cracked, beneath the strain.

Soon, however, a change came upon us, and the era of "the sea-rod" dawned. Oh, those sea-rods! What libels they were upon the rod tribe. They never bent and swayed with the weight of lead used, even should that weight be a hundred-weight. No! The angler might bend and stagger, but the rod was rigid in action,

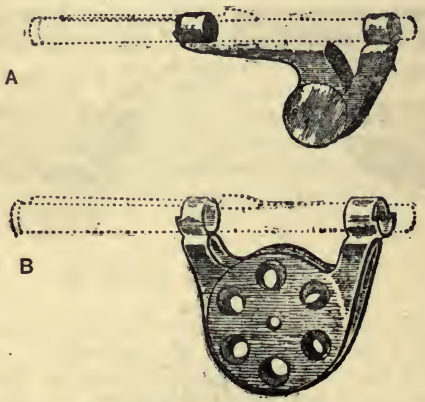


Fig. 10. Carter's End Pulleys.
A. For wire line. B. For ordinary use.

much resembling the kitchen poker. The wily rod-fisher soon found that he must take no liberties with this rod if he would save his tackle. It did not bend double with the combined struggles of the fish and the weight of lead; in fact it did not bend at all.

The sea fishermen soon found there was more give in the line than in the rod; therefore many, when they hooked a good fish, adopted the plan of dropping the rod point into the water and playing the fish direct from the winch, a method of hand-lining which had to the uninitiated the outward appearance of rod-fishing.

But a new era was to dawn ere long, heralded in by the fine tackle school. It was pointed out that the necessity for stiff, stout rods was entirely due to the weight of lead used, and this weight was required in order to hold the bottom against the drag of the tide against the main line.

It dawned upon one wise man that a fine line would require less lead, and that a greatly finer line could be

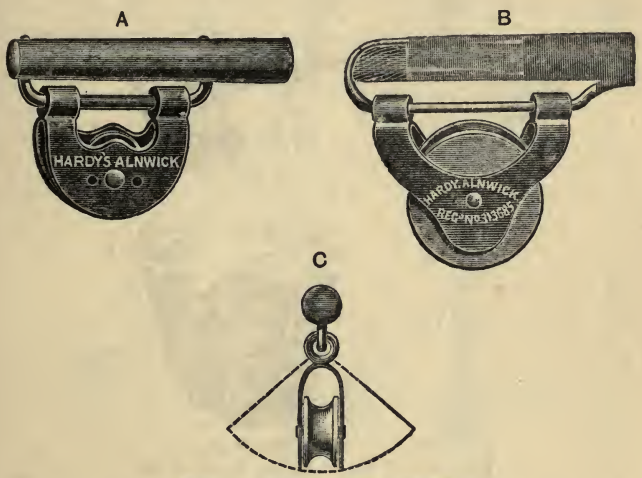


Fig. 11. Hardy's End Pulleys.

A. For general use. B. For wire lines. C. End view of A.

used from a winch than had been previously thought possible. This reduction in the thickness of the line reduced the weight of lead markedly, and the revival of the whalebone top allowed of a stoutish rod being used with a great deal of pliability towards the top. The introduction of a pulley at the end—at first swinging freely from the rod top, but in more recent times fixed by a circular collar, but moving laterally through a quarter of a circle—aided greatly the free running of the

line, prevented wear, and brought out the pliability of the rod top.

The changes were mainly due to a process of natural evolution. The whalebone top had been used for many years on fly and bottom-fishing rods in fresh water,

Fig. 12. Straight Pull Diamond Paternoster.

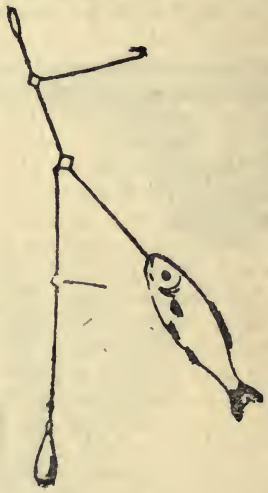


Fig. 13. Straight Pull Diamond Boom Paternoster in action.

while the pulley top was first adopted as a means of avoiding the chafing naturally occurring when fathoms of line were run out over a wire ring at an angle.

The old fashioned paternoster also was greatly improved, finer material being substituted for the thick, twisted gut so much in vogue; while the rigid booms were replaced by appliances giving a straight pull between the hooked fish and the rod point, such as

Clements' ledger boom and various direct-pull paternoster booms, of which the Diamond boom (Figs. 12 and 13) has in the hands of the author proved most satisfactory. This last-mentioned little appliance has as its chief advantage its simplicity and shortness, a long boom for boat fishing being usually a mistake, save and except at dead slack water when long booms and snoods are of undoubted value. The author is at present working on a long boom paternoster which is released and gives a straight pull when the fish bites. (Fig. 14.) Of other forms, that sold by Farlow's as Kirby's Straight Pull is very good, as is also the treble swivelled arrangement of Mr. Jephcott, of Margate, described later in this book.

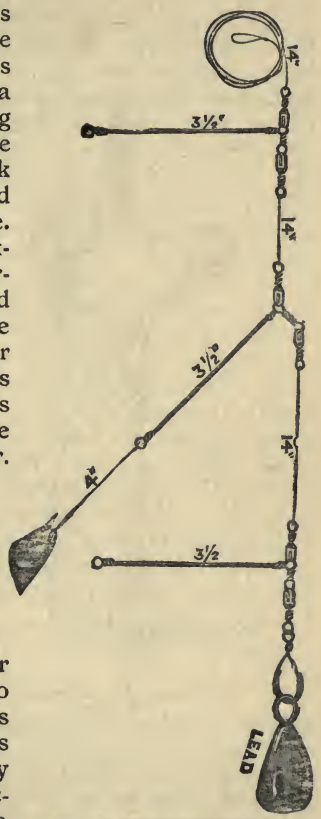


Fig. 14. Kirby Straight Pull Paternoster.

With all sea fishing tackle the difficulty has been found to be that if fish are not feeding freely they feel the check of the lead before the bait is properly in their mouths, and are inclined to spit the lure out as soon as they feel any resistance. As was so ably pointed out by Mr. A. W. Parker, in his lecture before the British Sea Anglers' Society in 1898, no form of ledger, in any depth of water or run of current, will permit of the line running through the lead. Several forms of boom invented by clever sea-anglers were also for the same

reason proved to be useless for the purpose for which they had been invented (namely, that of allowing the main line to run through them when the fish pulled, without the lead being moved). Mr. Parker's own ingenious pendulum boom to a certain extent allowed the fish to run with the bait without feeling a check, but at the same time possessed the defect that until the fish had run to the end of his

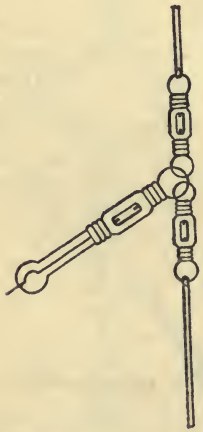


Fig. 15. Jephcott Treble-Swivel.

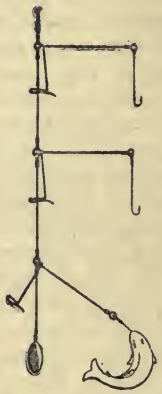


Fig. 16. The Author's Long Boom Straight-Pull Catch Paternoster, for Pier Fishing and Slack Water.

tether no indication of a bite was conveyed to the angler. Mr. Parker's argument, moreover, overlooked the fact that a greater pendulum already existed, composed of the rod-point, the line, and the lead; and he does not appear to have remarked that hardly any check was caused to a feeding fish by the lead, if such were properly adjusted, as such a load requires but a minimum pull to drag it down tide off the bottom.

In the department of bottom tackle proper, the old Kentish rig of boom has, during the last year or two,

been applied to rods, and several attempts have been made to get some strong, light form which could be easily carried and quickly rigged up. The first successful form was invented by Mr. Clements in 1897, and consists of a treble arrangement of arms having a lead link suspended below, and a swivel on a traveller horse above, giving a direct pull on either of the lateral arms should a larger fish take the bait.

This, the writer can say from several years' experience, is an admirable rig for fishing for cod and whiting, and with the lateral arms rigged with long snoods (4ft. — 6ft.) is perhaps the best arrangement in existence for sea bream. It, however, possesses one great disadvantage, namely, its want of portability. This has been remedied in a new collapsible boom (Fig. 40) invented by Mr. T. B. Bates, a well-known member of the British Sea Anglers' Society, and a sea rod-fisher of several years' standing, The full description of this rig would probably prove wearisome, but a brief sketch will convey a general idea of the apparatus. The material out of which the boom can be made is either German silver, hardened brass, or, better still, steel wire double-coppered. There are two arms, each terminating in a swivel, and made of an inner and outer piece of wire so that the length of each arm can be regulated at will, so that. when not in use, the apparatus can be reduced to one-half its length fully extended. When rigged up—a matter of less than half a minute—the boom has quite the spread of the usual Kentish rig as used on fishermen's hand-lines, and when collapsed goes comfortably in the breast-pocket. It will be interesting to note in the future whether this tackle will be as successful as the Kentish rig and hand-line have been in previous years in the capture of big cod; for it allows what no ledger or paternoster tackle (except that next mentioned) efficiently permits, namely, that the cod to rove about for some distance up-tide with the bait before feeling a check, an advantage—the writer is convinced—in the capture of these bottom-feeding, slow-moving fish.

Another form of tackle which has appeared in various

modifications is known variously under different names. It consists practically of two short cross-pieces made fast in the middle, to each end of which is attached a hook link. The main body of the paternoster is made either of jointed German silver wire or of gut; the arms may be either straight or bent; and the lower cross-

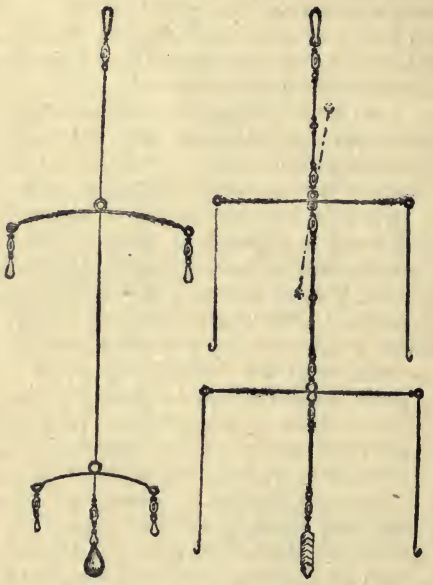


Fig. 17. Pine Tackle, Nos. 1 and 2.

piece may be either close to the bottom or raised six to twelve inches.

The best known patterns are those sold by Carter & Co. as Pine Tackle Nos. 1 and 2 (after Mr. David Pine, of Maidstone) – (Fig. 17.)

Many anglers have had great success with this tackle, notably Mr. Pine, who fishes regularly with this rig in Pegwell Bay during the late autumn and winter.

This tackle gives a straight pull on the hooked fish and is specially useful for slack water, as the baits are kept free from entanglement. Some anglers fish with the upper snoods longest; personally, however, if fishing for cod and whiting, I should prefer the lower cross-piece close to the bottom and the snoods of the lower hooks twice as long as those ofthe hooks above.

In a heavy run of tide such tackle should not be used, as the cross-pieces offer too much resistance to the current.

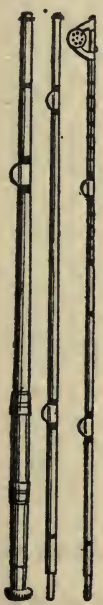


Fig. 18. The Welldone Roller Ringed Sea Rod.

As regards the line best suited to sea angling, opinions seem to greatly differ. Thus more than one writer assures us that sea-water rots silk, hence lines of this material are not to be used in the sea. One writer recommends "highly dressed pike lines" as "very good for the work." Hemp, and flax, and cotton are most commonly used, although the great fault of such lines is their great thickness if sufficiently strong. The writer has found silk quite durable enough if dressed with some preparation of paraffin, either crude or purified.* Such a line, say, of square solid-plaited No. 3 or 4 Nottingham is quite strong enough to hold a strong fish, picks up but little water, and lasts for at least two years if any care be taken of it. It occupies a middle position between the flax or hemp lines and those to be mentioned in the next paragraph.

Fig. 19. The Author's Light Sea Rod with a double set of Porcelain Rings. Exaggerated to show details. Length 7ft.; diameter of middle of butt, 1in.; of top, ¼in.

The writer is inclined to think that the

* An excellent silk line dressed with Ozokerit has been placed on the market at a moderate price by Messrs. Carter & Co. On one of medium thickness a skate of 171lbs. was landed this year.

greatest advance made in the art of sea-angling is the invention of the wire line. As has been said, the problem of the past few years has been to reduce the resistance of the line in heavy tides, and thus lessen the weight of lead necessary to keep the tackle on or near the bottom. Mr. A. W. Parker, whose boom has been already referred to, hunting about for such a line, bethought him of wire, and, after a few trials, decided that tinned iron wire—such as is used for aerated water bottles—would do; he used this substance for some time, finding a marked gain in the small amount of lead necessary in heavy tides. Two objections were found, however. The first was that the line did not run freely, being too stiff to run easily over the pulley end-ring, even when a large-sized one (with a sheave as big as a shilling) was used. The second objection was fatal, namely, that if the greatest care was not used the wire kinked and, on any subsequent strain, broke at the kink. Accordingly he tried phosphor-bronze wire and, after consultation with a firm of expert wire braiders, got an excellent braided phosphor-bronze wire line, which the writer can vouch from personal experience was very nearly perfect for the work. This, however, did not wear satisfactorily, so has been to a great extent superseded by a similarly braided 16-strand line of slightly annealed (or rather, softened) German silver. This line is still upon its trial, but seems, with pulley wheel blocks and a large pulley end-ring, to work admirably in the hands of expert anglers as regards power and sensitiveness, while sea water has apparently but little effect upon it. There is, however, a tendency for the line to carry away unexpectedly where it is joined to the bottom tackle. It should, therefore, be spliced to a foot of silk or hemp.

Another wire is spoken well of by several experts who have used it; the composition is supposed to be secret, but the material is known in the tackle trade as the Hercules Rust-proof Twisted Wire. Of this second class of wire the writer has had no personal experience, save for traces and paternosters, when it at once

twists into snarls—a defect which its advocates say is not present when the material is used as a winch line.

Wire lines have reduced the lead used for seabottom-fishing to a minimum. Thus the writer, off the Goodwins, last winter, one day fished the wire line with 1½oz. of lead, keeping the bottom with ease, while a friend with a hemp line of fine twisted snooding was using 12oz., and the boatman a hand-line with a 1½lb. lead. Of course, as has been said, the proper use of such lines necessitates, or, at least, is facilitated by, a

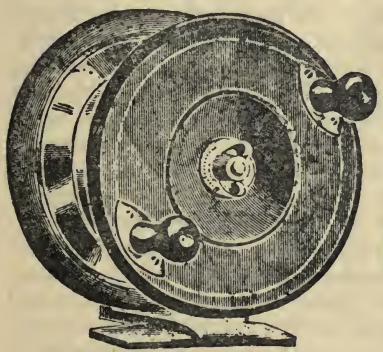


Fig. 20. The B.S.A. Sea Reel,

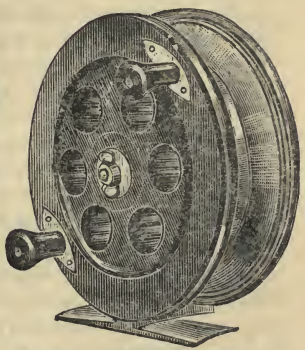


Fig. 21. The Nemo Sea Reel (Author's Pattern).

large pulley end-block for the wire to travel over, and it is as well for the ring next the rod to be replaced by another roller, as the line, travelling off the rod on to the big-drummed winches now used for wire line, is apt to cut against any form of rod ring. Most anglers, indeed, prefer that the rings should be all replaced by rollers, and a well-built rod of this kind, the "Welldone," is now on the market (Fig. 18). One point of caution must be given while speaking of the wire winch-lines, namely, the importance of having a pliable rod, for the amount of stretch in the wire line is not at all to be compared with that of silk or even hemp; hence the full jerk of

the fish comes on the rod, and if light tackle is used, if the rod does not spring, a smash occurs. Of course for easy tides and shoal waters such lines are unnecessary and indeed in some cases are harmful, as, where the tide is slack, the wire line fishes too much under the boat.

As regards reels also great improvements have lately been made. After many trials it has been found that the most convenient form for sea use is a wooden Nottingham pattern with a 5 to 7 inches diameter and a drum of about 1 to 1½ inches less. These reels require a brass inner plate and lining to save warping, and are preferably optional check, while the spring, cog-wheel, &c., are of brass or gun-metal so as to avoid corrosion by sea water. The handles are made pear-shaped, which allows of a firm hold being obtained by cold and wet hands. The writer's own winches for moderate depths (8 to 15 fathoms) are 5½ inches in diameter each, with the drum of the hemp-line winch 4½ inches and that for the wire-line 5 inches. in diameter. It will be noted that the American system of the multiplying winch does not seem to have met with any favour over here as yet, although tarpon, tuna, and black sea bass have been killed with it on the other side. In conclusion, it may be said to those fellow-anglers who pride themselves on their conservatism: "Try all recent improvements; they are not fads of the moment, for they tend to lift our amusement further into the regions of true sport." Who would go fishing for salmon with a cart-rope and a meat hook, and why should we sea-anglers be less sportsmen on the sea than we are when fishing on the river or the lake?

As a last suggestion to old sea-anglers, I would respectfully submit that eyed salmon hooks, tied with the figure-of-eight knot (Fig. 6) on gut (either single, double, or twisted) immediately before using, are the best value in the end, as they are of properly tempered metal, and do not break or bend, and may mean the capture of the fish of the season. It is as well to tie afresh before each excursion, as the steel quickly perishes the gut where in contact.

Two extra-long-shanked sneeked patterns have been brought out by Messrs. Minchin and E. C. Clements, which only differ from one another by the fact that one is of square and the other of round bend. Tinned hooks of all kinds I am distinctly distrustful of, as I find the barbs too deeply cut, the workmanship poor, and the temper unreliable. Till we get phosphor-bronze, I suppose we must put up with brass or German silver swivels, as for sea-fishing steel is non-permissible.

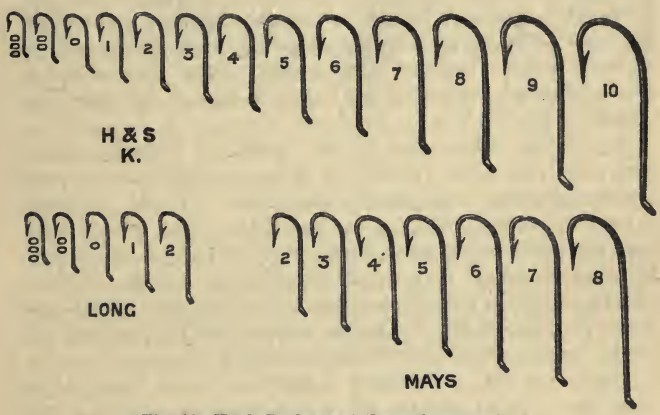


Fig. 22. Hook Scale used throughout book.

In the course of this short chapter, the writer may seem to have placed his remarks on record in a very dogmatic manner; the explanation is very simple, namely, that they are an individual's conclusions and ideas, and are the outcome of some seasons of experience, not only of one man, but of many, some of whom are amongst the best sea anglers on the South-east Coast.

In conclusion, I would reiterate the advice to keep the tackle light if you wish to enjoy sea-angling as a sport, and not merely as a method of catching fish. If I should meet good anglers who have tried the tackle and

methods here advocated, and found them wanting, I shall be only too delighted to acknowledge my errors, and accept any wrinkles they may have to offer.

It is necessary to say a word or two here about accessories which add greatly to the comfort of the sea angler.

Pier and boat fishers alike must provide themselves with a something in which to carry tackle, bait, and fish. For tackle and fish nothing will beat the strong canvas bag, previously noted, called "The Gresham" (see Fig. 9). It was designed by Mr. Zerfass, a member of the Angling Society so called. For baits the author would strongly recommend a little wooden tub or bucket, with a short board to go across the top which serves to cut up bait on, or, turned over, makes a seat.

The boat fisher should also provide himself with a compass (in case of fog), a strong sharp knife, some drinking water, and some food of some kind. Nobody knows when once they go afloat when they will return and the author has an unpleasant recollection of twenty-four hours spent in a small boat in fog in the Firth o Forth when the sole drink was stagnant water which had been in the breaker for some weeks, and the entire food stock was a tin of lobster and a loaf of bread.

And now in conclusion I would say a word about clothes. Take plenty of warm things, trousers and double-breasted pilot coat being the best rig, with a warm jersey. A fisherman's brown jumper overall will keep the angler warm and clean. Never omit rubber waterproof, or, preferably, oilskins, as there is on, or by the sea, always the prospect of a ducking.

There is no doubt that for sea-fishing nothing equals oilskins, and these are now being made so light that an entire suit sou'-wester, double-breasted short jacket and double-seated trousers can be purchased for from 21s. to 35s., weighing from 3¼lbs. to 5lbs. The writer has a suit, made by Johnson, of Yarmouth, which has seen some years' hard service, and is perfectly watertight, and weighs exactly 4lbs.

As regards boots for winter wear they should be up to the knee, either of rubber or dubbined leather, and so loose as to be easily kicked off in case of accident. If rubber, an extra over-sock should be worn inside the boot to keep the feet dry.

A cloth to wipe one's hands on after taking off fish, or adjusting bait or tackle, ought not to be forgotten.

CHAPTER II.

January

Pike Fishing on the Broads.

THE ideal winter fresh-water sport is undoubtedly pike-fishing, if it can be got. I say advisedly "if it can be got," because good piking is daily getting scarcer, especially on free water.

In the Norfolk Broads district, however, there are still sheets of water where, for a small daily fee, or, in some cases, without payment, good sport may be had. In speaking of pike-fishing on the Broads two methods of capture, and two methods only, need be mentioned—namely, spinning and live-baiting. Trailling is practised, but it is to be hoped that such a system will not be pursued by true sportsmen, as, mainly owing to the shallowness of the water, the majority of fish so taken are undersized.

Nearly every pike-fisher has his own favourite methods for both spinning and live-baiting, which probably have found special favour with him from the success achieved by their employment. The tackle and methods here mentioned are not advocated to the exclusion of all others, but are described because the writer has found them most suitable for the waters he has fished.

In spinning a broad for pike the first necessary is local knowledge as to shallows and sub-aqueous weed-beds. If the angler possesses such knowledge he can dispense with the services of a man and work single-handed from a boat; for such is necessary, as, owing to weeds, etc., it is impossible to properly spin a Norfolk

broad from the bank. I have always found a man advisable, as the methods here advocated will require one man's attention devoted almost entirely to the management of the boat; and, if a large fish be hooked, he should then be able to get the boat at once under way and follow up the fish. The boat used should be broad and stable, the flat-bottomed local craft being especially suited to the work. A good 56lb. weight and at least twenty-five fathoms of line should be stowed away in the bows. For spinning the rod should be preferably light and springy, but not whippy, as the natural

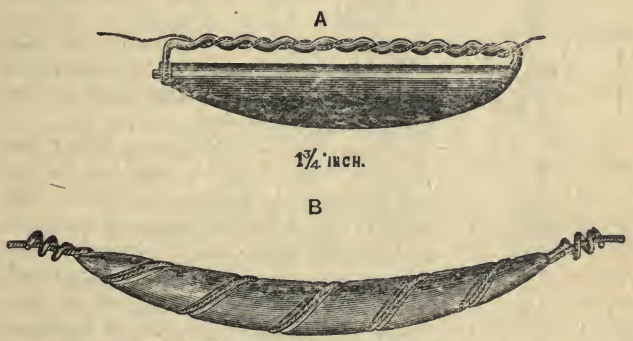


Fig. 23. A. Fishing Gazette Spinning Lead.
B. Jardine Lead, bent to prevent kinking.

—I cannot recommend artificial—bait used is small. The winch should carry one hundred yards of line, the first fifty of which should be dressed—if the line be coiled down—or may be Nottingham silk, if the casting be done from the winch.

The trace should be best salmon gut, six to eight feet long, and should carry at least a double and two single swivels. If lead is used the *Fishing Gazette* or Jardine patterns are best.

A flight upon which the bait is threaded is the one most suitable for the work: it consists of a triangle with a moveable lip-hook on about eight or ten inches of

best gimp (Fig. 24). It may be said *en passant* that all gimp is bad, but some kinds are better than others. In use this tackle is threaded on a baiting needle which is entered at the vent of the fish and brought out at the forward border of the orbit or eye-socket; this is pulled tight, so that the lip-hook lies in the vent and the triangle hangs free, say one inch behind. In very weedy water the lip-hook is slipped off and the single triangle above used. When this bait is spun it does not revolve quickly but slowly wobbles round in spirals, a movement which seems to possess special attractions for pike. In most Broads waters no lead is necessary, as the bait sinks sufficiently by its own weight and that of the line. In fishing a Broad the best method is to arrange the boat up-wind and fish carefully over all shallow water within reach; then let out twenty yards of cable and fish again carefully, and again twenty yards, and so on till all the cable is exhausted. Then haul up the weight and drop it again at the last water fished, and proceed thus till the whole of the water worth covering has been fished down wind, then the water can be rowed back over and the next suitable drift fished. In this way a large shallow broad may be carefully quartered and all the best places carefully fished, special attention being paid to the reed-covered banks and little bays therein. If two fish from the same punt, the outer man may spin and the inner—next the reeds—live-bait, as two anglers casting out of a boat end-on are apt to get in each others way.

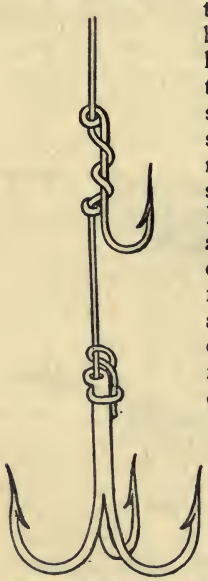


Fig 24. Old-fashioned Broads Flight.

In live-baiting I strongly recommend a single triangle on a short link of gimp or preferably three or four strands of trout-gut lightly laid together, not twisted.

Even with a good fish some of these strands will get between the pike's teeth and will be uninjured. One hook of the triangle is placed through the base of the back fin of the bait.

The float should be easily adjusted and the line may be greased if there be any danger of a submerged line catching in weeds. In very shallow water a bottle cork and one or two travellers may suitably replace the large pike float.

It will be noted that for both spinning and live-baiting the tackles recommended consist only of a single triangle with, in the spinning flight, the addition of a lip-hook, which, however, takes little part in hooking the pike.

It will also be noted in the next section that single and uncomplicated hook tackle is recommended.

The chain of reasoning may be given as follows :—

1. Few hooks take less striking to embed the barbs than do many.
2. Forcible striking means strong tackle and rod.
3. Strong tackle and rod necessitate stout gut and gimp.
4. Stout gut and gimp scare fish.

The reasons why complicated flights have grown up are two :—

1. To hold the fish in position when spinning.
2. To provide that some hook points shall catch in the lower jaw of the pike, as the upper practically possesses no surface where a hook can take hold.

If the reader will notice the position in which the triangle is placed in both the single tackles described, he will see that at no time can a pike take hold of the bait without one at least of the three hooks of the triangle being against the lower jaw. As all anglers are aware, one hook of a triangle will hold a pike quite as well as, and, indeed, better than two ; and, if the strike be made *underhand* and sideways, the triangle will usually be found in the right place in the lower jaw. As regards the Broads another special reason for few hook points protruding exists, viz., weeds abound.

Starwort in hundreds of acres of water has in many cases nearly choked up the Broads; any person therefore wanting to catch fish on the waters must avoid the weeds, and the tackles described will pick up less weed than any others, save and except the gorge, the abomination of all true sportsmen.

In live-baiting it is as well to give the fish a second or two to get the bait firmly across its mouth before striking.

By these methods I have frequently had ten or twelve good pike in a day's fishing with a friend on one of the public broads. As most people are aware, the right to fish on several other broads is permitted on payment of a small sum varying from 6d. to 2s. 6d. per day. Of this class of broad my favourite was Barton, although I am now informed that the pike-fishing there is let and daily permits no longer granted.

However, on South Walsham Outer Broad, Horsea Mere, Ormesby Broad, and Rockland Broad, the fishing is still free; while on Hickling Broad the charge is 1s. per day and on Wroxham Broad is 2s. 6d. per day.

The best description of how to use the tackle and methods can best be given by the recording of an actual day's sport. Staying at Buckenham Ferry, after breakfast we started off, with a westerly gale blowing, to work up the river to Rockland Broad. Such was the force of the wind that we found it impossible to row the boat up the river, and we therefore got out on the bank and towed her with the line made fast fore and aft, so as to sheer her well away from the shore.

In this way we got on the Broad, and by working up under the lee of the reeds on the weather side reached the head of the water. As the sea was too violent to permit of drifts we started live-baiting along the rushes, and during the forenoon, by this means, we got five nice fish, the best being 9lbs. weight. After lunch the wind moderated, and we started the drifting game, the writer live-baiting and his friend spinning. The spinner took seven fish, four of fair size (one 10½lbs.) the other three being undersized, while the live-bait only accounted for

two, but both of these latter were nice fish, one running nearly 6½lbs. and the last a fine female fish of 10½lbs.

As the darkness came, the wind dropped, and we had a pleasant row home and sat down to a comfortable dinner, the writer coming back to London by the train leaving Buckenham about a quarter to seven and getting home about midnight, tired and satisfied with the day's sport.

Such days are now, alas! not so easily obtainable, as good pike-fishing is everywhere run after. Still, every now and then most anglers get the chance of a day on water that has been little fished and where the methods here advocated can be applied with great success. A few seasons back the writer and a friend had permission for a day's fishing on a private lake in Buckinghamshire. By some error regarding the date the boat had been taken up by the son-in-law of the proprietor and a friend. These gentlemen, on our arrival, offered us the boat, but, of course, we declined with thanks.

As the lake could not be easily fished from the bank, the land steward suggested that we should try his mill-head, where the miller complained that a pike was eating his young ducks. We tried the water, which was only about eighty yards in length and about ten or twelve yards across, and in an hour and three-quarters we took with live-bait six brace of pike, the best brace 12lbs. and 11½lbs. each, and so on gradually downwards, the last pair, which were returned, being 3½lbs. and 4lbs. apiece. They seemed to appreciate Thames dace and took the bait as soon as it was in the water.

The fish made a grand show on the bank and somewhat surprised the land-steward, who said he had never heard of such a catch, even in the lake. There was little wonder that the miller's young ducks were going, for it seemed almost impossible that such a small piece of water could support so many good pike. From the same water in the summer time I have seen fine roach of 1¾lbs. taken, so probably there is good feed for these fish, upon which the jack rely.

As live-baiting on the roving-float system will not be

again referred to in this book, I must here mention one or two things which I have found of practical value when live-baiting.

In very weedy water, especially that containing water ranunculus, I have been greatly annoyed when playing fish by the float catching in the weed by the stump of the peg, and would therefore draw attention to a form of float obviating this. If an ordinary pike float be taken and a swivel pegged firmly into the lower or small end,

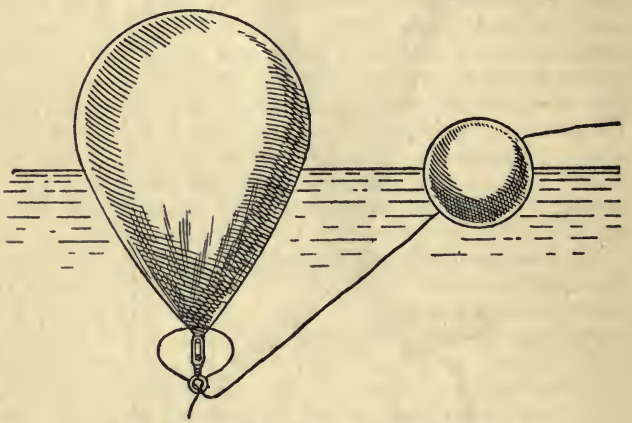


Fig. 25. Author's live-bait for weedy water.

and a bight of the mainline be put through the lower ring of this and slipped over the pear-shaped float, the depth can be easily altered or the size of the individual float changed; when a fish is hooked this float is pulled through the water, small end first, and does not hitch. A traveller float fixed about a foot above should be used and the running line greased, as the line, being submerged near the float, otherwise quickly sinks and becomes entangled. With the single triangles recommended, a landing-net may be used rather than a gaff; and if slaughter is not intended, the fish not wanted may be returned, to grow bigger and fight again.

Old "Professor" Day, of Norwich, one of the cleverest professional fishermen of his time, used to lift pike out with his thumb and forefinger in the orbits,

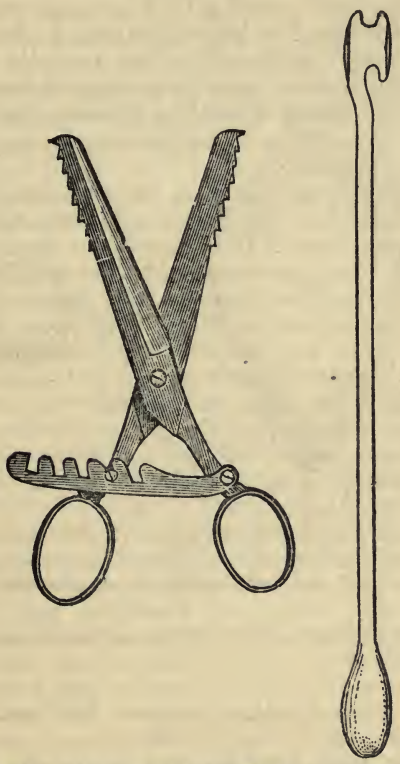


Fig. 26. Pike Scissors and Disgorger and Priest.

the eyeballs springing back out of harm's way. I cannot, however, recommend this for large fish or timid fishermen.

Just a word on pike-gags. The writer has never for this fishing found anything better than what are sold as

Pike Scissors (Fig. 26) supplemented with a piece of stout holly about four inches long, with which to prop the jaws open, if the scissors be wanted to cut a hook out.

A word or two on baits will conclude this chapter. For spinning the baits need not be large, and, in fact, suit better if small, as they can be used with a lighter rod and tackle. Indeed, one old friend of the writer has spun this district for pike for years with a 10ft. 6in. steel-centred, Hardy fly-rod, and during that time has taken fish up to 25lbs. in weight—two in one day being over 20lbs. each.

Preserved bait may be used, but personally the writer prefers a fresh bait, which sinks without added lead.

As regards live-bait, I imagine that a large bait, up to six or eight ounces, is more attractive to a big fish than a small one; and the head of a pike now in the writer's possession confirms this. The original owner of the head, a fish of 17lbs. was found in Wroxham Broad choked by a 3lb. bream, which was firmly impacted in the pike's gullet. In spinning the angler covers his fish, while in live-baiting the pike has usually to make some advances to approach the fish; and if the bait is not a fair size, the big, lazy pike will not trouble. That is my idea of the matter.

Just a word on carrying bait. If the weather be at all warm, or the journey be long, two-pennyworth of ice on the top of the bait-can will mean the difference between brisk, lively, and attractive bait, and limp, half-dead abominations which even an eel looks at with distrust.

Pike-Fishing on the Kennet.

In the first portion of this chapter I dealt with pike-fishing on shallow, muddy lagoons, such as the Norfolk Broads essentially are. The River Kennet, on the other hand, is a water of a very different character.

Flowing in still, slowly-running deeps, alternating with swift, rippling shallows full of waving water-weeds, with a nice gravelly bottom lying exposed between the

weed patches, it contains good pike; for them the methods of capture employed must be far different from those in vogue on the Broads.

In these waters pre-eminently the paternoster, the ledger, and heavy-leaded spinning tackle are most suitable, each in its own stretch of water.

For paternostering, the following tackle has been found most successful by the author: A light 11ft. rod with a 2ft. whalebone and greenheart top, the butt and middle pieces being made of whole-cane; the running line, 100 yards of dressed or undressed silk, should be upon a large-drum Nottingham winch, with the usual line-guard. The paternoster should be of single salmon-gut about 6ft. long, with a swivel fastened to the end, and another 14in. piece of light gut looped on to the same eye of the swivel at the lower end, to which loop the lead can be attached in the usual way. This will break if the lead gets entangled. If this swivel is of the buckle-swivel type, so much the better; it should, when rigged, stand at right angles to the main paternoster. To the buckle-swivel one attaches before fishing a single hook of square bend, about No. 11 new scale, mounted on either gimp or, better, three strands of lake-trout gut lightly plaited or twisted. This gut link goes between the pike's teeth and is not often entirely cut through, though one or two strands may be severed. The lead used should be from $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of an ounce according to the size of the bait.

The paternoster should be used in the river pools, in the slow, oily, deep eddies under the campshedding, and under overhanging banks in the quiet deep reaches.

A fair-sized bait on this tackle is a mistake, the most killing being four to five inches in length, the single hook being put through both lips, the lower being penetrated first.

Bait the hook as gently as possible and *swing* the bait to the desired spot. Shift the bait a foot or two frequently, and work the quiet eddies, especially those parts that are nearly still. When a fish seizes the bait lower the rod-point and give a minute or two; then

strike, and the hook, as a rule, will be found firmly embedded. By this means I have taken good fish on the Kennet up to 8lbs. in weight, although I do not find it as successful for large fish as the next method here described.

Ledgering for pike is essentially a means of capture well suited to the river. The pike in the Kennet are not rovers, but, like the trout, take up their position in definite spots, only moving out to feed when food is plentiful. Pike-ledgering as an exclusive pursuit hardly repays the ardent fisherman, but combined with winter roach-fishing often gives a few minutes' excellent sport during the day's outing. When roaching one often finds that the fish are feeding well for some little time and then suddenly leave off; if, after ground-baiting, they do not again come on the feed, nine times out of ten it is because a pike has appeared on the warpath. If the angler takes the precaution to put out a ledger baited with a gudgeon he will usually get the jack as soon as he appears. The ledger should be of strong salmon-gut, stained brownish with permanganate of potash or Condy's Fluid of a rose-pink dilution, and the hook and link those recommended for paternostering.

Some anglers put the lead—a round bullet of $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of an ounce—on the running line; while others thread it upon gimp. Personally, however, I prefer to put the bullet on the salmon-gut, which should be 4 feet long. About 15 inches from the lower end a shot may be pinched (or preferably a small perforated bullet may be run on when the strands are being knotted up); this, with the 8 to 10 inches of hook link, will give sufficient play for the tethered bait.

This form of tackle can be used in holes too far from the bank to permit of effective fishing with the paternoster. Further, the ledger does not need as much personal supervision as the paternoster, and therefore is best for the roach-fisher. John Bickerdyke states that it is most useful in thick water. This I should venture to doubt, as in thick water pike lie very close, and the best chance of capture is by thoroughly searching

the water with some form of tackle by which every part can be covered, paying special attention to little quiet lay-byes under the banks. This can most effectively be done on the Kennet with the paternoster. Personally, I have always looked upon the ledger as specially useful for very shy fish in very bright water if such fish are looking for their food close to the bottom. When roaching the ground-bait causes fish to feed on the bottom, and Mr. Jack hence has his attention attracted in that direction. If the ledger is cast in below the angler's swim, the pike sneaking up for his final rush among the feeding fish, sees the tethered bait and, as a rule, grabs it first.

The best bait for this method of fishing undoubtedly is a gudgeon, as the writer has found from personal experience that it does not tangle itself up in weeds as does the dace when used on a ledger; the reason of this I do not know, but the fact is indisputable. Ledgering without some other form of fishing is uncommonly slow work, as one has to wait for the fish to attack, and unless one attracts the fish by, in a manner, ground-baiting with roach in the way described, the whole day may be spent waiting for a bite.

On the other hand, a dozen fine roach averaging 1¼ pounds topped off with a brace of jack of say eight pounds and twelve pounds each, may be often got in a day's fishing on this beautiful river.

Of course, the major portion of the river is private, although a day's permission can often be got in the Newbury district, where a combined roach and pike foray will produce a handsome bag of specimen fish. By "specimen fish" I mean specimen fish, not four-ounce roach and little scripers of jack from one to three pounds in weight, fish which no real sportsman would destroy save in a river devoted to trout.

Should, however. the water fished be specially suited for trout, then the pike should be mercilessly destroyed. As such water is as a rule full of swift rippling shallows, the pike may be best killed by the method now to be described.

Spinning in quickly running water is a very different matter from that written of as suitable for the Broads, and requires a certain amount of modification as regards tackle. The wobbling bait mentioned for the Broads may be used, but it is here necessary to bring the needle through the gullet and out at the mouth, and a pipe-lead

Fig. 27. Archer Spinner.

should be slipped on and pushed inside the fish; the needle can then be re-entered, and pushed out at the eye, or, better still, a lip-hook with a large eye at the bend and another at the top of the shank, may be slipped on and passed through both lips; a turn or two should be taken with the hook link round the shank between the two eyelets to prevent the lip-hook slipping.

The lead is necessary owing to the swiftness of the current.

The best tackle I have used has been, however, a

spinner of the Archer-Chapman class (Fig. 27), and with this I have not found it necessary to use lead save in exceptional circumstances. For very shallow weedy waters such as the Upper Kennet and its tributaries I have done great execution with that excellent artificial bait, the Wagtail (Fig. 28). This bait has often enabled me to have a good day's sport when I have been unable to get a supply of bait.

By pulling the rubber wings off the central support, the bait can be weighted by rolling lead wire round and then replacing the wings. *En passant*, it should be said that for these Southern rivers I have found the brown-coloured kill better than the blue; and those mounted on

Fig 28. Wagtail Spinner on Gut.

twisted gut seem more attractive than those on gimp, and last sufficiently long.

Live-baiting in the ordinary way may be tried occasionally in still mill-heads or weir pools, but it is not much good as a rule for this river. As to live and dead gorge-fishing, I know nothing and care less; for a method that of necessity kills every fish captured does not as sport commend itself to me in the very least degree. It should in justice, however, be said that by gorge-fishing good fish are every year taken on this river, although some of the largest specimens have been taken by snap-fishing, either paternoster or live bait float-fishing.

The pike of the Kennet are a very different class of fish from those of the Broads. Of a grand type, the average pike of the Southern streams are short, slab-sided powerful fellows, able to contend against strong currents; they compare well with the trout, inhabiting

the same waters, as regards fighting qualities; while they are well-flavoured and firmer than many sea-fish.

Large specimens, over twenty pounds in weight, are not taken frequently in the Kennet, although there is little doubt that such fish exist in the river. The largest pike I ever saw, in the flesh or out of it, inhabits a mill-pool near Newbury. One day when I was watching a trout from behind the shelter of a bush, this grand fish (he must have been well over thirty pounds) sailed slowly out from the overhanging bank under my feet, where he had been lying in about three feet of water. He cruised slowly up stream until the next bush hid him from sight. I fished for him for years; and, although the pool yielded pike from twelve to twenty-five pounds apiece, the monster was never taken.

One gentleman, casting a live bait, was rewarded with a rush that took out all his line and smashed his rod; but that was the only occasion when Goliath tempted his fate. If old age has not carried him off, he is cruising about still, taking toll of the trout and coarse fish even to this day.

CHAPTER III.

February

Perch Fishing on the Kennet.

WHEN writing in the last chapter of "Pike and Piking," I had occasion to recommend certain tackles for the capture of *Essex lucius* because I had had personal experience of their efficiency in the particular branch of sport then described.

In writing of perch fishing, the same system will be pursued; and as the locality mentioned is the River Kennet, only two methods of fishing will be treated of in any detail, viz.: paternostering and ledgering.

It is as well to say here that the writer has taken perch, and good perch, very frequently by other methods, such as "sink and draw" (see p. 96) and Nottingham float-fishing, but such captures have been either at other periods of the year, or have been merely incidental to some other fishing.

For still waters such as lakes, &c., undoubtedly one of the most killing methods is "Roving with the Live Minnow," but such is entirely out of place in a river full of deeps, with overhanging banks, and full of eddies swirling rapidly behind piles and camp shedding. In considering the question of tackle for perch-fishing on the Kennet, the ordinary ideas inculcated by the books must be got rid of entirely.

According to the majority of authors, perch swim in shoals; and if one is taken the others crowd to the bait and can be removed *seriatim*. In some lakes, notably Loch Leven, I believe this is the case; but certainly not in the Kennet. In past years—indeed, only a few years

ago—perch were plentiful in this river, and good bags might be then taken in certain favourite spots. About 1892, however, an epidemic seemed to sweep away multitudes of these fish, so that for some years perching was lost labour. During the last year or two these fish have again increased in numbers, and may be taken by careful fishing with appropriate tackle in the right spots. Shoals of small ones are to be seen in many quiet eddies, especially around the mills, and fine specimens are occasionally taken. That large perch—and such, in my opinion, are the only perch worth fishing for—were ever found in *shoals* in the Kennet I can hardly believe. In the nature of things, predatory fish such as perch, loving small deep holes and eddies, could hardly dwell together in unity; and indeed, even if the apparently impossible were to happen, would have very grave difficulty in getting a living. That we have not more reports of these handsome fish being taken in the Kennet is, I think, due to more causes than their scarcity. Other reasons, I would respectfully suggest, are, firstly, that the cunning angler says nothing about his captures, and, secondly, that the fish are learning wisdom by experience, and disdain to have any truck with the average angler's coarse tackle.

This brings me to the question of outfit for both paternostering and ledgering for perch. It should be said at once that the angling in the Kennet is rarely done by boat, and is indeed essentially bank-fishing. The writer may say that after ten years' acquaintance with the river, he has only once been afloat upon its waters; and then it was in a crazy old punt, which was being taken down the river for weed-cutting.

This being the case, in order to cover the water properly, especially when paternostering, a longish, light rod is a necessity; the best for the purpose is twelve to thirteen feet in length, built, as regards the lower joints, of whole-cane with a light springy top of greenheart, or, better still, in the writer's opinion, lancewood. This latter wood, although not so dependable as greenheart and more liable to warp, is lighter; and lightness and

pliability, as will be seen later, are absolutely essential for comfort. As regards a winch, nothing need be added to what has been said in Chapter II. The running line for this work—unless wanted for ledgering also—should be square-braided undressed silk, fine-chub or coarse-roach size; but should the angler wish to carry only one line, he may use a fine dressed Olinea, special H. (see Fig. 3), or the silk line rubbed down with Ceroleum occasionally, which gives it enough substance to allow of casting without entanglement, even from the coil.

Of the paternoster itself a good deal must be written. The perch paternoster of the shops is an abomination, hardly fit for the capture of unwary sea-fish. In some places the tackle is still in use, in which, threaded on the gut, are found those bone beads from which the "paternoster" takes its name. The gut, also, upon which the hooks, large enough for barbel, are mounted is quite as stout as that used for worming for salmon in Ireland.

Such a rig-out would meet with but little success nowadays on the Kennet, and is, indeed, unnecessarily strong for perching on that river. There is little doubt that fine specimens are to be taken on the river in certain favoured spots; indeed, the largest perch that I have ever seen, either in a glass case or out of it, was in a mill-pool near Newbury. It was at that period when the Kennet was supposed to have been denuded of all its large perch. The sluice-gates of the weirpool had been shut down and only a trickle of water was coming over. I thought it would be a good opportunity to go over and examine the back eddy under some bushes, where previously I had been broken when spinning by a heavy trout. I had a few red worms in my pocket, with which I had been throwing the worm for chub. As I stood on the partially submerged camp-shedding, looking down into the depths I saw one or two dace swim by, and dropped a worm or two in to see what the fish would do. Down sank the worms past the fish, which were not feeding. As I dropped in a final worm, I saw a dark shadow uprising from the depths, evidently

attracted by the falling worms; it moved towards the last worm, which was quite close to the surface, beneath my feet. I then saw that it was a magnificent perch which must have gone nearer four than three pounds.

I am well aware that all fishermen are proverbially given to exaggeration, but in this case I must ask for credence. Perch I know well, and have constantly handled specimens from 1lb. to 3lbs. in weight apiece, but such a fish I never dreamt of before; as I gazed at him, spell-bound, he caught sight of me and, abandoning his worm, sank again slowly into the deeps. For months I angled for that perch, but though I caught trout, chub, greyling, barbel, and several of his smaller brethren, as far as I know he still lives to gladden the heart of some more fortunate angler.

Even when trying for this monster, I did not use heavy tackle, and indeed deemed it unnecessary. If one can capture trout of from 3lbs. to 6lbs. on drawn gut, why should one require salmon-gut for perch of half the size; for, nowadays, it is a good fish which weighs over 1¼lbs., and a specimen over 2lbs. The best fish I ever took on the paternoster went 2½lbs. The gut of the paternoster then should be of the finest natural, as round as can be obtained; if the water is extra bright I use drawn-gut once through the plate. There should be as few knots as possible. I made up a trial paternoster of two pieces of 18 inch gut, bought last summer for fly-fishing points, with the hook-link loop at the lower end, and below that seven inches of drawn gut to which the lead was looped. This seems an ideal tackle, and stands between the hook-point and the loop for the main-line, a dead strain when dry of 4lbs. This is surely more than any perch can pull, and a good deal more than my rod can stand. I should say that I mount my hook upon 5 inches of the same material.

As regards the lead, the average pear shape is undoubtedly wrong, as the enlarged base enters the water with too much of a plop. The pipe-lead shape is much better; a small pipe-lead with a piece of brass wire doubled and run through makes an excellent

weight. The object of the sinker is to take the bait down and keep the line taut between the rod-point and the bait, so that the lightest touch may be felt. The lighter the lead that is used the better, providing that the two objects mentioned are attained. To render the lead inconspicuous leave it over night in acetic acid, or common vinegar, or even lemon-juice; this is better than painting.

Now, how is the tackle to be used, and with what bait? Personally, I swear by minnows, but some like gudgeons better, others say they prefer worms. With worm alone on paternoster I have never done any good, but have *occasionally* taken fish by following the old tip of, an odd time or two, putting a hook just above the lead and baiting it with worm, while the upper hook is baited with minnow, as usual. It will be observed that I have said nothing about three-hook paternosters, and for a very good reason. I find Kennet perch quite scary enough, without startling them further by lowering before their noses three hooks with probably three different kinds of bait: not to mention the trouble that would occur if two good fish, not to say three, were to take a fancy to get hooked at the same time. Further, the idea of playing a lively fish in a weedy river, with two hooks flying loose, is not attractive: and the complications caused by loose hooks and a fish with a spiny back-fin in a landing net give one pause. No, three hooks were all very well in the old days, when the strength of the tackle allowed of skull-dragging, but nowadays they are not only dangerous but also unnecessary.

A change of bait may be occasionally advisable, but Kennet perch must be very well fed if they refuse a nicely-presented minnow, or, better still, two, hooked each through the upper-lip on the same hook; this last tip was given me by an old perch-fisher, who has certainly had his share out of the river.

Now as to how and when to fish.

In fishing this river, whether for trout or coarse fish, in summer or in winter, keep out of sight.

Creep and crawl, wind your paternoster up to the rod point; see everything clear and swing gently the lead out into a nice eddy swirling close under the bank. Let the lead sink to the bottom and wait ten or twelve seconds and then lift a little, letting the lead work towards you, and again lower the rod point till the lead settles. Thus cover the eddy gradually, paying special attention to the slack water at the head, if there be any stump or camp-shedding there. When a perch takes hold you feel a twig-twig; at once lower the rod-point, and when you get a decided tug, tighten and give a sideways stroke, when your fish is usually well hooked. Occasionally a perch will take hold with a rush like a trout, but this is rare. Now and then a perch will, even in winter, refuse minnows and will only take worm, but this is usually only in flood-time or if the water is clearing but still coloured. Under these circumstances the ledger is better than the paternoster.

The ledger for perch must, like the paternoster, be very light, and if properly constructed will in very bright water entice fish when the paternoster seems to scare them. One of the neatest forms of ledger is one introduced by Anstiss, the tackle-dealer, who is himself a good bottom-angler. He attaches to the brass ring of an ordinary paternoster lead a short loop of gut, say about two inches, to which is made fast a bone paternoster's ring. Through this the gut of the ledger runs instead of through the lead; the idea is that the pull of a fish is transmitted to the angler direct, and at the same time the bait is raised an inch or two off the ground, and is, therefore, more freely taken by the fish. In my hands, for perch, the tackle has proved most successful. For minnows indeed the tackle is almost necessary when ledgering, as they tend to involve themselves in any weed at the bottom just as dace do; as has been said when speaking of pike, this is not the case with gudgeon.

The water fished with ledger is not as a general rule at all of the class suited for paternostering. There are many places, however, on the river where perch may be

found where it is almost impossible to use a paternoster in the manner previously spoken of, although they can be reached easily with ledger tackle. Thus bushes may densely overhang most desirable eddies; a ledger, run gently down with just enough lead to sink it, if carefully worked by means of lifting the rod-point, can be made to cover every inch. Again, a deep hole may exist some distance from the bank, and here the paternoster would lie at too great an angle, although the ledger will work admirably.

Worming with the ledger. a maiden-dew or a marsh-worm has accounted for many a good perch on this river during the winter months; one old angling friend used to always count on at least a dozen good fish by this means in the day's fishing.

No matter how your perch is hooked. whether by means of paternoster or ledger, I am inclined to think the important matter is to get his head down stream: and here, undoubtedly, lies the great superiority of the paternoster. In ledgering, the fish always starts the battle down stream below the angler, and further has the advantage that it can always get a bit of slack line below the lead, consequently it can rush one side of a weed bed and leave the lead behind, so that the angler pulls against the lead, impacted in the weeds, and the fish gets a chance to get the hook out or break away. With the paternoster, on the other hand, the pull is direct on the fish, and if the lead catches—which is hardly possible—the thin gut by which it is suspended breaks, and the fish and the angler are left fighting without impediment, each at one end of the line. Hence arises my objection to the second hook, although it occasionally takes a fish. What is an extra odd fish, compared with the chance of losing the perch of a life-time, through the spare hook catching the weeds? In conclusion, it may be said to those who have never tried a day's perching with the tackle suggested, that three good perch—taken each after a good fight in which victory has inclined sometimes to one side end sometimes to the other—give nearly as much satisfaction to

the sportsman as would a brace and a half of 2lb. trout to the average dry-flyfisher. If you don't believe it, try it and see.

Winter Roach Fishing.

It is not necessary nowadays to sing the praises of roach fishing, when we have the eloquent testimony of Fennell and Senior.

As regards roach-tackle the author's ideas are very catholic; in fact, his experience is that, tight line or Nottingham rod, ledger or float, tight corking or sink-and-draw, more depends on the fisherman than upon his tackle if it is fine enough.

It will be noted that the record of two days is given, one unsuccessful though promising well, the other successful though promising badly. These are actual days enjoyed during the same winter, and are singled out in order to give some idea of a grand winter sport.

No doubt roach fishing of sorts is to be got throughout the United Kingdom, but large roach are getting, alas! few and far between; and such alone are worthy of the foeman's steel. In this chapter it will be my endeavour to point out where and how specimens of these educated fish may still be obtained.

To the enthusiastic fisherman, who aims at being an all-round angler, a day in pursuit of large roach is an experience which, once enjoyed, is usually frequently repeated. The month of October, before winter has yet chilled the country with her icy breath, when frosty nights are succeeded by bright sunshiny days, is undoubtedly the season when this form of sport is in its prime. The snug bedroom in the old-fashioned country inn, the early rise, the cold splash, the arrangement of tackle, the mixing of ground bait, &c., prepare the jaded town-dweller for doing justice to the plentiful wholesome breakfast. One gets on the water when the day is (in country parlance), thoroughly aired, and as the punt drops down the river, or the old brown horse steps smartly along, the early pipe is smoked, and the clean,

crisp, frosty air inhaled, while a sense of well-being steals over one. The morning is spent trying here and there, by various methods, with varying success, seeking for specimen roach, especially that chimera of the coarse fisher, the three-pounder. With what zest is the mid-day lunch eaten, and with what alacrity is the pursuit resumed, even although one is obliged occasionally to knock off for a while and take a stroll along the bank to warm the feet and stretch the legs! And when the shades of evening begin to gather and the mists to resume their nightly dominion over the water meadows, one packs up and punts, drives, or trudges back to the inn, better content to live, and fitter to perform one's daily duties in the mill of life. During this and the next three months, however, on most of our Southern rivers, the weeds interfere sadly with sport as will be seen in the succeeding narrative. Therefore the writer suggests that, though an occasional day in an occasional position may be enjoyed, still the best sport with heavy fish may be most surely counted upon in February when the weeds are gone and the keen short evenings find us, after a day of bending rod and singing line, trudging home with a creel of roach all over one pound apiece. One thing is only needed to produce this full creel, viz., fish, and these, alas! are getting fewer and harder to catch.

Further and further afield one goes in pursuit of large roach, while smaller and more beautifully less grow the results. Few rivers now contain the average of large fish for which they were once renowned. Take, for example, the Thames and the Lea. The weekly report is "ten dozen of roach and dace," any mention of the individual size and weight being carefully omitted. On one occasion a curious reader made inquiries, and found that a catch of this description weighed, if my memory serves, 20lb. Think of it, less than 2½oz. per fish. Occasionally, good fish are captured; thus, eighteen weighing 20lb., and one of 2¾lb., were this year reported from the Lower Thames. But such sizes are not only exceptional, but phenomenal on our

grand old river. Still, some waters remain where good roach are the rule and not the exception, notably the Kennet and Avon. On these rivers, if in condition, the angler, with average skill, fine tackle and anything like luck, ought to be able to take a fair bag of roach, averaging over 1lb. apiece.

The words "average skill" have been used with reason. How often do we find the clever dry-fly man or the accomplished salmon fisherman fail absolutely in the capture of these fish, through forgetting that for every fisherman fishing over an individual trout twenty have tried their apparatus over a large roach in free water? Nowadays it is only the hungry youngsters of some secluded pond that still think that every bait is a gift direct from the gods, and reck not that danger lurks within the bunch of wriggling gentles, and that sudden translation to another sphere is frequently the result of gluttony. Sometimes, however, the stars in their courses seem to fight against even the most skilful angler, and a combination of circumstances may lead to unmerited failure. A short account of one of these unsuccessful expeditions may prove interesting or instructive, even if affording little more than food for criticism.

Arriving one night in November with a friend at the best inn of the little village of Downton on the Wiltshire Avon, we made all arrangements for getting off to the water by 8.30 next morning. At that hour we stepped aboard the old square punt with all our impedimenta, armed with roach pole, Nottingham rod, and pike rod apiece, so as to be prepared for any eventuality. Shoving off out of the dyke, we slowly dropped down the river, and, as a strong northerly wind was blowing, the punt was kept under the shelter of the north bank. Two or three swims were tried, but were found to be still hampered by weed. Finally it was decided—really a case of Hobson's choice—that the punt should be poled down to a deep swim on the opposite bank and anchored at the upper end, the ground bait put in, and the water fished with roach pole and tight line, not

more than 2ft. being left between the float and the rod point. This seemed to be the only method, as the strong cross wind bellied out the Nottingham line, and with float-ledgering the rod point waved and the float jerked about to such a degree that it was impossible to see bites.

Almost the first swim my friend got a good fish over a pound and a quarter, and the next I myself got a smaller fish. Then, as if by signal, the wind burst forth with redoubled fury, and it became impossible to hold the rods steady or to distinguish bites at all. Leaving my friend to carry on his war with the elements, I walked down half-a-mile to a little weir, and found a nice pool about fifteen yards wide and four feet deep, sheltered by withy bushes and fed by a shallow rush-grown race. On the far side of the pool, in the oily, swirling eddy, there was a small rise of what appeared to be apple-green duns; as I sat and prospected a fish rose and took one. How one longed for the old fly-rod and the ever-useful partition-box of floaters! As these were in London, the next best substitute was tried, and the Nottingham rod was rigged with a free-running reel, a sewing-cotton line, and a heavy float; a 3ft. bottom, well-shotted, was soon ready, and within a minute or two four or five gentles on a crystal hook went wriggling down the far side into the gliding water of the eddy. Slowly the float travelled round under the opposite bank, and then it slightly dipped; a strike, a rush down stream steadily checked, and the fish worked up without disturbance into the near side eddy, and soon a nice roach of 1lb. 6oz. was kicking on the bank. Another bait was adjusted and again the cast was made, this time a little too far, and the hook caught an overhanging willow bough on the opposite bank. I shook the butt and pulled with rod up, then down, straining upstream and down with gradually increasing force, for, of course, the clearing ring had on this occasion been left at home.

At last a ping was heard, and the line, parted at the top ring, fluttered dismally over to the far side of the

pool, while the float bobbed about at the throat of that nice, oily eddy. Still the fish rose, so, hope springing eternal, a fresh rig was fitted. Just as the cast was to be made the sun went behind a cloud and down came the rain in torrents; as a consequence the light silk line refused emphatically to leave the wet reel or to travel through the dripping rod-rings. However, all was not lost, though it was by now past one o'clock, for the rain had calmed the wind; and gathering together the paraphernalia once more, I retraced my steps to the deep swim. On arriving there I found my friend, having only taken two or three fish of about ½lb. to ¾lb. had bethought him that there might be a disturbing element below as well as above the surface; he rigged up a paternoster, baited it with a ½-pounder on a single hook, cast it into the hole, and at once got a run. Forgetting that he had only a single hook, he at once struck, and the bait came away greatly mangled. He rebaited and tried again, giving a little more law, and this time played the fish, a good pike of 8lb. to 9lb., for some minutes; again the hook came away and the expected victim made off.

At this juncture I arrived to resume roach-fishing; of course, after this disturbance, such a thing was out of the question; so, putting some more ground-bait in above the swim for the fishes, we commenced to feed ourselves. About 2.30 we once more sat down to fish; the wind had died down, the light was good, the water was a nice colour, and we determined to make the last three or four hours' pay for the disappointments of the day. Just as we are preparing to start a bunch of floating weed came down close to our bank; and looking up stream a terrible sight met our eyes. A perfect shoal of cut weeds and rubbish was coming down, extending for about two yards out into the stream. Some floated, some were in mid-water, and others drifted along the bottom, making sport absolutely hopeless. The stuff was evidently dislodged from somewhere higher up, and had been blown under our bank by the wind.

After this procession had gone by for an hour without

any intermission, we packed up, got into the punt, and poled back up stream to a gravelly shallow below the railway bridge above. Here we caught roach and dace of the bait-can size, nothing exceeding half a pound. This exciting sport was interrupted by the arrival of the man who was to punt us back and help to carry up the tackle. So at five we packed up and returned to the inn for a hurried dinner and home by the evening train, tired and disappointed, but all the better for the fresh air, the biting breezes, and the exercise. The total bag of the day was three roach of over a pound and a dozen small ones.

Having narrated such an unfavourable experience it is perhaps as well that I should give a short account of the next expedition to the same water during the following February. On this occasion owing to a week's heavy rain, the river was in flood, and although it had commenced to fine down rapidly, was still running bank-high and somewhat coloured. We drove down the river about three miles to the bridge across the road, hoping to get a quiet spot in one or other of the backwaters.

When we arrived at the bridge the water was all over the meadows and it did not look as if we could get about anywhere. My friend, however, started off in his knee-boots, across lots, for the corner where he had been fishing during our last trip. I decided to stick to the immediate neighbourhood of a ditch, which, as the river was in flood, afforded a quiet corner with a deep eddy at the entrance. The water was about six inches deep over the bank at this place but already beginning to clear. Rigging up my roach pole I put out a light float ledger baited with worms and managed during the morning to get hold of one or two nice fish, over a pound a-piece. However, the roach seemed not there at present; so ground-baiting the swim well with bread and bran, I decided to rig the Nottingham rod and stroll along the flooded meadows and see if I could find my friend. I came upon him at his old spot, well occupied in smoking the pipe of peace and pulling out small jack, one of about 3½lbs. to 4lbs. weight and several smaller.

We lunched together and resumed our fishing, but all our efforts were of no avail. Getting back to the bridge where the trap was to meet us, I decided to try the mouth of the drain, where I had already baited in the morning. I had taken the precaution to plumb the depth carefully in the morning and had noticed by a stick, rigged like a gauge on the bank, that the river had fallen 2 inches. I then adjusted my float on the Nottingham rod to the required depth, just clear of the bottom, threw in a little sprinkling of bread, bran, and gentles, so that the mixture would slowly work into the eddy and started fishing with a good bunch of gentles on a crystal hook. As the float worked into the centre, it gently depressed slightly; a strike, and out into the current shot a grand roach. Gently he was persuaded to come back and then to take his exercise up the drain, where I netted him out, first blood, 1lb. 13oz. A fresh bunch of gentles and off goes the float on another voyage of discovery; this time, as it was passing slowly under the bank, it was again gently checked; once more a wild rush into the river and the little Nottingham rod and sewing cotton line are put to the test. At last he comes to bank, another beauty, and so on it goes, fish after fish, while the daylight fades so quickly that at last I am compelled to give over, for I can no longer distinguish the bites. Moreover the coachman is waiting and the old horse will be none the better for standing in the evening mist, which has begun to gather. So I pack up and count my catch, eleven good fish taken in fifty minutes, averaging over 1¾lbs., while the champion, when weighed at the Bull Hotel on our return, went within ¼ of an ounce of the two pounds. I have often fished for roach, but this was my nearest attempt to get the magic even figure. He was the last fish taken and they seemed to get larger as the light went. My friend, who stuck to his old place, had twelve fish going eleven pounds odd while my eleven fish went nineteen and three-quarter pounds, or with the three fish taken in the morning twenty-three and a half pounds, an average which would make the expert Thames roach fisher stare.

It is interesting to note that these fish, although the water was thick, did not begin to feed freely until just before dark. I have noticed the same with the roach of the Essex Blackwater, and markedly the roach of the Kennet. On three successive evenings, at one pitch, a quiet eddy below Newbury, I took each evening three roach of from 1lb. 14oz. to 1lb. 6oz. in weight and no more until the next night; these fish commenced to feed just as the light began to fail. I was fishing very fine and was float-ledgering, so do not think there was anything to keep the fish off. Whatever the reason was the fact remains that on many of our best rivers large roach are only taken just about dusk.

CHAPTER IV.

April

Thames Trouting.

THE Thames trout—the only salmon, in my opinion, that will ever flourish in our noble river, the quarry of the keenest sportsman, bar, perhaps, the dry-fly fisher—have we not all longed, and many tried, to capture him? A few have succeeded, and those few know the pleasure that such captures have brought them.

By the Thames trout is not meant the fish of from ¾lb. to 3lbs., which is now getting so common in the river owing to re-stocking operations. No, what is written of is the tyrant of the weirpool and the weedy reach, who long ago abandoned flies, and such small deer, to betake himself to a dietary of fish; and who, daily at the appointed hour, takes toll of the shoals of bleak, dace, and gudgeon that populate our grand old river.

For such a great trout the fly, even of the salmon variety, has few attractions. He wants a fish, and a fish, live or dead, on spinning tackle or simply lipped, is the best lure. Early in the season, before the boat traffic gets too thick, the finest trout are to be found in the open river; but later they are frequently driven up into the weirs. Spinning is undoubtedly, in the hands of an expert, the most killing method of taking Thames trout. By "spinning" is meant casting from the reel, coiled down, over a definite, feeding fish, whether the fish be at that moment feeding or no. A kind of bastard spinning is popular in the weirs, in which the angler

stands above the rush of water and allows his bait to be worked hither and thither by the varying eddies. It is not to be denied that fish—and heavy fish—are thus taken, but such is not the art of Thames trouting, and cannot indeed be practised unless from the weir heads. As bait, there is little doubt that a natural bleak, or later in the season, a minnow, is the most killing, either fettled up on a Thames flight or on an Archer or similar suitable spinner. Occasionally the Devon or other artificial will kill, but mainly in the weirpools.

The live bait is next best after the spinning bait, and possesses the doubtful advantage of being easily worked even in the open reaches of the river by anglers possessed of only a moderate amount of skill.

The gut required for either live-bait, or spinning-flight, should be of picked lake-trout or sea-trout quality, and the trace should be at least nine feet long, with one or more swivels, if for live bait, and not less than three if used for spinning.

The Thames trout spinning-rod is of a type quite its own, 12ft. long and with plenty of spring and power for weir work, and a trifle shorter for casting from the punt.

The winch ought to be free-running, large in the drum, and should carry about 150 yards of line. If the angler can cast accurately at least 40-50 yards Nottingham fashion, the line had better be of undressed square solid-braided silk (No. 2, Theaker). If not, then 75 yards of dressed line about G gauge can be married to 100 yards of fine silk back-line.

For live baiting it is usual to put on the running line just above the trace, an ordinary bottle cork as a float (no lead); one which has been knocking about in the weirpool for a week or two is to be preferred. The best live-bait flight consists of a liphook and a single triangle, one hook of the latter being caught into the side of the fish, just before the tail. A second flying triangle is used by one very successful angler: this is much smaller than the body size and projects at least an inch or even two, behind the tail of the bait. The angler claims by this tackle that he has taken fish which for some reason

had just missed striking the bait. For bright summer weather nothing beats a minnow, or preferably two, as described in the last chapter. I have thus taken a trout 5½lbs., which had refused to look at a spinning or live bait (bleak or gudgeon) for days before. The *modus operandi* of weir fishing is probably known to all. It may be briefly described as running the spinning-bait down the main rushes of the weir, and casting and working the bait in all the eddies, choosing especially those pieces of slack water where trout delight to lie hidden. Of course, should a fish be seen to feed he should be cast over at once and may usually be run, especially if for any reason he misses the prey he is after at the moment.

With live-baiting the same system should be pursued, save and except that the water should be made to carry the bait, so that it may be as little injured and as lively as possible. Far different is fishing in the open river. Here one is dependent on one's fisherman. He must have previously observed the fish and noted his feeding hour, for Thames trout are regular in their habits; then he informs his patron, and getting him aboard the punt, drops down towards his troutship's parlour as the fatal hour approaches. If the live-bait is preferred, it is made ready and sent on its journey, being checked a short distance above the fish, awaiting his appearance. A boil, and the live-bait is dropped down right over the trout. If the angler is fortunate there will be a dash, a screech of the winch, and the fun has commenced. With the spinning method other tactics are pursued, and much more latitude is given to the angler to display his individual skill. When the fish feeds, the angler should cast just across the fish and spin the bait quietly and evenly across the feeding fish. This is much more likely to tempt trout than any live-bait, and with what a rush the grand fish does take the bait! No need to strike. A screech, a splash, and the line is simply melting off the reel while one's fisherman endeavours to manœuvre the punt so that the angler can get on terms with his fish

One well-known Thames angler told me that when he hooked a 7-pounder several years ago below Henley, the fish made one dash for the bank, leaped out on the reeds, gave two kicks, got back in the river, then ran off half his line in one screech, leaped twice, and was finally landed a quarter of a mile below the spot at which he was hooked.

As regards the future of Thames trout-fishing things look all right, although it is to be feared that the size of the individual fish is diminishing, although the numbers are increasing; if anything, a little too much re-stocking is taking place. It would be as well, if any trout are to be put in, that they should be three years old and upwards; otherwise, sooner or later, overcrowding will, I greatly fear, have a marked effect on the standard of size.

It may be asked where such trouting is to be obtained. The answer is pretty nearly everywhere on the Thames. Shepperton, Henley, Pangbourne, Egham, and the Clappers at Reading are places of which the author has most experience; but no doubt there are still more excellent portions of the river. Should the angler live near the river he can get excellent trouting night and morning, and need not be dependent on a professional to spot his fish for him. On the other hand, if he lives at a distance, a fisherman is an absolute necessity, unless he be content to spin the weirs on the off chance. Then the bait difficulty occurs: owing to some mistaken idea the Fishmongers' Company have forbidden the sale of preserved bait during the close season, so that fish taken months previously must not be sold, though fresh live fish are permitted to be taken out of the river to be used as bait. There is no doubt that this anomaly cannot exist much longer, but as it stands at present it is a serious nuisance to any trout angler not employing a professional fisherman. An hour or so has to be devoted to catching one's own bait, or the risk must be run of being prosecuted for purchasing from some one on the river's bank.

Perhaps the chief advantage of living close to the

river is that morning and evening, when the average resident angler can get away from business, are the best times for finding trout feeding. When the weather comes warm it is difficult to choose any hour that is too early or too late for trout to feed. Certainly these trout feed during the day, but not with the light-hearted abandon with which they dash at the bait, say, between seven in the morning or after eight at night.

In conclusion, I may remark that any angler commencing Thames trouting must be prepared to suffer disappointment and to remember that the amusement requires, perhaps more than any other form of angling, great skill and patience combined with a fair proportion of good luck.

Some of the cleverest of our Thames spinners seem uniformly unfortunate, while every now and then the veriest duffer gets hold of one of those monsters the bare mention of which make one's mouth water. In the long run, skill and patience will be bound to bring reward; and the result will be all the more prized, if it should have been a long time being achieved. It will be noted that I have not given any record of a day's sport. In this section such a thing does not exist. One may fish half a season without getting a sizeable fish, but the excitement when a good fish is taken almost compensates for the weeks of waiting.

Trout in a Midland Reservoir.

Fishing for trout in lakes is a sport with which, personally, I can claim but little practical acquaintance. The average practice does not seem to me so much a sport as an occupation.

Eight hours' hard labour with a fly rod drifting over deeps and shallows, where there may—or may not—be trout, is hardly my idea of soul-engrossing sport. Such is the angling usually provided on the lakes of the United Kingdom for the would-be loch fisher. The author would not, for one moment, deny that skill is

necessary for the efficient capture of trout by the drifter —the skill to appreciate the best points of a trout fishing lake, the skill to know the right hour, wind, and water for a success, the skill to so manœuvre the boat as to give proper control to the rod fisher in his choice of water fished, if such be not all supplied by the gillie at so much per day. Only one piece of skill is an absolute necessity, namely the faculty to appreciate a rise, and to know when and how to strike. How different is this from the dry-fly fisher's multifold art, which appeals much more keenly to the author's idea of what sport should be. Certainly, perhaps owing to the increasing popularity of angling generally, and the consequent scarcity of really first-class fishing, a school of loch-fishers has risen who do not confine themselves to the orthodox boat-drift; these anglers do use their own brains and skill to seek out fish even in lakes. Of these, the chief prophet is the author of "Lochs and Loch-fishing," Hamish Stewart, whose book is well worth perusal by all interested in loch trouting—or indeed trouting of any description. The book is, however, somewhat marred by unnecessary attacks on other types of angling.

Owing to the number of anglers from the South who each year invade the Scotch trout lochs, a love of lake-fishing has become implanted among sportsmen in many Midland towns. This, together with the facilities offered by the various fish-breeding establishments, has led to the stocking of many of the reservoirs which supply our smaller industrial centres, such as Northampton, Derby, Kettering, &c.

In some of these reservoirs the fish have thriven well and grown to great weights, having been taken up to six or even seven pounds each with the fly. In few of these artificial waters have the fish bred owing, in many instances, to the lack of spawning grounds: where such is the case a sufficient head of fish can be kept up by constant re-stocking.

In these lakes as much fishing is done from the banks as from the punts; by the use of large flies, good sport

may be got early in the season, and later with small loch flies; indeed, during the glassy summer evenings some success has been arrived at by anglers using the orthodox dry fly. A moderate charge is, in most instances, made to any stranger who may wish to fish: in all cases the number of rods is limited, and notice is required to be given some days before the angler proposes fishing. In the past some tremendous catches have been made in two or three of the reservoirs; thus at Ravensthorpe, one reverend gentleman one day took the limit, six trout (three brace), which weighed 34lbs., while at Teeton another angler in a season took 148 trout, *averaging* 3½lbs. apiece.

One Easter a small party, including the writer, decided to try one of the less-known reservoirs, and fished three days; but owing to the storm which raged and the backwardness of the season they did but little good, the boat-angling being about on a par with the shore fishing. The reservoir was reached from the town each day on bicycles, and fishing was solidly indulged in from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. each day. The best trout taken during the trip went 3lbs., 2lbs. 12oz., and 2lbs. 6oz. respectively, all being taken on salmon fly; none of these fish were in any thing like good condition, although they cut pink; later in the year, or with milder weather, they would be evidently in fine fettle. As an agreeable change a day or two of this fishing may be confidently recommended to anyone who has the facilities for obtaining tickets. There is no apparent reason why the reservoirs of all our great towns should not be stocked with trout of some sort, either brown trout or rainbows, and this would go far to meet the demand created by the destruction of game fish in our rivers by pollution. Of course, the great size of the individual fish is a suspicious circumstance, when one comes to judge of the permanence of the breed. It is due to one or both of two factors: paucity of numbers or plenteousness of food. The paucity in numbers is in most instances due to the fact that the fish do not breed, while the abundance of food may be

—as in the Tasmanian Rivers—only temporary. In more than one reservoir, when trout were first introduced, minnows and sticklebacks were present in abundance, while now not one is to be found. In such a case, unless some fresh food supply be introduced, the condition of the fish will sadly deteriorate.

However, there are plenty of reservoirs without trout and full of good feed, so perhaps we need not feel unduly worried. Destroy the pike and perch, and stock them with trout, and in half-a-dozen years we will have in our midst some southern Loch Levens, such as will give that Mecca of the loch-fisher a hard task to hold its own.

One or two practical hints may be advisable to be given as regards the best tackle and methods of fishing these reservoirs.

As wading is very properly prohibited, it is as well to say that for shore-fishing a 14-foot rod will be found more convenient by most people than a somewhat shorter single-handed rod. With respect to flies, perhaps I may be allowed to write a few lines on a very vexed subject, which seems to be dealt with by many writers in a somewhat unnecessarily disputatious fashion. It has long been my habit to suit my methods and tackle to the habits of the fish; and these vary entirely with their environment. Why do the trout of the chalk streams at times feed madly on surface flies, such as the sub-imago of the mayfly; while the Loch Leven trout, even though the fly be in quantities on the surface, apparently ignore it? Who can tell, the fact remains! Is the average loch fly aught else than the imitation of some water beastie, presumably the larva of some insect? As to the knowledge possessed by chalk-stream trout regarding the flies used by their arch-enemy man, such knowledge has been dearly purchased; they have seen dozens of artificial flies where the lake fish have seen ones; and in some instances have on more than one occasion made an excursion on to the river's bank, in consequence of having been deceived by a clever pattern. No wonder they have

learned wisdom! Still less wonder, then, that the tackle has to be carefully selected, and as close an imitation of nature as can be possibly made, if it be hoped to lure successfully such educated fish as those of the Itchen and the Test.

But there is room for all methods in angling, and far be it from me to recommend that any one system should be universally pursued in all waters, or to condemn the methods of others,—good sportsmen and skilful anglers—as poaching, because they do not appeal to me as the most enjoyable form of sport.

It may be safely said that experience is the best teacher, and that with a few exceptions at special periods of the year the flies for our Midland reservoirs bear no resemblance in form to any perfect kinds of insect.

In April fishing the most successful results have been obtained with a brilliantly coloured salmon-fly on a No. 0 hook (No. 15 new scale) of the Jock Scott, Silver Doctor, or Golden Parson type; later in the season the well-known Loch Leven patterns do very well; while in July, the smallest North Country midge flies seem the only lures that meet with any success.

With the big flies, a strong lake or even sea trout cast may be used; and some local experts are in the habit of adding a lake trout fly as a dropper.

In conclusion, it may be safely said that as good a day's sport may often be had on these reservoirs as any to be obtained in Ireland or Scotland; and that at the expenditure of one third the time and money.

CHAPTER V.

May

May Day on the Lambourn (1900).

HAVING acquired a rod on a piece of this celebrated little river, I decided to run down and look over the water. The gentleman through whom I got the fishing, an old friend of mine, asked me to take my rod and get a trout or two, and see what condition they were in, so as to decide if the water should be open in May, as usual. Last year the fish were hardly fit to be taken for at least a fortnight later than the usual date, and he was anxious to know how they were getting on this season.

Leaving London by the 9 a.m. train, Newbury was reached about half-past eleven, and a few minutes' travel by the Lambourn Valley Light Railway brought me to my destination. An extraordinary concern is this same railway, where all one's accepted notions of railway travelling and railways are upset. Here we have a line with no signals, stations without platforms or stationmasters, while the very train itself (there is only a single line) has first and second, but no third-class carriages. The smoking carriage is at the two ends and guard's van in the middle, the guard issuing tickets *en route*. Still, primitive as the arrangements are, the little railway is a boon to trout fishers, as otherwise, in the immediate past, in order to get to the water the fisherman had to walk or drive varying distances, say, from six to twelve miles, according to where his fishery

was situated. Upon my arrival, I made a call on the holder of the next stretch, and in the course of our conversation he told me that, in his opinion, I should find the trout were well forward. He based his view upon the fair rises of fly that he had seen during the last fortnight. He also told me that he had noticed a lot of small fish about on the shallows, and considered the river better stocked with trout than it had been for some years back.

While standing talking to him on the bridge I saw quite a fair rise of fly and the trout taking them freely, so, wasting no more time, I strolled off up the water meadows to a nice little double bend in the river. Here one or two good fish were rising at the few flies that were hatching out. I tried first with an India-rubber Olive, and popped it over where a dimpled rise had shown, a little way up near my own bank. Owing to a fairly strong downstream wind my first two casts were wide, but the third sailed fairly over, but without any response. Another trial was made, but evidently the fly was wrong, and I changed to a Wickham, while meantime my quarry took another fly as it passed over him. At the first cast with the Wickham he took it, and I landed him, a lanky 12in. fish, certainly not in condition. I duly returned him to his native element, and, while doing so, saw the fly on the water—a pale Blue Quill. This I put up, and fished a rise about twenty yards above the last. This fish at once rose and fastened, but was small, though better-conditioned, and rejoined No. 1 in the river.

In a sharp stickle above the fish rose merrily, and I had three out in no time, all small, duly returned; these ran from 8in. to 10in. in length, and were plump little fish. On the shallows below the sluice I saw a good fish lying where the water rippled over; he was evidently grubbing, though occasionally he rose and took a fly; it was an awkward cast against wind, among trees, and nearly across stream. A lucky shot dropped the fly just on the edge of the stickle, and as it came over up he came, and down it went. He made a

gallant fight, and gave grand sport for light tackle in the swift water, leaping three or four times when checked. This fish went 13in., and though rather poor in condition, was retained in order that the stomach contents might be examined.

While this trout was in the landing-net another rose in the next run in an almost identical position; another fly was rigged up, this time a Pale Olive, as the stock of Blue Quills had all given out, and the last used would no longer float. Sir Herbert Maxwell says that trout have no colour perception, and adduces certain experiments to prove that he is right. These experiments would be more convincing if carried out on well-fished waters, such as that of the Piscatorial Society on the Lambourn, where the fish know the make of fly, and prefer the products of certain fly-tyers. My trout certainly did not think much of yellowish hackle, as he once rose short, and the second time I distinctly saw him follow the fly down for about a foot but finally refuse it. I then picked out the best of my Blue Quills, dried it well in the air, and put it over him; this had him at once. That fish knew the difference between blue and yellow, anyhow. He was hardly as game as his mate, but was in better condition, though ½in. shorter. Him, also, I added to the bag. At half-past four the day turned cold, all rise ceased, and after another small fish was taken and returned I packed up my rod, walked back to the train, and jogged off for London to the *post mortem* of my trout and subsequent supper.

The examination of the stomach contents was interesting and, one is inclined to think, instructive. The first fish, which weighed 11oz., was, as has been said, poor in condition, and the stomach only contained two or three caddis and the dèbris of partially digested duns; while the second trout, though only 12½in. long, weighed 14oz., and its stomach was stuffed with fresh-water shrimp, as well as fly dèbris, also two water snails (*limnea*) and a planorbis. When it is remembered that the two fish were feeding in adjacent runs

and in nearly similar positions, such a difference seems difficult to account for, unless by the hypothesis that the smaller fish commence to feed sooner after spawning (both were female). Another fact was to be noticed, namely, that the larger fish which frequent this stream (from 1lb. to 2lb. in weight) were conspicuous by their absence, and, indeed, might hardly yet have commenced to feed. The presence of water shrimp (*gammarus*) in the better conditioned fish might account for the greater weight, but no sufficient reason seemed to exist why the other fish should not have contained them also. In both trout the usual small stones were present in the stomach in fair quantity. Two out of three caddis in the first trout had similar stones cemented into their cases, and the other stones may be the indigestible remains of previous case-worms

As far as one could learn from such slender materials as have here been indicated, the coming season seemed likely to prove a successful one, especially if the next few weeks had been wet. From the examination of a little sample of weed and water, the supply of larvæ seemed plentiful, while the presence of numerous specimens of both large and small water shrimp showed that the *gammari* had been breeding freely, which would help to bring the fish on rapidly. Altogether it might have been safely prognosticated that if plenty of bright, pure water, a good stock of fish, and a bountiful supply of food were necessary for a successful trouting season, the season then opening bid fair—on this stream, at least—to be above the average. But it was not so; for some weeks, in fact during the whole of May, the river maintained its height and the fish rose well. As the summer passed on without rain the river suffered, the low water and tremendous growth of weed almost putting a stop to the fishing,

The Mayfly, alas, proved a complete failure, only a very few being seen, and those the fish would hardly look at.

The duns also did not show up in any abundance, and altogether the promise of May was not carried out.

On the Test.

The Test, the home of the dry-fly, is the water garden of England, with its chalky white bottom, its brilliant weeds and its diamond-bright water; there live those educated trout whose very existence seems to be scouted by the North Country fly-fisher.

I shall never forget my first introduction to the Test. The portion on which I got the opportunity to fish was noted for the size of its trout. There were not many of them; but what there were were good. And didn't those fish know something! The advent of the angler forty yards below stopped any attempt at rising on the part of one fish, which previously had been taking every Olive that came over it. How gently the fish rose, and how it would examine the fly, almost touching it with the snout, hovering below, following it down, and finally sinking disgustedly out of sight.

The first time I saw a rise of fly I was out on a shallow, exploring the river, carrying all my impedimenta, such as spare rod, &c., with me.

All around me suddenly the fish commenced to rise, occasionally taking the floating insect, but as a rule attacking the nymphæ as they came towards the surface. The spare rod was clapped under the left arm, the waterproof, rod-bag, &c., were stuck under the shoulder strap, and to work I got. I had had some years' experience of dry-fly fishing on other rivers, and flattered myself that I had some little knowledge of this branch of the art; my first cast resulted in the rising fish bolting as if I had thrown a brick at him. I put on a lighter cast and tried another close under the bank; he took the fly and at once bolted into the weeds, and the hook came "unstuck." No. 3 I put down, and then I saw no more rising fish that day.

I returned to London perfectly convinced that Test trout know, as a rule, rather more than the anglers. That is why they have survived. I know as a fact that last summer four past-masters, fishing strictly preserved water, did not bring home a sizeable trout in a week's

fishing. The landlady of the inn, who told me, said that she hoped one fish would be taken that day because "it made them so hard to please." These trout evidently know a little more than others, or else they feed a little less.

Now there is no doubt, though scoffers may deny the fact, that Test trout do feed on fly, and that freely during the month of May. One peaceful May morning I discovered four large fish—none of them under 2lbs. apparently—quietly sucking in the flies which were floating down over them. By kneeling under a large tree and using the underhand cast, I could easily cover the nearest fish, which was rising freely under my own bank. The first cast with the Hare's Ear he came up, put his nose against the fly, followed it down a couple of feet, and then sank to the bottom. I rested him and tried him again with the same fly, but this time he would not budge. I then tried him with the Blue Quill, and again he came and inspected it, but refused to take, although a moment earlier he had risen and sucked in a natural fly. I stuck to that fish all the morning and tried ten different patterns, each of which he carefully examined the first time it came over him, but took no further interest, although taking natural flies every now and then. At last I put up the Orange Bumble, and this he followed down until he saw me, when he at once bolted for cover, scaring the other fish as he went.

After fishing the Test I have come to the conclusion that if the first cast does not hook the fish it is better to change one's fish, for his suspicions are bound to have been aroused. When captured the Test trout is a beauty, brilliantly coloured, well-conditioned, and well-flavoured he is and ought to be, for he takes a deal of catching.

As to the pattern of fly, my personal opinion is that, if his suspicions are not aroused, he is not very particular; but that, if they are, the pattern must be correct, the gut transparent and inconspicuous, and the cast perfection, if one hopes to induce him to take hold. One bit of advice as given by Halford ought to be

framed in letters of gold, namely, that fish feeding under the bank rise more boldly than when in the middle of the stream. This is especially the case in the Test, where I found the shadow of the gut was to a great extent lost under the bank, whereas if thrown in midstream on to the white chalky bottom it appears an inch at least in thickness, and almost enough at first to scare the angler. Another thing that strikes one is the necessity of creeping and crawling and throwing a short line; for a long line cannot fall delicately. Also, in a river full of natural obstructions, the water runs faster in some places than others, and a long line gives therefore more chance of drag.

A short line, accurately and delicately thrown, combined with the underhand cast, will do more execution than the most magnificent exhibition of record casting with the performer silhouetted on the skyline.

CHAPTER VI.

June

The Mayfly.

THE early days of June are marked with red letters in the calendar of the Southern fly-fisher, who looks forward to the rise of "the fly," *i.e.*, the Mayfly, as the time when he will be the captor of a giant trout. Many or few as may have been his previous victims, he still thirsts for the record fish which will satisfy his inward longings. How true it is—

> Hope springs eternal in the human breast,
> Man never is, but always to be, blest.

So every year about the latter end of May or the beginning of June, Piscator awaits eagerly the looked-for telegram conveying the welcome news that "the fly is up." Most of us know the meaning of this term To those who do not, the following brief explanation is given.

The larval Mayfly spends its time under water for a period of two years, according to our best authorities; and in the early summer, when the water gets to a certain temperature, hatches out into its sub-imago or first winged condition, known as the *Green Drake*. I am not aware if it is generally known that the female Mayfly alone undergoes its transformation on the water. The male, on the other hand, creeps up the stem of some reed on the bank, and there hatches. He then begins his up and down dance on the shore, and never

ventures over the water. The female, on the other hand, goes through the metamorphosis on the water, rising to the surface and, splitting along the back, emerges as a winged insect floating on a raft formed by its larval shell, until its wings are dry, when it flutters off towards the shore. Here she meets the male insect, and after becoming the perfect insect known as the *Grey Drake*, she returns to the river to lay her eggs, and then floats away down stream with outspread wings as the *Spent Gnat*. It is while undergoing the first change that the female is most freely taken by fish, while even birds of all kinds devour the Mayfly by hundreds. The Southern fly-fisher then enjoys his best sport, using his various imitations of fur and feather so well known to all anglers. Each angler has his pet fly, and most their pet theories. Dark wings and light, detached bodies and semi-detached, hackles cut and uncut, and a dozen other modifications all have their advocates and detractors.

One gentleman with whom the author is acquainted has a pet theory about hooks, and has his flies all tied on 0 size. As he very sensibly says: "If you can hook big trout on small irons with small flies, why not try the same with the big-winged flies, seeing that most of the size is in the wing?" However, space does not allow of any full discussion of the subjects broached; suffice it to say that the whole question reminds one forcibly of the old line, "Who shall decide when doctorsdisagree?"

Amongst all the angling festivals of the year the Mayfly Carnival stands chief; the balmy air, laden with the scent of meadow flowers, and the glancing stream winding its way through the water meadows, its surface here and there covered with ranunculus, alternate with brilliant green ribbons of flowing weed, under whose shadow lie the great lazy leviathans of our Southern rivers, are engraven on our minds, and the memories leave therein a supreme sense of pleasures enjoyed. At this time, and at this alone, the monsters of the stream give the fly fisher an opportunity to try conclusions with them. "The duffer's holiday"—and why not? Why should

not the duffer have his chance? Were we not all duffers once? Moreover, all must allow that the man who, on a 10ft. rod and single drawn point, can land his 3½lb. or 4lb. trout after playing it in a flower garden of water weeds, must be something more than a duffer. Such fish are not uncommon on our Kennet, and when in the mood, feed on the mayfly right busily. Even if the trout are not feeding madly, and only occasionally a mayfly appears, how pleasantly the hours pass, as we wander by the river waiting for the rise, and watching if the trout be inclined to move. Now and then a mayfly appears on the surface, only to be seized by an adventurous dace, or, feebly fluttering off the water, falls a prey to the swoop of a swallow or a swift. The recollection of pleasant June days returns to us, when the hours have been spent in wandering by the river, knee-deep in the luxuriant vegetation of the lush meadow, crushing as one goes buttercups, forget-me-nots, wild orchids, and dozens of other wild flowers, and disturbing moths, butterflies, bees, in fact a busy throng of insect life, all getting a livelihood from the honey-laden blooms. Above, around, everywhere, the different notes of wild birds can be heard, whilst now and then a splash in the river marks a feeding fish; or a coot, or a water-vole, startled at our appearance, plunges into the water.

Usually the morning rise is scattered, but about two to four o'clock the Mayfly may come up more freely. Every here and there a sub-imago will then be observed breaking into life. Frequently its two years of slavery in the mud are ill repaid; ere it has time to dry its wings, a ring, a splash, and it has gone to help to get into condition another lusty trout or grayling. If the wind be high, however, the fly is frequently whisked off the water on to the bank, where the sparrows and chaffinches quickly end its woes.

Most of us have enjoyed a good day on good water when the mayfly has been in evidence, and require but little further to be said on the pleasures of such a day. About the end of May we begin to furbish up our tackle,

and get our pet pattern mayflies in readiness. A short account of three days of sport will give a better idea than any description devoted to tackle and methods can possibly convey. These days are not chosen as anything more than fair representations of actual days enjoyed. The memories of marvellous bits of sport recur to one's mind, but the notes giving the correct data have been mislaid. Thus in one half-hour on an otherwise blank day, the writer once took from under a length of camp shedding extending about 25 yards, four trout between 2¾ and 1¾lbs. apiece, having been broken up at the first cast by a much larger fish owing to having no landing net.

On the Lambourn, June 5th, 7th, and 8th, 1897.

"The Fly is up," says our telegram, and therefore, throwing business to the winds, again we go to our old water, to engage in that most fascinating of pursuits, described by Cotton—"the second way of angling at the top, which is with an artificial fly." We arrive at our inn about eight in the evening, and fifteen minutes sees us upon the water. We perceive that, though prompt, we are not the first arrivals In the garden, past which flows our stream, crouched behind a gooseberry bush, one veteran is posted, just about to make a cast over "that big one, sir, that broke me last year," while further up the river a novice may be observed occupying a prominent position on the extreme edge of the bank, silhouetted against the darkening sky, and casting frantically a long line in coils; he serves, no doubt, as a danger signal, which will be pointed out by the old grandfather *farios* to the young unwary troutlings. I am not a great believer in the value of books in the learning of our sport, but nevertheless can scarce forbear to steal up to our friend and whisper the words of our only fishing classic: "You have length enough; stand a little further off, let me entreat you, and do but fish the stream like an artist, and peradventure a good fish may fall to your share."

Though the rise is practically over, still an odd fly drifts down under the bank, and is taken by shy, rising trout.

When last seen, the river was practically a mass of waving water weeds, resembling nothing so much as the Medusa's locks. But now a change has come over the scene. At the lower end of the water, upon the bank, is a fragrant (?) stack of weed, and the river bed, shorn of its tresses, bears a strong family likeness to a stubble field. Over the weed stumps here and there a terrified trout scurries away at our approach.

Evening is coming on, however, and the dusk partially hides the angler, if the approach be carefully made. Putting up a small Mayfly, I try my luck, creeping, kneeling, and casting a short line under my own bank. Only three times does a fish come at the fly, but the three rises result in two sizeable fish, the larger of which, 1½lb. in weight, is an exceptionally good fish for the river. In half an hour it is impossible to see the fly, and a slight hollowness suggests the necessity of adjourning to the hostelry to partake of that midnight feast—dinner in the Mayfly season. Here about half-a-dozen fishers foregather, and those who arrived earlier in the day narrate their experiences, all united in complaining that the fish came very short, and showed a great fastidiousness as to the pattern of the fly. Next day is Sunday, and, of course, the weather is lovely, the breeze favourable, and the rise occurs early in the afternoon and lasts well into the evening. From four till dark the river literally boils with fish, but more fly seem to be taken under water, or just as it is hatching out at the surface, while but few are taken by the fish when sailing full-blown down the stream.

During the rise the larger trout can be seen moving about under water, but rarely breaking the surface, and even when they do so, are evidently taking the fly as it rises before it has hatched out. After this day of undisturbed enjoyment for the fish, the fishers naturally expected that they would be getting over their shyness, and I looked forward to great things being accomplished

on the morrow. Everything is put in readiness, lines are greased, gut put to damp, and flies prepared.

The day rises grey and misty and inclined to rain, but the inclination is not given way to. A light breeze blows upstream and the hopes of the fishers rise high, as, about breakfast time, the sun breaks through the clouds. The morning is put in wandering by the bank of the river, and an odd fish is taken with the Alder in the forenoon. At five the rise commences, and in half-an-hour the scene of yesterday is repeated, and the river seems alive with fish. Plunge, plunge! flop, flop! resounds on every side, while the martins skim the water hither and thither, picking up what flies escape the fishes. But though all appears favourable, the gut fine single-drawn 20-inch, the line straight, and the fly comes down without drag, nothing more than a false rise results, the fly passing on its course untouched by the fish. After many changes of different patterns by the best makers, a dark-winged, straw-bodied fly is borrowed from a neighbour, and then one gets an odd fish drowning the fly. Once or twice a slight pull is felt, but I am convinced that this is only from the fly touching or catching on the fish's body, as on striking the fly comes away. Later on, however, after the rise proper is over, a couple of brace of small but sizeable fish are stalked and captured. It has been frequently stated that when the fish are not taking the perfect fly well, the wingless pattern, which is supposed to imitate the larvæ, should be used. This was put on during the heat of the rise, and was fished upstream wet and dry, and downstream, both with and without jerking the rod top. Nothing whatever came at it. The artificial perfect mayfly was constantly picked off the water by the birds after it had passed over a rising fish, which will not look at it.

The mystery explains itself next day. The weather having completely changed in the night, the day breaks cold and windy, with a N.E. wind and rain. I determine to devote the first quarter-of-an-hour of the rise to watching the movements of the fish, so choosing a

sheltered nook beside a floating bridge, I sit down and wait. The fly does not come up till five, and then not freely. Before the rise has apparently begun, I see a large fish going through the most extraordinary antics in the eddy below the plankway; he darts from under the bridge into the eddy, twisting hither and thither three or four times, and then darts back again to his shelter; close watching shows that he is larvæ feeding, opening his mouth and taking one at each twist.

Just above the bridge a small fish is at work. The reflection from the water does not permit of watching his under-water movements, but his manœuvres at the top are clearly visible; a little blackish point appears above water, gets a little bigger, then there is a slight dimple, and the black spot disappears. Once or twice the dimple is not seen, and a perfect mayfly spreads out its wings and flutters off. Evidently this fish is following the larvæ up to the surface, and taking them as they hatch; he does not look at an artificial dropped before his nose. About the middle of the rise an odd fish or so comes half-heartedly at the dark-winged artificial; during three-quarters-of-an-hour eleven fish are risen, six are pricked, and one, foul-hooked outside the jaw, is landed. Thus ends my mayfly holiday. It has convinced me of one thing, viz., that the modern subscription-water trout is getting to know more than the fisherman.

It is to be noticed in many fisheries that although the fish show a growing disinclination to take the perfect insect, when their stomachs are opened they are found stuffed with hatching larvæ. Indeed, if the rise be carefully watched, it may be noted that underwater feeding is the rule and not the exception, and this throughout the whole period, from the first day to the last. The reason of this state of affairs is obvious. On dry-fly waters, of course dry-fly only is allowed; undersized fish are taken galore during the Mayfly season with the floating imitation, either of Grey or Green Drake or Spent Gnat. These are returned to the water upon, perhaps, more than one occasion. The next year they

find themselves again confronted with the mayfly problem; eat they must, for the mayfly, with the Grannom, in many rivers takes the place of the quails and manna of the Israelites in the wilderness; but last year's feast had painful memories connected with the floating fly, so this year the trout try the larvæ as it ascends. Great fish can be seen dashing hither and thither, snapping up the changing insect before it can even reach, much less break, the surface on its way to light and sunshine from its two years' captivity below the waters.

Some authorities say that the bulging and under-water larva feeding is only seen at the beginning of the rise. On this water it was most marked at least eight days after the first appearance of the fly, and was accompanied by two other vices—a great fastidiousness as to the pattern of the artificial and a marked tendency to come short. The true explanation appears to the writer to be that the fish are hook-shy; the stream is overcrowded with trout, which therefore rarely grow to any great size; the number of rods fishing the water are too many; and the limit at all times is 12in. Frequently ten undersized fish will be caught and returned for one which is takeable as regards size, especially during the summer months. Therefore, nearly every fish in the river has been hooked, some frequently; and many are landed and returned at least once in their lives, so that it is not to be wondered at that they fight shy of floating flies, and prefer to make a diet of something under water. This evil tends to grow worse, as short-rising fish are frequently pricked, and just sufficiently alarmed to put them off a fly dietary. Again, having been hooked before, when they feel the steel they know what to do, and at once bolt into the weeds, take a turn, and the hook comes away. This is a bad state of affairs, as the trout are being gradually educated not to rise to the fly at all, and seem to be learning their lesson well.

The trout quickly find that they can gorge to their heart's content upon the larvæ, secure from the prick

of the steel-barbed hook and downstream drag of the experienced fly-fisher. If they should be fished for with the imitation of the larvæ, fished wet downstream, as practised now on some waters, they are rarely landed, as, being below the angler, they usually weed him in the first rush, and escape while he is trying to get below and pull them down towards him. Of course, on many waters such a form of fishing would not be permitted, as under no circumstances can it be called a dry-fly method. The difficulty of such a method, if pursued where the sport is best, namely, amongst the aquatic flower gardens of our southern rivers in June, is tremendous, and the game is hardly worth the candle.

Seeing, then, that the fish which take the perfect insect are caught and either killed or scared, it is small wonder that the percentage of such fish should grow yearly less and less, while the proportion of larvæ feeders should increase. The local committees, who so frequently manage subscription waters, seem inclined to look with favour upon such a state of matters, because if fish are not taken out fresh stock need not be put in, and the expense of re-stocking is avoided. This is to my mind bad policy, as the first object of a fishery is to provide fish, and of a trout fishery to maintain a good supply of free risers. These are to be obtained only by getting rid of the old stock and introducing fresh blood. In order to get rid of the present non-risers, the limit might with advantage be lowered, and the large, non-fly-feeding fish removed with the minnow. Then the river could be thoroughly re-stocked with two and three-year-old fish, and given a complete rest for one season. In order that the old order of things should not speedily recur, either a low standard with constant re-stocking must be adopted, or the number of rods fishing the water should be materially reduced. Further, on many mayfly waters a practice prevails of cutting the weed immediately before the Mayfly rise. The would-be trout wiseacre says, "Weed cutting does not hurt the fly, because it lives in the mud." Well, who said it did? That is not the objection, which

is two-fold. Firstly, the running of scythes through the water scares the fish; and secondly, the cover removed, the fish will not feed freely. If lanes are cut three weeks or a fortnight before, that is all that is necessary; and this can be done without greatly scaring the fish. Trout are kittle cattle at the best of times, and require a good deal of encouragement before they will feed on the may-fly, and cutting away their cover and wounding the fish themselves with scythes seems nothing more nor less than absurd. Of course, weed-cutting does not always depend upon the angling tenants, but no water should be taken without some definite arrangement being come to on the matter.

Much damage has also been done to trout fisheries by the indiscriminate flogging to which they are subjected by persons learning the rudiments of the art of fly-fishing. This nuisance is greatly accentuated during the Mayfly season, as every public hotel or day ticket water is then thronged to its utmost capacity. At this time the banks are lined with would-be trout catchers, armed with a fearful and wonderful array of rods and tackle. The weaver's beam and the penny cane styles of architecture are both in evidence; while flies, from an apology for a shuttlecock to one of Mrs. Richardson's straw-bodied Gems, dot the water rather more thickly than the natural insect, some floating, others dragging, but the majority derelict. A well-known angler, speaking of a notably successful but somewhat unskilful fellow sports-man, said the other day, "Everyone knows how 'W' gets his fish with the mayfly; he picks out a good fish and sits over him. Whenever a natural comes over that trout, he smacks down his artificial beside it and scares the fish away. This he keeps up till the rise is over and the fish has got so hungry that, in desperation he takes 'W's' fly. Any fool can get 'em that way." Is it any wonder that the fish do not feed freely, and take to preying on the larvæ?

There is much to be said for those who, having good trout water, thank Providence that this fly is not to be found in their fishery; for, although fish rise at

that fly which never rise at any other, still many which otherwise would give a chance during the rest of the season are hooked and landed, scratched and lost, or gorged to repletion, so that for months afterwards they never rise to the dry fly with any freedom.

To those who have never fished with the Mayfly three hints may be given which the angler has found useful.

1. Fish it whenever the chance occurs, which may not be for another year, and perhaps not then.
2. Use strong tackle.
3. Get below the hooked fish and pull him downstream.

On the Kennet.—June 4th, 1898.

The permit arrived by post of Thursday, June 2nd, and was worded as follows: "Permit Dr. Patterson and friend to fish my water for one day during the next ten days." Consequently, when the 6.30 a.m. steamed out of Paddington on Saturday morning we occupied two seats, while waders, rods, nets, and fishing bags helped to fill up the racks above us.

Pleasing visions filled our minds of the big takes we were going to make, and memories of past triumphs seemed to promise success. Those who do not know the Kennet can have but little idea of its capabilities as a breeding ground for large trout. Running, as its does, canalised in stretches, its course is, in the true river portions, made up of a succession of slowly running deeps, converted in June into flower gardens by the water ranunculus, with paths of clear water separating the beds. These deeps are separated from each other by a succession of gravelly shallows; at the head of the pools below, and in the foot-deep stickles, lie handsome trout of from 1lb. to 3lb. in weight. In the water lanes are dace, chub, and other coarse fish; and here, when the rise is at its height, are to be found the leviathan trout of the Kennet--the monsters of 5lbs., 8lbs., or even 10lbs. weight, for which the river is famed.

While the train speeds on its way the tackle is got ready, the double tapered lines are vaselined, and the casts are put into the damping box. Good lake trout these are, strong enough to hold a small donkey, and thoroughly suitable for the work on hand; for it is to be remembered that, in the weedy deeps and the swift shallows alike, if fish are to be landed they must be held from the start. Moreover, these fish are not in the least gut shy, if they have not become aware of the angler's presence.

Arrived at our destination, we made for the village inn, and proceeded to consume with avidity the second breakfast, which was to be the only solid meal of the day.

While thus occupied the keeper was announced as waiting outside, and within half an hour, *i.e.*, about 9.30, we were *en route* for the river. The day did not look promising, dark grey clouds overhung the sky, and a stiff breeze was blowing from the south-east. The keeper told us that there had been a scattered rise the day before, but that the fish did not seem to be taking the fly, and, in fact, had not got used to it.

We arrived at the river bank, and, while we were fitting up, a good trout rose and took a mayfly right opposite where we were standing. Below lay a shallow with about two feet of water over it, so, wading out in this, I cast upstream over the rising fish, which I promptly put down. Turning to come ashore, I noticed a boil about ten yards below me, and without measuring cast the fly down-stream in that direction; a boil, a strike, and I was into a good fish, which, being below me, at once weeded himself and got away.

Coming ashore, I indulged in the luxury of a smoke, and awaited the resumption of business on the part of the other trout on the shallow. At the end of ten minutes I noticed another rise, cast over it, and hooked a nice fish, pulled him downstream, and landed him; he weighed 2lbs. The pulling of these trout down the stream as soon as they are hooked is, in the writer's opinion, the secret of success, for if they are once given a chance they are in and out of the weeds with lightning

rapidity; while if their heads are once pulled so that the current plays on their broadside, their power of direction is gone, the current carries them past their hiding places, and if one can run fast enough the fish is into the net before he quite realises what has happened. Half an hour yielded two more trout out of this run—nicely-conditioned fish of 2lbs. and 1¾lb. respectively, the roofs of whose mouths were packed with May flies, many not hatched out, retained in position by the vomerine and palatine teeth: these structures, curved backwards and inwards, are best developed and most persistent in those trout which are practically dependent for their livelihood on a diet of flies and larvæ. The capture of these fish put down the others in the immediate neighbourhood, so I moved further down, and tried if any of the Kennet monsters were on the move in the deeps.

Here I found my friend, who had been in grips with something large, which smashed him, but otherwise had had hold of nothing save dace, which he had risen galore and hooked occasionally. The rising of dace during the Mayfly season is full of information to those who care to learn. How often do we find dace, and dace only, rising to the fly which is fluttering feebly on the surface. Suddenly the rise comes on, and the fly begins to hatch out. The scene at once changes—a dash, a rush, and half a dozen Kennet trout are at work, and not a dace is seen to move. How different also is the manner in which the dace takes the fly. The quick, impatient plop, made by the dace, the frequency of the fly being missed, as if the fish strikes at his prey to drown it, preparatory to swallowing it.

In the deep, quiet water, where the big trout live, one must not look for the dashing rise of the fish on the shallows. Close in under yon trailing tress of weed, with its buttercup-like flowers, one sees a tiny dimple and a bubble left where a mayfly was. Cast there an upstream line, which shall drop as light as thistledown about a foot or less above, and within an inch or two of the weed. As it passes the fatal spot it is gone, and you are fighting with all your power, all

your knowledge, and all your skill against a fish as strong as a salmon, with many times his experience of how to avail himself of his local surroundings. Further, it is to be remembered that it is not in the clear water of a salmon river that this battle must be fought out, but rather in the midst of a growth of water-weed, which bears a strong family resemblance to an African jungle. This is the time when the strong gut comes into play, and when, if one loses control for one instant, the game is up, and the angler is left lamenting.

It was too near the commencement of the Mayfly season, however, for the big fish to be taking kindly to the fly, and as regards trout this situation was drawn blank, so I resumed operations by wading across a shallow covered with weed, and was soon into another 2-pounder.

Then the morning rise went off, and ample time was left for a stroll up the water, and the mid-day sandwich and *post-prandial* pipe. Towards four o'clock the fly came up again, but not as in the morning in single spies, but in battalions, and the plop, plop! splash, splash! of rising fish resounded on every side. The bright yellow-winged mayfly did tremendous execution, and fish after fish was taken, which, as one was fishing for sport and not for the pot, were returned to keep up the stock. About five o'clock another 2-pounder took the fly, and was played and netted while one stood knee-deep in a shallow. The net, however, an old and trusted friend, failed me, for, being rotten from age, the bottom strands gave way while the fish was being carried ashore, and in an instant the astonished fish was again in the water, and the angler, in a similar state of mind, was playing him through the net. The captive took refuge in a tuft of weeds, whence he was hauled out by the gills, and is carried ashore plus a bundle of vegetables. His romantic capture, however, lost him his life, and he was added to the others in the fishing bag.

Now the fun is nearly over, for the trout are pretty well gorged for the day, and only the coarse fish continue to rise. So after one or two casts on a little

stream, a feeder of the main river, which yields one undersized fish, the tackle is packed up, and after a good meal the tired anglers return to town. The second fly-fisher has not done so well, for, adhering to old experience, he fished in the deeps, catching plenty of coarse fish, but only one trout of 2lb.

The total catch for the day is thirteen trout, of which three brace, averaging close on 2lb. apiece, are retained —a brace for the owner of the water, and a like number for each of the fishermen. And so ends the outing, one of the pleasantest of many angling days on that queen of rivers, the Kennet.

On the Kennet.—June 2nd and 3rd, 1899.

This year I had an invitation to fish the Kennet on both Friday and Saturday, June 2nd and 3rd, one day with one friend and next day with another.

Starting from London by the early morning train I was met at the station by my old friend, who had permits for two stretches of the river. Leaving the station we discussed as to which water it would be most profitable to fish, and finally decided on the lower of the two, as the last report stated that the fly had only been seen in quantity during the last day or two. As is well known, the Mayfly rise begins low in the Kennet, and gradually works up, so that the rise is full on at Hungerford at least a week or ten days later than in the lower reaches, say between Aldermaston and Theale. We arrived at the river's bank about ten, and already a few fly were to be seen. Thus encouraged, I rigged up a Mayfly and walked up the bank looking for a rise. At one part of the river the banks are about 4ft. high, and the bottom is deep, forming a fine pool and eddy of about fifteen yards across; in it was a collection of scum, and on the edge of this several dimples appeared.

The first cast into the slack water resulted in a bold rise, and after a few minutes' good sport a nice fish of 1¾lb. was safely netted. This looked a promising

beginning, although another try in the eddy produced no result, the other fish having been evidently scared by the dashing rushes of number one. About 50 yards above, after a series of sharp stickles where small trout were well in evidence, the river undercut the bank, and here, in one of those tiny eddies where big fish love to lie in wait, a succession of quiet rises close beside the bank were observed. Every fly that circled in was taken immediately, so the artificial was promptly got to work The fly was cast with plenty of slack line to avoid drag, and curled into the eddy; there was a quiet dimple, the fly disappeared, a turn of the wrist, and next moment a good fish was fighting for his life. Just below his eddy was a fallen, half-submerged tree trunk, and here, evidently, was his lair. How he fought for the trunk! and how one slipped and stumbled in the rapid stream, about 2½ feet in depth, and full of trailing tresses of water weed. Suffice it to say that both fish and man were pretty tired when the net was slipped under him. The net was placed on the bank, and the fish weighed on the steelyard; 2lb. 6oz. he went, and a picture he looked as the hook was taken out of him. Getting a fresh grip to throw him to the boy, in order that he might be knocked on the head and stowed away to keep cool, a terrible catastrophe, from the angler's point of view, occurred; the fish slipped, bounced off the edge of the bank, and in an instant was in the river, rolled over and disappeared. "A bad start to a good day," said my old friend, and it seemed as if his words were correct, for, try as one would, not another sizeable fish could we get on our way up the water. Small trout and dace rose greedily, but the Kennet monsters from 3lb. to 5lb. were conspicuous by their absence, or rather abstinence.

About two o'clock the rise proper began, but still the grandfathers refused to dine. A still, muddy, deep reach amongst overhanging trees gave an occasional indication of the presence of fish, and upon casting over a quiet rise just at the edge of some rushes the Mayfly was taken, and I landed a 3lb. chub. A few

minutes after another of this species rewarded (?) my endeavours.

Further up the river a good trout was seen on the shallow on the other side of the river; he never rose to the natural fly at all, but when the artificial was put over him he turned round, sailed downstream after it, and—refused it.

This settled the matter, and as the fly weakened about three, we adjourned under the shade of a friendly haystack for lunch.

While investigating the construction of a most excellent veal-and-ham pie we heard repeated splashes on a weedy shallow just above; so, postponing further food till a more convenient season, we raced off to see if, perchance, we might find trout at last feeding on the Mayfly. Here, there, and everywhere the fish were rising busily, and each cast was rewarded with a rise. After some little trouble a dace was captured, and then a roach; but over an hour's careful fishing did not yield one trout. By this time we made up our minds to walk up and try the upper water, so struck across the fields, arriving at a favourite shallow about half-past five. Here a fellow-fisher told us that he had been having good sport, and had taken four and a half brace of sizeable trout, and had been broken up two or three times with heavy fish: further, he said that the rise had been on from one to four, and that the fish then fed greedily. Certainly they must have fed well prior to our appearing on the scene, for after our arrival they refused to look at any pattern of Mayfly—either light wing or dark, grey hackle or red, straw body or chenille—or even Spent Gnat. First cast my old friend got broken up casting downstream with a wet Mayfly, but, although he tried the same lure for an hour or two after, no further offer rewarded his efforts. The fish seemed thoroughly satisfied, and although as the sun went down a good show of sedge came on the water, not a fish stirred a fin, and, indeed, could be seen lying motionless in the runs, letting Sedges, Mayflies, Spent Gnats, &c., go by unharmed. And so the

day finished, and we returned to the hotel with one sizeable fish, while a good rise of fly had been on in the immediate vicinity.

The next morning rose fine and bright, a light breeze blowing gently from the S.S.E. After the usual excellent breakfast, for which the Bell Hotel is noted, I walked down to the station to meet my friend, who arrived, full of enthusiasm, by the first train; and full of enthusiasm he must have been, for in order to get to Paddington it was necessary that he should rise about five a.m. By half-past nine we were on the water, needless to say before e'er a mayfly had thought of putting in an appearance. The swifts and swallows were, however, already hawking over the water, evidently picking up some form of fly food. Putting up the appropriate pattern of Mayfly, I wandered off to my favourite shallow, and, lighting a cigarette, sat down to await events. About 10-30 a small sprinkle of mayfly began to come up, and at the tails of various trails of weed one here and there saw a movement which bore a suspicious likeness to trout feeding on the larvæ. As one sub-imago, just emerged, floated down a gentle run past one of these trailers of weed, it was suddenly taken, disappearing almost imperceptibly. Here was at last a chance for the artificial, so, wading in so as to get below the level of the bank, and in a position to avoid drag, I made a false cast or two to get the distance, and the fly dropped about 18ins. above the place where the natural had disappeared. It slowly glided down, and was at once taken—a strike, a wild rush, and the fly fluttered back. This was an uncommonly bad start, but no matter, as the rises were now seen in all directions. Every time the fly was floated over a fish he rose, and in quick succession one hooked, played, and returned undersized trout and large dace. Here and there amongst the weed, in difficult spots, one saw the water boil, although nothing was seen to happen, should a hatched fly drift over the spot. One fish I tried with every pattern of Mayfly in my possession. Finally, I bethought myself of the Spent

Gnat. Putting up one of the well-known Hungerford patterns, I dropped it over the fish, and up he came and took it, a nice-conditioned trout of 1¾lb.

How that fish did fight! winding himself and the line into the weeds which surrounded him on all sides. Keeping a firm hold, I waded up, and by stirring the fish up with the handle of the landing-net succeeded in bringing him into view and quickly into the net. But, alas, the Spent Gnat was evidently not medicine for all the trout, although the dace admired it greatly, making the most futile attempts to get it down and bedraggling it every cast long before it could be taken by a trout, unless it were put right over the spot where he was suspected to be feeding.

At lunch time my friend and self compared notes, He had taken a trout of 1¼lb. on the Mayfly, and I one of 1¾lb. on the Spent Gnat. Dace innumerable had been hooked and landed, and we had taken about a dozen undersized trout between us. However, we comforted ourselves with the idea that when the rise came on the true Kennet leviathans would feed. About four o'clock the fly came up thickly, but the rise of fish grew less. At the upper end of the water my comrade took a 1½-pounder, a chub, a roach, and several dace, while below I continued to capture dace, with an occasional undersized trout. Several other rods were fishing the water with similar want of success, and yet at the same time the day before one rod had taken four and a half brace of 2-pounders, and been broken up several times, so he said, with better fish.

This reminds one, by-the-bye, of an interesting occurrence which throws some light upon the fish one loses during the mayfly rise, and other matters. I have mentioned that in the morning I took a trout of 1¾lb.; when I got home I gave this fish to a friend, who, in the course of a day or two, returned to me a mayfly which the cook had found in the gullet when cleaning the fish. It was certainly not the fly the fish was captured with, as it had an Egyptian Goose wing, whereas the fish was taken on the Spent Gnat, and the wing of the May-

fly I was using was Dyed Mallard. The fly was quite fresh and had about an inch of gut attached to the eye. This was possibly one of the fish in which the successful fisherman of the day before had broken away. In any case, the occurrence throws an interesting light on several points. Thus it is repeatedly stated that a trout which has been hooked and the fly broken in it will not rise again that mayfly season. Here the fly was embedded in the fish's gullet, and yet it rose and took another fly within certainly a day or two. Again, the voracity with which trout on the feed take the mayfly is shown by the fact of the barb of the hook being embedded in the gill arches, just by the gullet. Thirdly, if this fish was hooked by the gentleman of the day before (who had alone fished the water before us that week), then the incident shows that it is not always the biggest fish which break away, as all the trout he took were over 2lbs. in weight. There is, in my opinion, but little doubt in this case that the gut, weakened by previous struggles, was cut by chafing against the sharp teeth, the hook being fixed in the throat. However, to return to our muttons, The fly rose right briskly, but the big trout would have none of it; so we wandered up and down disconsolately, casting in a half-hearted way over dace, and "cussing" them when they hooked themselves. As evening came on, a slight change for the better occurred, and at last, in a few difficult positions, decided trout rises appeared. No pattern of fly seemed of any use, except a small, dark-barred wing variety, with a red cock hackle and a straw body. I happily had a few of these with me, tied by Mrs. Richardson, and putting one up, started to work. The first result was that I rose, hooked, and landed a trout of 1½lb. Next I got hold of a small fish, which I returned, and then walked off along the bank, keeping a sharp look-out for rises. Over on the big shallow in a long glide I found a fish feeding steadily, taking every one of the few flies that came over him, and taking them so quietly that hardly a dimple marked the water when the fly disappeared. Here at last was a large

trout which ought to be mine. I waded carefully within easy casting distance, and first cast the fly floated over him without drag. Suddenly it was gone, and I struck; a heavy plunge told of a good fish, necessitating careful handling. It is my habit, as I have said, when fishing weedy water, to hold all fish hard and haul them downstream, which plan of treating trout is, I am convinced, the only certain method of preventing them weeding themselves. When I cannot run, as, for instance, when wading, I always pull the line through the rod rings in order to get it in quickly. Discussing the matter with a fellow angler, he stated that, in his opinion, it was safer to wind up the fish and play him from the winch, and that this could be done quite as quickly as pulling the line down. On this occasion I tried winding-in, and the result was that the fish got into the weeds and the hook came away. At the speed that fish came downstream no ordinary winch could recover line fast enough. Here would have been an opening for the Automatic winch, and it might certainly be worth while giving it a trial. Anyhow, I lost my fish and learnt a lesson, namely, not to try experiments with valuable material. All day long I could have winched in undersized fish; but no, I must wait till I get hold of the only decent fish of the mayfly season to experiment upon it.

By the time I had waded ashore, made several appropriate remarks to the keeper, lit a cigarette, and otherwise relieved my feelings, the trout had ceased to rise, and as night was gathering in we packed up, walked back to the "Bell" to dinner (the most satisfactory part of the day's proceedings), and returned to London by the last train with the total bag for the day—two-and-a-half brace of fish for two rods, against six-and-a-half brace for one rod the previous season.

Dace on the Kennet.—Fishing by Sight.

Frequently during the hot, cloudless days of June and July, the angler, having toiled from early morn till about ten in the forenoon, finds his occupation gone because,

as he says, "the fish have gone off their feed." He, therefore, either spends his day in idleness, or fishes patiently on to capture infant and unsophisticated fingerlings, which alone appear to notice his lures. The question has often occurred to my mind whether it is really a fact that during the hours of heat fish do not feed. Some years ago I became sceptical, and, therefore, have never missed an available opportunity, when the water has been clear, of watching from some place of concealment the movements of freshwater fish during these hours of brightness.

The first fact that I noticed was that, instead of being listless and idle during the day, roach, dace, chub, and even perch seem to be for ever roaming about in search of food; and when they find it, instead of refusing it, they feed greedily on whatever seems in best condition.

Well do I remember one bright July day how, crouched behind a bush on the top of an 8ft. bank, I watched a dozen large roach busily engaged in stripping the confervoid growth, with its myriads of small animal and vegetable inhabitants, off the surface of the ribbon weed, which waved its 7ft. or 8ft. tresses in the cool running water. The *modus operandi* was simple: each fish swam up stream among the waving ribbons, and seizing a frond with its lips about 2ft. from the root, allowed the current to carry it down stream for a foot or two, the blade of weed being drawn through its mouth. These evolutions they kept repeating by the hour together, and a prettier sight I never wish to see. The great fish, some of them well over 2lb. in weight, plunged amongst the weeds, their silvery sides and red fins contrasting with a wealth of waving green, the brilliant sun illuminating the brightly-glancing crystal water so that every blade of weed and every scale was as distinct as if placed behind glass in an aquarium.

Another simple proof that fish feed in the hours of sunshine is known to all of us. How often, when we stand on the road-bridge over some favourite fishing river, do we see the dace close on the bottom, head to stream, making little darts along the gravel! Try them

with a little bit of bait, thrown well up stream, and watch as it comes down. If suitable and well sunk the fish take it for a certainty.

Why, then, does the ordinary opinion prevail? Simply because the tackle and the baits used are wrong. Every angler can prove this for himself. Take a place where you have clear water containing dace, about 3ft. deep, either still or having, preferably, a gentle eddy; rig up your ordinary tackle, taking care to keep out of sight. Let, for example, your bait be gentles, and your arrangement float tackle, shotted just to clear the bottom, or to drag a little, according as there is little or no current. Watch carefully, and if you have not disturbed the fish, and encourage them by scattering in a few gentles, they will begin to sail round, probably absorbing *en route* any gentles that may be falling; two or three small fish may rush for your bait, and suddenly a large fish sails straight up to it. Occasionally he will go so far as to open his mouth, suck in the bait, and as suddenly blow it out, without any movement of the float exhibiting the fact that the angler has had a bite. As a rule, however, when within an inch or two of the hook the fish turns away, and for the future pays no further attention to the bait, which is worried by minnows and small fry, one of which sometimes gets hooked for his temerity. It may be thought that the fish see the gut, so try the ledger. As a rule this also proves fruitless. But the fish took the gentles that were falling, therefore let us imitate nature; so rigging up a single hook, and putting a gentle on we allow it to sink gradually. A dace takes it, and we strike—but too late; the fish had felt the hook, and ejected the bait almost instantly. What is to be done? Keep a tight line between the bait and the rod top, and therefore shot the line. In order that the shot shall keep an absolutely straight line between the hook and the rod top it must be nipped on the shank of the hook itself. Here, then, we have evolved the well known sink-and-draw tackle of the Lea. This has been denounced as a modern innovation, and as a near ally to poaching, but for what

reason I have always failed to find out. It is certainly hallowed by age, being fully described by old Izaak himself in his immortal pages. It will be remembered by all who know their "Compleat Angler" how in the roach and dace chapter he speaks of "a very little hook . . . and a very little thin lead, so put upon the shank of the hook that it may sink presently." As to the poaching accusation, it seems to me that every fair-minded man looks upon a fisherman as a man who goes to catch fish, and catches them in a sportsmanlike manner. What fish does this method take, the large or the small? Certainly the large; and, moreover, the use of the little hook, and the instantaneous strike, causes the fish to be hooked in the edges of the lip, so that undersized specimens can be put back to keep up the river's stock. Now by fishing in this manner, we have found a method of catching fish in the summer heat. I say "a method," and not "the method," because we find that though we hook, perhaps, our big fish first offer, nevertheless sometimes the fish will not look at gentles at all; they have not been educated up to them, and require a course of ground baiting.

But they must feed on something, and, therefore, to ensure success, we must find a summer food that these fish feed on. Again turn to the pages of our master; he devotes nearly three pages to describing the best summer bait, commencing as follows: "You are also to know that there be divers kinds of cadis or case worms that are to be found in this nation," and goes on to mention the three principal forms, winding up thus: "These three cadises are commonly taken in the beginning of summer, and are good, indeed, to take to any kind of fish, with float or otherwise." Now we probably all know caddis, cads, or cadbait, but how few there are who properly appreciated Izaak's words, "any kind of fish." Roach, dace, chub, barbel, greyling, and perch feed greedily upon them, and as our old teacher says, "doubtless they are the death of many trouts."

As everyone is aware, they are the immature form of the flies known as sedges (natural order *Phryganidæ*)

and closely allied groups, which live in cases composed of little sticks, stones, etc., cemented together by a gummy secretion from the insect itself. They are to be found inhabiting shallow ditches, or irrigation canals communicating with rivers, and are most easily collected for bait by means of a small boy. This month, however, they are so plentiful that any quantity may be gathered with but little trouble. As far as I am aware, Mrs. Sowerbutts, of roach pole fame, is the only Metropolitan tackle dealer from whom this bait may be obtained. If no other means are available, then the angler should collect for himself. Choose a gravelly shallow and notice, scattered hither and thither, little black or green pieces of stick. If you watch carefully they are seen to move. Each contains a caddis — a small, fat-bodied creature with a reddish-brown head and short legs, its long, plump body being coloured yellowish white. One of the large ones, or two or three of the small, should be put on a No. 2 crystal hook, with a shot pinched on the top of the shank, so that the greatest portion is on the convex side of the bend. (Fig. 27.) As old Izaak puts it: "These worms being kept three or four days in a woollen bag, with sand at the bottom of it, and the bag wet once a day, will, in three or four days, turn to be yellow, and then be a choice bait," and so on. Mr. Coxon has told us how to use this bait on float tackle, and it will be my endeavour to show an even more excellent and exciting method. A long or short rod should be used, according to water, but a 10ft. rod, very light, but not whippy in its action, will be found the most generally useful; running line (which should be of No. 2 undressed silk) should be used on a Nottingham reel, and the gut bottom should be of single drawn gut.

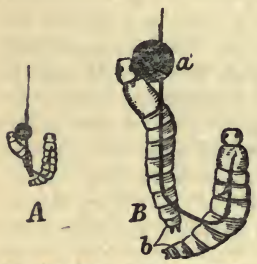


Fig. 29. Sink and draw tackle.
A. Natural Size
B. Magnified.

The hook should be, as stated, a No. 2, whipped on the finest drawn gut, and the size of the shot pinched on the hook varies with the speed the water is moving. The best sport is undoubtedly got with large dace, but the running line is necessary, as a trout, chub, perch, or barbel, may at any moment take the bait. One morning then, in the month of June or early July, we catch the early morning train for the banks of the Kennet, and make a comfortable breakfast at the inn preparatory to setting out.

With a little tin of bait, and a good brown straw hat to protect us from the sun, we seek the river. Near the commencement of the water a rustic bridge spans the stream, which glides steadily under it. About the centre it is 6ft. to 8ft. deep, and on the gravel bottom, just above the bridge, wagging their tails to keep their heads to stream, we see a fine shoal of twenty or thirty dace. The heavy water necessitates a large shot to carry the bait down quickly, so on it goes, with its biggest half on the convex side of the hook. Two cad-bait are extracted from their shells by the simple method of breaking them across and drawing out the inhabitant. The hook should be entered just behind the thorax of the first, and brought out nearly at the tail, and the head pulled well up to conceal the shot as much as possible. No. 2 should have the point of the hook buried inside the body (see Fig. 29 B b). Now draw off enough line to allow of the bait reaching the bottom, and cast well up stream, standing on the bridge; the bait sinks, and is allowed to run with the stream amongst the shoal of dace. The first fish it comes to turns, but is not quick enough, and a fine fellow of, say 10oz., just behind sees the movement and grabs the bait as it runs by. A quick strike, and up at the surface among the waving weeds you are fighting your first dace. Remember the gut is gossamer and the hook but small, and let him run a little or a smash ensues. After you have landed your fish, re-bait, and let the tackle go down again. This time perhaps a smaller fish rushes at

it; but you have not come out to catch small ones, so raise the rod, and the bait flies over him. Withdraw it gently and let it go down again. The grandfather of the flock, seeing the young ones busy, is on the alert, so steer your hook in his direction, and as soon as he opens his mouth, strike, or he will have felt the lead and spat the hook out minus the bait. You hook him and a rare struggle begins, which, perhaps from ill-luck, or shall we say want of skill on the part of the novice, ends in a break or the hook coming away, and the old stager returns to his place a sadder and wiser fish. From this moment the best of the sport is over in this spot. Occasionally, a medium fish may take your bait, but frequently it will touch a fish's nose and he will refuse it. Far better seek a new spot. This may be found a little further on by some camp-shedding under a tree. Crouch in the shadow and let your bait work, if possible, on the edge of that nice eddy behind the stump at the commencement of the shedding. A good fish turns at your bait, and you get him; then one or two more. Finally you are running your bait perhaps a little closer to the stump, when a dark form dashes at it: a pluck, whizz, and something or other is out in the river tearing down stream like a racehorse. Out and after him, and get him out as gently as possible; a good trout has taken your bait, and you want, if possible, to get him ashore and remove the hook as soon as practicable; then return him gently to the water and remember to say nothing about it. The latter is good advice, whether you return the fish or not; for, although good eating, there is but little honour in a bait-caught trout; and catching trout with bait will not tend to ingratiate the angler with the owner of the fishing.

But once again sport has slackened, so we move on to the lower end of the lock, where the canal enters the river. Here the water is practically still, so we take off our large shot and pinch on in its place a very small one, and look about for fish. There they are; a magnificent shoal is swimming slowly about in the slack water, 3ft. in depth, on a nice gravelly bottom; some of

these fish appear too big for dace, and a gleam of red fin betrays that the larger ones are roach. Try them. Crouching on the lock drop the bait gently on the surface of the water and gradually let it sink. Out from the shoal swims one nice fish and snaps up your bait as it slowly falls ; strike, and a nice roach of over 1lb. is fighting for dear life. Keep back from the edge, and play him round to where the bank runs down to the water and slip the net under him. But dace are what you are after, so sit down and wait for the shoal to return. Soon they come and swim towards you. The bait should be lowered to the surface on their approach and gently allowed to sink. Up comes the father of the flock and seizes it, and then you get the fish of the day. Gently, gently, don't hurry him ; but keep a tight line, and soon this fish of between ¾lb. and 1lb. is added to those in the basket. Now take your lunch, for the shoal in the still water think grandpapa has gone mad, and the sorrowful occurrence has put them off their food. After lunch try again, and you get one or two more, and then the remainder wake up to the fact that the object on the lock has something to do with the mysterious disappearances that take place so frequently. Therefore they regard your bait with uneasiness, and if induced to inspect it, go no further, but precipitately retire. Hide under the arm of the gate, keep the shadow of your rod off the water, and wait. Soon they return, and your cunning is rewarded by two more taking the bait in the old unsuspicious fashion. Re-baiting the hook after the last fish taken, we are gently, experimentally letting it sink and drawing it close up to the lock gate when another dash occurs, and in an instant a strike, and you are playing a fine perch nearly 2lbs. in weight. Out he dashes over the lock pool, and the little rod is nearly doubled as we give him the butt to keep him out of the piles on the other side. Up and down he goes, dashing hither and thither, with his great spiny fin bristling with rage. Treat him gently, and put him back when landed, for he is in but poor condition after

all, and October will see him nearly 1lb. heavier; he has given good sport and well deserves his liberty. By this time it is five o'clock, and you have got, say, a dozen fine dace, so pack up your fish, put your rod on your shoulder, and get back to tea at the inn, where over your meal you can chaff your comrades, who, sticking to old methods, have toiled all day long and caught nothing. This is no fancy picture, but is a good sample of the many interesting days which one may get with this method of fishing.

A record of one of these days may be quoted from an old note book and will give actual figures. "On water at nine-fifty, left at five. Result: two trout (returned), six roach (best 1lb. 10ozs.), fourteen dace (best 11¾ozs.), three perch (returned), one chub (2½lbs.) All fish taken fishing by sight, caddis bait on crystal hook. Fish took well at first, but owing to shot working to inner bend of hook some were missed at the bridge swim."

Of course, an absence of wind and gin-bright water are the two essentials for success, as either prevent a good view of the fish being obtained.

The rivers where such fishing can be practised within easy reach of London are many. I have quoted the Kennet simply because it is my favourite river, not because it is in any way more suited for this sport than the Lea, the Avon, or a dozen others. The method of fishing is of much greater importance than the river on which it is tried. Given clear water success ought to be certain, and it may safely be said that to anyone who has succeeded in picking it up it possesses a wonderful fascination. The chief charm is that the whole process is in sight, and one sees more, perhaps, of the true inwardness of the fish feeding by this than by any other method. No one who has not had the opportunity of watching roach and dace in rapid water, can have any idea of the rapidity with which these fish can absorb and eject a bait. Frequently I have seen a dace take in my bait and instantly blow out the hook denuded of the caddis, and only the faintest of faint plucks was conveyed to the rod point. I am convinced that the

excitement of fishing by sight is far superior to ledgering, as dry-fly fishing is to the average "chuck it and chance it." The fish have to be stalked, and a good view of the quarry must be obtained by the fisherman, while he himself remains concealed. The tackle used is of the finest, and the nature of the whole arrangement demands an instantaneous strike. When this method becomes popular, we may say (to parody the well-known pen advertisement),

> He then will fish who never fished before,
> And he who always fished will fish the more.

And, more by token, will catch better specimens.

CHAPTER VII.

July

Rudd Fishing in Ouse Waters.

THE rudd is greatly neglected in works on fishing; in fact, most angling authors have treated it with scant courtesy, under the impression that Izaak Walton did so in his "Compleat Angler." There is no clear evidence, however, in the pages of the master that he had any knowledge of the rudd at all. He, indeed, mentions "a kind of bastard roach," speaking of its being called "rud," which some editors have concluded to be a reference to this species; however, there is no internal evidence that he referred to the rudd (*Leuciscus erythrophthalmus*). Indeed, it seems more than probable that he had no knowledge of the distinction between these fishes (seeing that he attributes the saw-like teeth of the rudd to the roach), and that the reference was to one of the roach-bream crosses so common in this country. The rudd does not come to its highest perfection in ponds any more than does the roach, the finest conditioned and heaviest fish being taken in the deep, slowly-running reaches of many of our great rivers. The largest, but not so well-conditioned, are taken in the shallow, reed-bordered broads of Norfolk and Suffolk, while small, flat-sided specimens are common in the ditches and dykes in the Southern counties of England.

It is to be regretted that our modern authors have evidently had but little personal experience of the art of large rudd catching, as seen from the character of their instructions. "Rudd take the same bait as roach and

may be angled for in exactly similar manner," says our most modern and complete text book on coarse fishing. How? With fly, or leger, with tight line and paste bait gently worked amongst the weeds; with shotted hook and cad bait, in the Lea fashion, or, indeed, any of the methods advocated by Ffennell? Why not fish as for chub, which has much more in common with the surface-loving, insect-feeding, upward glancing rudd than has the roach? One look at the throat teeth of these latter fish will show more than hours of argument. The roach, with his five teeth, one pointed, another cone-shaped, a third chisel-like, a fourth flat-topped, appears at once a fish adapted for all kinds of food, whereas the rudd, with hooked, saw-like dentition set in a double row is mainly fitted for tearing asunder and devouring hard-shelled insects such as are found mainly at the top.

Again, the mouth of the rudd looks up and that of the roach looks down, and yet again, the back fin of the rudd is placed behind the highest portion of the back, whereas that of the roach is just upon that point. These two differences of structure are full of instruction to the observant mind. The mouth is upturned to catch the sinking food, the fin is set far back to let the fish swim on the top without showing a danger signal to its prey, or a red flag to its enemies. Therefore imitate nature and keep your bait near the surface; fish fine, cast near weeds, and fish far off. Fish fine, because the fish are easily scared; cast near weeds, because that is their hiding place; and fish far off, because the larger specimens are never found close to the fisher. But all this requires special methods and tackle, and with the description of one of these the rest of this chapter will be taken up.

In some large rivers—notably the Bedfordshire Ouse—the best fish are taken in deep waters (8ft. and more) by casting over the rising fish twenty yards away. The favourite time is the evening of a hot still day, or the calm which so often follows a summer breeze at the time of sunset. Drop down the river, seated in your boat, and watch for sporting fish. Suddenly, out of the foot

or two of water over the weeds, right in the middle of the river, a fin and back will show, turning over like a porpoise. Drop down steadily towards the spot. When the boat gets within fifteen yards, all is still and undisturbed; but further down one sees another movement. These are rudd sporting, and not only so, but rudd worth catching, running up to two and a half pounds apiece. How is one to capture them? Some anglers try with the double-handed fly rod and a Zulu, with a piece of white kid on the hook. But the best fish are not to be taken in this way; the flash of the rod and the frequency of the cast apparently frighten them. The best tackle is undoubtedly that used by the experienced angler accustomed to the water. My own outfit is as follows: A 12ft. springy greenheart trout spinning rod, a movable check Nottingham Coxon Aerial reel and guard, forty yards of dressed Olinea line, special H size; a self-cocking float with the tip bright red (manufactured by wrapping lead wire round the foot of an ordinary Nottingham float, and painting the top with Aspinall's enamel); next add a foot of strong trout gut, with a single tiny shot 3in. from the float; and then a No. 6 Limerick hook on 8in. of drawn hook-link. The float should be buoyant enough to carry half an ounce of lead, and still project well out of the water.

The special reason for this type of tackle will be seen; to take full advantage of it the following directions for use must be observed: Soak the gut well for some hours before it is intended to be used. Before embarking (for this fishing must be done in a boat), set up the rod and fit the reel-line, float, and bottom, having about one and a half feet in distance between the float and the hook. Slip the hook under the top winch-fittings and stow away the rod in the boat on the right, and the landing-net fixed and ready on the left-hand side. Just ahead of the thwart, place a 56lb. weight attached to a rope twelve feet to fourteen feet long, made fast at the other end to the ring in the bow. Have a tin containing brandlings as fresh as possible under the thwart. Take your seat and row where the fish are; when approaching

the reach, turn the boat, and, keeping the oars ready, drop down steadily, stern first, watching every foot for sporting fish. As soon as a good one is seen, note the area he covers in his rises and then drop within twenty-five yards, if able to cast so far. With the tackle recommended at least twenty-five yards ought to be easily covered throwing from a sitting position. This point reached, check the boat slightly with the oars, and, taking hold of the ring of the weight, lower it gently into the water without shifting your position in the least. As the rope tightens, again take the strain off with the oars; this allows the weight to hold and prevents any scaring of the fish from the boat dragging. Put the sculls away, taking care that no noise is made and that they do not interfere with the rod, landing net, or bait tin, and that the ends are against the boat so that the line may not tangle round them. Now lift the rod, disengage the hook, bait with two brandlings by threading the middle third of each, one on the shank and another on the bend covering the point. Drop this over the side and grip the line, below the ring next the reel, firmly against the rod. This is preparatory to the next step, which is that of pulling off and coiling down the line at your feet. In order to give both hands full play I always have, above the winch fitting, an umbrella ring under which I pull a little loop of the line so that one hand is not required to keep the float from running away with the uncoiled line as it pulled off from the reel.

Why not keep the float in the boat? Simply because a leaded float and a large hook are the most magnificent things for tangling up a coiled line. Before commencing to pull off line, remove the check and brake the edge of the reel with the finger to prevent overrunning when pulling; the removal of the check is to avoid scaring the fish by the noise. Then why have a check at all? Because the Nottingham reel muddles and overruns if improperly used with a coiled-down line, especially if such line is dressed. After pulling off the line it should be re-coiled so that the top coil is next the lowest

ring. If the weeds are numerous the line must, during this manœuvre, be well vaselined; the check is then to be replaced, taking care that about two yards of slack line are left free below the butt ring. Then pull the little loop from beneath the india-rubber ring and hold it in the left hand; and taking the rod in the right make a steady underhand cast about a yard above and in the direction in which the fish was last seen. The apparatus should reach the water with the worms a little further down stream than the float; the shot prevents any entanglement, which is the great bugbear of self-cocking arrangements. The worms wriggling, kicking, and gradually sinking, precede the float down stream and the yard or two of slack line runs out. This is the killing moment for a big rudd; as he passes the sinking bait, he wolfs it down and proceeds on his way; thereupon away goes the float. Strike quickly and as lightly as possible and then hold on, for the fish at once makes for the weeds, and out of them he must be kept at all hazards.

Here the value of the pliable greenheart comes in. Kick and struggle as he may, if steadily held and given the butt he soon gives in and is scooped into the net. The only critical moment is just as he is brought alongside, for he almost invariably tries to dash under the boat. But if, instead of this exciting episode, your float, after alighting, proceeds for its yard or two unmoved, quickly slip off the check and let the line run on for ten or fifteen yards more, checking the reel every now and then to make the bait come to the surface and gradually sink again. If there is no attack made during this period, reel quickly up for, say, twenty yards, and then placing the rod horizontally out on the other side of the boat, let the float run down as before. If there is no offer, sit still and look about to see if you have scared your fish, and, should one sport within reach during the time, cast over it. If not, drop down further; or if a fish show anywhere not within casting distance, get above him and repeat the manœuvres above indicated.

In this manner some of the finest rudd ever known in this country have been taken, notably by one local angler, whose fish have ranged from 2lbs. to 2¾lbs. I have taken some good specimens on the few occasions that I have been able to fish these waters during the past few years; the smallest fish weighed over 1¾lb. and the largest 2¼lbs. One is frequently asked why Nottingham methods are not used, and the only reply is that they have been tried and found wanting. It is to be remembered that a long cast has to be made from a sitting position; and that, as soon as the cast is finished, the point of the rod should be lowered, and must not be again elevated until the strike. With true Nottingham fishing, the undressed silk line would be soaked, and the difficulty of casting greatly increased, if not rendered entirely impossible. But let every one try his own methods, and the maximum of skill and knowledge will give the best results. The months most suited for the capture of rudd in these waters are July and August, especially if the weather be hot and dry; therefore, when salmon and trout fishing is all vanity and vexation of spirit, and the killing of the out-of-condition pike is abhorred by most good sportsmen, a day or two may be devoted to the pursuit, if not capture, of this most game fish.

Congering off Brighton.

With the month of July the silly season of sea rod-fishing fast draws to a close, and from the latter end of this month up to the close of the year fair sport may be enjoyed all round our Southern coast within easy reach of the shore. So, furbishing up our tackle, we took train to Southwick one evening and started afloat early next morning almost as soon as it was light.

During this month the writer has found that in order to enjoy good sport it is necessary to be upon the fishing ground early, so five o'clock saw us *en route* for a good pitch five miles away and well out from the shore.

The mackerel having been seen shoaling in the neighbourhood induced us to get our spinners out and try a little railing, although our boatman thought that as the nets were still getting fair quantities the season was, as yet, not sufficiently advanced. "For," said he, "early in the year the mackerel have a skin over their eyes, and swim low, and are then taken in the nets; but later, having cleared their eyes, they rise to the surface and chase the fry, and are no longer taken in the nets, because they can see to avoid them. No, sir, August's the month for railing." However, being short of fish bait, we persevered and managed to get three fish, quite enough to give us some good baits.

Arrived at the ground, we anchored, and tried our luck with soft crab, mussel, lug, and mackerel as bait. One angler had all the sport, while the others looked on and applauded. First came a small conger as the tide slackened towards the high water flood; then another succumbed to the mackerel bait—a better one this time, running about 5lbs. Then a period of inactivity, varied by a fair sized pouting or two, and then the conger-catcher again was fast in something which eventually turned out to be an eleven-pounder, which struggled gamely in the water and rather more fiercely after its arrival on board, until the boatman's Russian bayonet (kept especially for conger killing) had pierced his brain and other portions of his anatomy. Then came another long pause, and then another game of "pull devil, pull baker," and the champion induced a fourteen-pounder to come on board.

For some little time after peace reigned, and pouting only accepted the cordial inducements to breakfast which we held out to them at rods' length. As the tide strengthened again, just as our champion was lifting his rod point, he got a pull that nearly took the line through his fingers (a wire line, one may add in parenthesis, which would most certainly have cut down to the bone had it commenced travelling).

Now a game began, and a good game, too; wind up; let run; wind again; let out again; for at least ten or

twelve minutes this continued, and finally, after a tremendous struggle, a handsome pollack of 7½lbs. was hauled up. This, with a few mackerel, taken railing going home, completed the bag, and a very fair bag, too, for the time of the year, one angler taking, besides pouting and small congers, two of 11lbs. and 14lbs., and a pollack of 7½lbs.

A week or two previously a couple of amateur rod fishers took from the same place a dozen congers and a five-pound pollack one tide, and next day they succeeded in capturing two congers, six sea bream of from 3lbs. to 3½lbs. each, a dozen pouting from 1lb. to 2lbs. each, and three young blue sharks, or sweet-williams, besides losing a fine turbot of about 8lbs. weight, when quite on the surface and close to the boat, owing to the snood snapping. A fair morning's fishing for the silly season, one is inclined to think.

On the way back the railing tackle was again put over, and half a dozen nice mackerel were taken, and cooked for the two o'clock dinner, which all hands enjoyed with that appetite which alone comes to the angler who has subsisted since the night before on bread and cheese, with a hard-boiled egg. After a snooze on the couch (tell it not in Gath) we take a stroll along towards the lock at Southwick and see the sand-eels brimming close to the gates and asking to be snatched and put on Wilcock's tackle to tempt the bass, whose presence in the harbour is manifested by their occasional capture; the best taken last season weighed 17lbs. and fell a victim to soft crab. We certainly would have had a try, but that our train left in the course of an hour. So, after our packing was over and our cup of tea swallowed, we rushed off for London relieved, refreshed, invigorated, and not fishless, although we were foolish enough to go sea-angling in July.

It has struck the writer that the idea that there are no fish about during the spring months may not be altogether correct, and that the non-capture by the professional fisherman may be due to his coarse tackle.

Certainly it was proved beyond the faintest shadow of a doubt that the idea that conger only feed at night is quite erroneous; for during the last season the writer has records, from one place alone, of thirty-five large congers by sea-anglers' boats in the daytime.

It is pleasing to notice that sea bream in fair quantity are now returning to Brighton and vicinity, as at the beginning of July, 1902, the local fishermen were getting from fifty to sixty daily, up to 5lb. apiece in weight. The capture of these fish is a pastime which, *par excellence*, ought to be pursued by sea anglers. The sea bream is a plucky biter and fights hard when hooked, giving excellent sport to the rods-man, and providing a dish not to be despised when cooked and served immediately.

Having tried the day fishing it is as well to have a turn at night for large conger, and the following is a short account of a night's work amongst the congers at Loo Gate.

The author and two friends, having had several days' unsuccessful fishing owing to the brightness of the water, decided to make a night of it off Brighton. So, getting our tackle together, we made all ready and went afloat from Shoreham Harbour at 7 p.m. The night looked blustery, and the sun shone "too fierce," as the boatman said, while low down on the horizon a dark bank of clouds was to be seen to the westward, right in the wind's eye. However, we decided to chance our luck, knowing that if the worst came to pass we had Brighton beach within four miles. As the mackerel had been pretty well in evidence, we put out railing tackle, consisting of 3½oz. lead. 8ft. salmon gut traces with two swivels, and a baby spinner and triangle, as bait.

The breeze was fresh and the boat travelled well, while the shoals near the surface were evidently still few in number and far between. However, on our way out we took eleven fish—one on each line thrice, and one on the starboard and centre line the last time. Although one line was kept constantly down, we never

got more than the three fish out of any one shoal, and those almost simultaneously took the baits.

One is amused to notice the opinions held by people who have not had practical experience of what they condemn. Thus a well-known writer on sea angling, speaking of railing from a sailing boat, says: "When you get over the water four or five knots to the hour, and draw the bait across a stiff tide eight or ten (in clear water, even twelve) fathoms of line streaming out behind the boat, where would the rod be then?" Of course, the general opinion is that under such circumstances 1lb. to 3lbs. of lead are necessary to sink the tackle. And so such weights are if the average hand-line is used. But with us the heaviest lead did not go 3½oz., as the lines used were of very fine gauge, one a fine wire line, another a barbel-size silk line, and the third a fine Irish watercord, cable laid, about the thickness of an F. or G. dressed silk line. (See Fig. 3). These lines were also used for the ground fishing throughout the night. I may say, in parenthesis, that I should never dream of using anything but the rod when railing, and have done so for years without accident.

We arrived at our anchorage about half-past eight, and baiting paternoster (twisted gut, three hooks), at once commenced to take pouting of good size up to about 1½lb. As darkness came on the pouting stopped feeding and we put on single hook wire-mounted tackle, and small congers commenced to take hold, while occasionally a larger one would worry the bait, and even allow itself to be lifted some distance from the bottom before letting go.

About four or five small ones were taken from 2lbs. to 5lbs. in weight, and then my partner on the port side of the thwart got into something heavy, but did not succeed in getting it off the bottom, and finally, after a struggle, the hook gave at the barb. Meanwhile the author had a steady pull, and, striking, found himself fast in a good fish, which, after a fair bit of sport, was gaffed aboard, and proved to be a conger of 9lbs. Then

the boatman had a small one, and my neighbour another conger, a good one, which weighed 18lbs. Hardly was he down again than another took him and got down amongst the rocks at the bottom, thus necessitating another break away.

While I was rummaging him out a new hook to re-fit (eyed Minchin cod hook on braided phosphor-bronze wire), I laid down my rod; and after he again was ready for the fray, I lifted my rod and struck as a precaution, when to my astonishment the line slowly moved off; and, tightening, I found I was in a good fish, which hardly gave one the impression of a conger. After a fair fight I got him up, and the boatman stuck the gaff in him and hauled him aboard, when he proved to be an old cod, weighing 20lbs., a somewhat extraordinary capture for the season and time of the year.

Shortly after my neighbour felt a drag, and struck and pulled up a large brown crab of the edible variety, hooked through the leathery hinge of the big claw.

After this, things quieted down for an hour, only a few congers being taken. About one o'clock, however, I hooked something good which gave my old rod plenty of work. For some time I could not succeed in getting it off the bottom, but eventually it rose well aft, and we could hear it splashing on the water. After several tremendous struggles it was brought alongside, but was missed by the boatman; on the second attempt he got the gaff in, and succeeded in getting the fish partly into the boat, but the gaff twisted and the conger tumbled back, breaking the snooding as he fell.

He was a grand fish, and weighed anything over 25lb. His departure was a signal for peace and quiet, and so for an hour or two we sat and dozed over our rods till daylight did appear. As soon as the ebb drew through, about half an hour later, our fun re-commenced. So changing to light tackle, we commenced to haul away at first big pouting, and then a 2lb. pollack and a 2½lb., sea bream. Fishing with one of the improved Kentish rig rod-booms, the writer got hold of something heavy—a big sea bream or a pollack—and lost it eventually,

after about five minutes' good sport, through the hook, an unreliable electro-tinned pattern, breaking at the bend. As the tide strengthened and the light grew stronger the larger fish ceased biting, and small pouts alone were taken. One peculiar occurrence was observed, namely, as our stern-sheets angler was drawing up two pouting on a long streamer, a squid followed the tail fish, seized hold of it, and, pulling it off the hook, departed with it.

As the small-pout catching speedily palled, we pulled up our anchor and rowed home over a glassy sea, getting a couple of mackerel with the spinner on the way in, and landing ashore about 6.30 a.m., ready for breakfast and the 9 a.m. train for London.

The total bag for the night, besides pouting, consisted of thirteen mackerel, thirteen conger (best 18lbs.), one cod of 20lbs., one crab (11in. across the shell), one sea bream 2½lbs., and one pollack 2lbs.

A boat which we met coming out as we were returning fished all day and only took a score of pouting and six ½lb. sea bream.

There is little doubt that the best hours to go fishing in the sea at this time of the year are those of the darkness, and that even close to London good bags may be made even at midsummer. It has been objected that rod-fishing for conger is poor sport, and that the conger gives little play. One can only say to those who have not experienced catching a big conger on the rod that the proof of the pudding is in the eating. One author objects that the loss of time is prodigious, and goes on to say, speaking of the capture of one of 24¼lb., "In the time it took me to kill that particular fish on the rod I should probably have accounted for three or four on the hand-line." This is surely a poor view to take of a sport; the killing of fish is a secondary consideration, the skill needed to succeed is everything. Four trout can be killed on the worm, and ten with a net in the time necessary to catch one with the dry fly, and yet no sportsman therefore recommends the worm as preferable to the fly.

In conclusion, one or two practical hints may be given

for what they are worth. The writer has found the following tackle the most successful for congering, namely, a 4ft. plaited gut bottom, terminating in a short boom of diamond pattern; on the lower swivel loop a 3in. link of old snooding to carry the lead; to the buckle fasten a composite 3ft. trace, the inner two-thirds of plaited treble gut, and the outer third of braided phosphor-bronze wire fastened on to the new long-shanked Norwegian hook with a figure-of-eight bend. Only one hook should be used, as two congers at one time would baffle any man; and a loose hook when handling conger in a boat is worse than a nuisance, and is indeed a positive danger. The rod should be strong and pliable, preferable with a whalebone top, and should be rigged with a winch of not less than a 5½in. or 6in. diameter with a large drum. If the wire winch line is used, of course the rod top must be furnished with large pulley wheel, which should be well countersunk. When fishing, the whole apparatus should be lowered, with the lead just off the bottom if the tide is slack, and just touching if there is any run of water. Wait for a decided draw (not bite) and then strike, making a point of at once winding in a fathom to try and get the fish off the bottom. Then, and not till then, must you play your fish, as if he once gets slack line on the bottom he gets amongst the rocks, and nothing will get him out. When the fish is done, bring him alongside and get forward, so that the boatman may have a fair chance to gaff him. Should he be a poor hand at the game, gaff the fish yourself, keeping your rod uptide and ready to let him run should the gaff miss him. When in the boat a sharp knife in his skull and a blow over the vent will soon quieten him, and a couple of sacks are useful to prevent the fish flapping about in the darkness amongst one's legs in the bottom of the boat, when "scotched but not kilt." The pike scissors and the disgorger figured in an earlier chapter (Fig. 26) are useful aids to getting the hook out if the fish is hooked in the mouth, otherwise slip the hook line or cut it adrift. The best bait for congers is according to season:

mackerel for summer and sprat and herring for winter being the most generally popular. These baits must be fresh.

In conclusion, a word about lights. Two lamps are necessary ; three are useful. One to signal with, one under the after thwart to light the gaffing area, and one beside the anglers to facilitate finding tackle, repairing, baiting, &c.

The best number to fish is two, with one boatman, who should sit in the stern sheets with the gaff, and the anglers midships. When the conger is played dead (a period of from five to twenty-five minutes, according to size and ferocity), it should be steadily brought alongside, and the boatman (armed with a short stout gaff) should, with an overhand draw, gaff the fish about the shoulder, and haul it into the boat with one action. It may here be remarked that the gaff should be lashed, not screwed, into the handle, as the struggle of the conger is apt to make the hook turn in the handle, and the fish may escape, as happened to the best fish on this very occasion.

A fourth hint is about sleep. If possible get an hour before leaving, and should any of the party feel sleepy in the boat let an arrangement be come to that one shall keep on watch, more fishing boats being run down through all hands going to sleep than from any other cause. In conclusion, it may very safely be said that night fishing is grand sport and safe, if one has a good boat, a clever fisherman, good tackle, warm clothes, and bright lights.

CHAPTER VIII.

August

Off the Great Orme's Head.

SEA FISHING with rod and line has not yet taken the same hold in the North of England as it has along the Southern Coasts. It must not be forgotten, however, that excellent sport is to be obtained in the Menai Straits, especially off the Anglesey side and on the West Coast of Anglesey itself, Cheap holiday tickets are granted by the London and North Western Railway to most of the principal stations, and although one cannot get back within the day, still at holiday time, when a day or two can be got, there are certainly worse ways of putting in the time than a day or two spent amongst the grand mountain scenery of North Wales.

Going to Conway on a visit for a day or two, the sea rod was accordingly packed and taken along. After a few inquiries a good man was got hold of, and Bank Holiday morning, shortly before six, saw the writer, his brother, the local demon, and his assistant *en route* for the fishing grounds.

The pilot deserves a word or two on his own account. The master of a local coaster; he is passionately devoted to sea fishing, and spends most of his spare time—when not engaged in transporting slates or other local products—in fishing either with hand-line or small trawl. He has at his disposal several boats, from a 5-tonner, used for trawling, to small boats easily sculled by one man.

The vessel chosen for our excursion was a 16ft. sailing boat, eminently suitable for the inside grounds in the channel of the Conway, but hardly weatherly enough for fishing off the Great Orme, except in light breezes with no ground swell moving. The position of the Great Orme's Head, as will be remembered, is at the entrance of the Menai Straits, and this headland forms the termination of the peninsula formed by the estuary of the Conway and that portion of the Irish Sea known as Llandudno Bay, upon which the fashionable watering-place of that name is situated. The fishing off the Head is fair as summer fishing goes, the water deep, and the bottom covered with great masses of boulder, which time and the action of wind and sea have broken off from the precipitous sides of the great rocky point. An hour's sail took us to our fishing ground, the principal mark for which is the lighthouse, the western gable of which is just opened on the projecting rocky promontory. Here the water is deep (about ten fathoms), and a nasty cross sea is set up with almost any wind. We sailed down with the last of the ebb, and arrived just as the tide was again making. The bait had been collected by the boy on the rough ground just below the town of Conway, and consisted of large mussels (of which a pailful is easily gathered at low water) and soft crab found under stones and bunches of weeds. The boatman also told us that on a certain bank large quantities of sand eels could be got by digging, but unfortunately the natives do not possess the art of keeping them alive for bait. On some future occasion the writer intends taking his courge (the Channel Island sand-eel basket), in which these fish may be kept alive for a day or two, as bass abound in the estuary, and no doubt could be taken with sand-eel and drift-line, or even fishing off the rocks.

Having got on our marks, we anchored by means of a weight, or killick, as it is called in the south, and fished with short boom and streamer (West Country fashion), baiting with mussel on two hooks and soft crab on the tail hook. The local man

and my brother fished with hand-lines, while I rigged up my Deal rod with wire line and big pulley top, much to the amusement of the Welshman, to whom rod fishing in deep water was evidently quite novel. The first pull was at my brother's line, and after a few minutes' play he hooked and eventually, by the aid of the gaff, landed a toper of 8lbs. This capture enlivened matters, and we were quickly amongst the codling, in spite of the heavy tide, which necessitated the use of tremendous leads on the hand-lines, and quite 3½oz. on the wire line. The wire line, as usual under these circumstances, did its work, and killed two fish for one taken by the hand-lines. As the tide slackened the pouting came on the feed, and were of very good size, going, many of them, from ¾lb. to 1lb. apiece. The codling were, however, small, few being over 1½lb. The capture of the pout ("rachan" the boatman called them) seemed not a usual occurrence, as our pilot told us, and it was suggested that they had followed the writer up from the South Coast.

As the tide slacked still further the sport died away, and as the wind came round more off the Head the sea became very choppy, so it was decided to get off home in time for lunch. When fishing, we opened one or two of the fish to see what they were taking; and it was found that the pout contained mainly small prawns, possibly the ring-horned prawn, popularly known as the pink shrimp. The codling also had a few prawns inside, but the principal food was found to be small crabs, known as the Hairy Porcelain crab (*Porcellana platycheles*), which has a long tail and exceptionally enlarged "nippers." Rowing gently in under the shelter of the Head, we gradually made our way towards home; and, finally hoisting our sails, we made a fine run back close-hauled across the flats, arriving at our landing place at Conway in about three-quarters of an hour. On the way home we counted our catch, which was made in about two hours' time, and found that we had taken two score of fine pouting and

fifteen codling. No doubt the catch would have been larger but for the fact that the artillery were practising with the guns within a mile or two, which, as all sea-fishers know, is apt to put fish off the feed. On the last occasion when our pilot was out he had taken a score and a half of codling up to 6lb. in weight, and every indication showed an almost ideal spot for line fishing. The impression one gained was that a night might be very profitably spent on these marks, when probably good codling, and certainly big congers, would be taken. The great objection of course is the fact that one's weather must be picked, as a very little swell will preclude the possibility of fishing here with a small boat, and the long winding channel and small amount of water on the banks makes getting to the ground in a larger vessel a somewhat wearisome proceeding. Moreover, anchoring with a killick or weight is rather a risky proceeding in a larger vessel, and the rough bottom is almost sure to foul the anchor even if nettled, while the jump of the sea breaks the nettle. I found out since that this is a good pollack ground, and fair-sized fish can be taken whiffing with the red rubber sand-eel. It would be well worth anyone's while trying the water with the living sand-eel, especially as a good lot can be easily got for a few pence. The writer was talking over the fishing with a friend who takes his holiday at Llandudno every summer, and he seemed much surprised to hear that any sea-fishing at all was to be obtained. In spite of this there is fine pollacking to be got off Llandudno pier, fish up to 8lbs. having been taken with the red rubber eel. The author had several nice little pollack up to 4lbs. with ragworm one evening this summer. There is but little doubt that if the local longshoremen are consulted nothing will be found out; but if one takes the trouble to root out the fishermen, and makes the trip worth their while, fair codling and bass are to be taken in August; while, later on, flatfish (flounders and plaice) are to be caught in the estuary of the Conway as far up as the Suspension Bridge. A first-rate centre for both

the Orme and river fishing is Deganwy, a rapidly growing place on the Llandudno back shore. In the Menai Straits, especially towards Menai Bridge, good sport is to be had occasionally during the summer months with pollack and bass. In June 1897, a gentleman was reported in *The Field* as making baskets of between 40 and 50lbs. of these fish. In the same report cod were also stated to be abundant catches from 50 to 70lbs. a day being recorded. If tried for with the proper baits and tackle, there is little doubt that excellent sport can be had in this neighbourhood with sporting fish.

Of course, better fishing is to be had in the Isle of Man at this time of the year, but such is not so accessible to South Country anglers. As may be seen by the time table, London can be left by the restaurant train at 4.15 p.m., and the angler arrives at from 10 to 10.30 p.m., according to his destination. On the occasion described, the author returned to London by the evening train, and was at work Tuesday morning, having had half a night's rest in the train and the remainder at home in bed. The price of the third class excursion ticket at holiday time is about 20s. for the return journey; therefore if one does not mind roughing it a little, this angling trip need not cost an excessive amount.

Should the weather be very settled the angler should try Aberffraw, on the West of Anglesey, which can be reached by train almost as easily as Conway. Good pollack, bass, gurnard, and sea bream are to be taken off here, and Mr. R. D. Williams, of Cellar Farm, who is an enthusiastic sea fisher, will accommodate anglers and give full information. Bull Bay on the N.E. side, near Amlwch is also a good station; but bait is difficult to obtain there.

Carp Fishing.

In all branches of sport the interest is exactly in proportion to the amount of skill, knowledge, and endurance displayed. From the slayer of the man-eating tiger to

the captor of the humble gudgeon, the chief and only pleasure felt is to be reckoned inversely to the ease with which the prize is taken. The average dry-fly man swears by his method as the only form of true sport; but he, one is inclined to imagine, would think little or nothing of it, if every yard of river contained trout so innocent and confiding that each cast, no matter how clumsy, would bring another tenant to his creel. And so it is with the pursuit of so-called coarse fish, so much looked down upon and scorned by the average wielder of the fly-rod; this despised branch of angling is every day growing to be finer art. Those of us who have read Mr. Senior's article in the Badminton "Fishing" volume and Mr. Greville Ffennell's "Book of the Roach" know what is to be said for "Roach Fishing as a Fine Art," and the same may be written of nearly every other member of that numerous family, the carps, of which that fish is one of the leading representatives. When one reads of the carp fishing practised in India, recorded in *The Field*, where the flash of the rod scares the quarry for the day, and therefore the fish-pole must be laid down and the bait thrown by hand, who will deny the title of sport to a method of angling requiring such skill and knowledge? But why go further afield than the lakes and rivers of our own country? The capture of a large, shy, educated carp will provide a task sufficient to daunt the most persevering, for even when the strike is made the advantage is still to the quarry. What patience may be thus expended is easily shown by the fact recently recorded in *The Fishing Gazette*, namely, that an angler had fished for carp in one lake nearly every week during the summer for seven years, and never had succeeded in landing one, though no doubt he had hooked and lost many, during this long period.

Carp fishing, as an amusement, requires, as the Scotchman said of olives, "eyther a cultivawted pawlate or a grawn' awpetite." The average London fisherman has both, as a rule, for several reasons, the chief of which are that he doesn't get much fishing, and what there is of it is made up of water not easily accessible,

containing fish not easily captured. But, nevertheless, within reach of London there are plenty of places where carp fishing may be got. Occasionally in the pages of the sporting papers we see inquiries such as the following:—

"I have permission to fish a lake containing carp ranging from 10lbs. to 12lbs in weight. How can I best fish it?"

This is answered by a short note from the editor: "Ground bait, with worms; and fish it in the morning."

The first time the writer went carp fishing, having carefully read all the directions given in the pages of his angling library, he went out and followed the advice therein contained. After spending some days and money in this pursuit he decided that the gentlemen who wrote those chapters either were not carp anglers, or else that their carp were not as his carp. Then a desperate longing came upon him to seize and mesmerise Mr. Kelly and put an influence upon him which would force him to reveal in confidence all he knew; but, alas, it never got any further than a longing, and so for years remained.

But in course of time he became acquainted with a man who caught carp, and persuaded him to take him out fishing with him. From that moment his fate was sealed.

Hither and thither throughout the land has he pursued these water Solons with all kinds of tackle, even to two quill pens, a bottle cork, some sealing-wax, and a piece of lead wire formed into an impromptu float, a salmon rod and line, and a lake trout fly, denuded of feathers, for a hook. It is stated that carp are sometimes easily caught; on these occasions the writer has always been absent, a fact he greatly regrets At other times they are the shyest, the wiliest, and the most cautious fish that swim; and in order to capture them brain must be pitted against brain, and herein the charm of carp-fishing lies.

The dry-fly man cares not to take fish but with the dry-fly, because the skill necessary for the capture of trout by this methed is the charm of the sport to him.

But in carp fishing there is even more, if possible. The fly-fisher marks down his feeding fish and watches where he lies; the carp-catcher marks down his fish and notes the paths through which he travels. The former waits till the fish feeds, stalks him, and casts his fly over him with skill and care. The latter does just the same, but has to deal with a fish infinitely more shy and suspicious than trout, and one that once hooked uses knowledge acquired by years of experience, hoarded up in the largest brain of the fish world, to enable him for another time to escape the clutches of his enemy—man.

To be a successful carp fisher requires the skill of the deer stalker, the accuracy of the rifle shot, the impassive alertness of the Red Indian—all combined with the patience of Job. These qualities the writer has not, and therefore does not pretend to pose as successful, but writes this chapter as a help to others, and as a beacon marking the pitfalls to be avoided. In order that the reader may be enabled to follow the reasons for the methods adopted, it is necessary that something must be said about the carp itself. Everyone is aware that at least two species flourish in this country, viz., the common carp and the Crucian carp. The latter, also called the Prussian carp, is the probable ancestor of the gold fish, and differs from the carp proper in shape and size, also in the fact that it has no barbels depending from the corners of its mouth; it rarely exceeds 1½lb. in weight, and is useless as a table fish; it is much less shy than its more bulky relative, and seems to be possessed of less intelligence; it is of quicker growth, and soon tends to overstock the water. Between this fish and the carp proper a hybrid exists, which eventually becomes almost identical with the latter, except that it is unfit to eat, and never grows to a great size. This is probably the fish which is easily captured with roach tackle, &c.

As to the carp proper, the subject of this sketch, it has been bred since pre-historic times, and many are the varieties existing, such as the leather carp, the mirror carp, the king carp, &c., of which space will permit of nothing more than mention. It is a stately fish, power-

ful, enduring, and hardy, long lived, and of slow growth.

It has been calculated that in the wild state a 12lb. fish may not be less than thirty years old. Artificially fed, however, Canestrini found that a carp of 15lbs. to 16lbs. was of about seven years of age. These fish live to a great age after attaining their full growth, as has been frequently proved.

Now, given a fish of large brain and long-lived in habit, small wonder that the intelligence should be cultivated; but when one adds to these a knowledge of the wiles of man, absorbed from generations of domestication, then we get that acme of cunning which renders carp-fishing such an engrossing pursuit.

Friends often say when they see me carp-fishing: "Well, how you can sit there hour after hour is a puzzle to me." And so it is to everybody who has not tried it; but to the enthusiast it is not wearisome, but full of excitement. But enough of dissertation: the points to be considered are the habitat and the habits of the fish.

Carp are to be found in lakes and rivers—mainly in quiet deeps and backwaters of the latter, far from noise, bustle, and stream. In summer they swim hither and thither through the water weeds, looking for food. They travel by paths known to themselves, and seem to take always the same route. These paths should be studied by the angler, and, once found out, ought to be carefully baited, both before and at the time of fishing.

The fish feed most during evening and early morning, spending the middle of the day, if the weather is hot, in their spawning operations, which are frequently protracted, taking place at intervals from May to August. During the night they ascend to the surface of the water and breathe air. This causes the smacking noises one hears in the dark evenings when fishing. When a carp feeds he noses about the food for some time without taking it into his mouth. If he is satisfied that there is nothing suspicious about it, he then sucks it in and proceeds to swallow it. When it reaches the gullet it passes between two rows of teeth, that break it up and

pass it on to the stomach. As the food is being swallowed, the fish, moving on his way, masticates and mills it with the millstone-like throat teeth. The food of the carp is mainly soft vegetable and animal matter, which the aforesaid teeth are capable of thoroughly crushing.

With this slight notice of the natural history of the fish, let us briefly consider the best manner in which it may be captured. The methods used in carp-fishing require four different varieties of tackle. These are : Light float tackle, heavy float tackle, ledger tackle, and tackle to lie on the bottom without either lead or float.

Of the first variety little need be said, save and except that this is a variety usually recommended by the books.

A small porcupine quill, 1¼dr. of shot, a No. 5 hook, an undressed line, and a Nottingham winch, fitted on a short, whippy rod, comprise the equipment. Its use is simple. Choose a spot free from weeds within thirty feet of the shore, and well bait it for three days with bread, bran and potato, or substitute chopped lobworms for the latter. This baiting should be done each evening about eight to nine o'clock, according to the month. The most favourable season being the end of April and the beginning of May, especially if the weather is hot.

In getting the ground bait in, it is important that the same identical spot should be baited each evening, as the carp are then not surprised to find the hook bait there eventually. The evening of the third day after the ground bait has been put in the angler may try the spot with his tackle, taking great care that he does not make a noise on the bank or stand upright. The hook should be baited either with potato or lobworm, according to whichever has been used in the ground bait. Cast out the float, preferably over the position of the ground bait. The rod is to be laid down on the bank or supported, as suggested by Bickerdyke, on a Y-shaped stick. The plumbing ought to have been done the night before, and the tacke ought to be so arranged that the bait shall lie on the bottom at some little distance from

the gut passing up to the float, in order that the fish when nosing about the bait may not be alarmed by striking against it. If the carp should be tame enough to come so near, you may get a bite. The carp bite is characteristic. The float bobs a little, then may incline a little one way, then the other, and then lie still. In the course of five minutes the same may occur again, and this may continue for some time. Finally, the float begins to sail away sideways. Lift the rod, and strike firmly in the other direction, and then the fun begins. It is to be remembered that you are using fine tackle, therefore you must let your fish travel, and away he goes for the nearest clump of thick weeds, and away through them. If your tackle stands the strain, you may turn him, and back he comes float first. He makes a terrible dive for the bottom, and takes the float down, the top of which gets promptly entangled in the weeds. There is a fine tight line between the float and the rod top, and behind is slack. Mr. Carp takes advantage of the chance, and gets rid of the hook, or with a sudden jerk breaks the rigid gut between the float and himself.

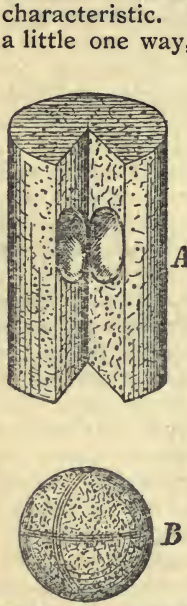


Fig. 30. Cork-covered Ledger.
A. Cork split and hollowed.
B. Ledger completed

These, then, are the disadvantages of the ordinary tackle. Many anglers of great experience use only the ledger, because there is nothing to hitch. This tackle, however, has disadvantages of its own for certain situations, such as lakes with soft, muddy bottoms, as the lead at once sinks, unless the very ingenious modification of a cork-clothed bullet (the invention of a London angling pressman) is used. This is simply made by enclosing an ordinary ledger bullet in a block of good

cork (a champagne cork for choice), and then paring away the cork till the lead just sinks the cork, but the cork supports the lead on the bottom. (Fig. 30). There is another reason against the use of the ledger, namely, that in very weedy lakes it is difficult to cast a ledger with sufficient accuracy to ensure its not being smothered in weeds. Its advantages over the light float tackle are tremendous; firstly, it can be cast very much farther

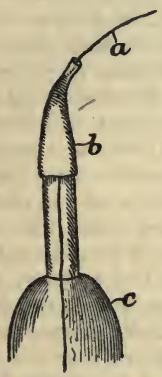


Fig. 31. Non-fouling Float.
A. Line B. Rubber Cap. C. Float,

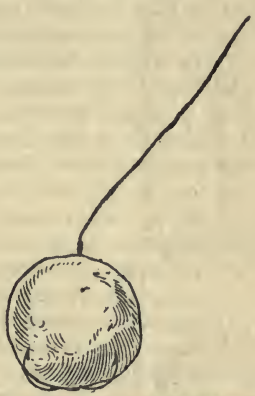


Fig. 32. Triangle baited with small Potato.

out; secondly, it can be used of stouter materials without scaring the fish; and thirdly, there is little or nothing to hitch. If a pipe-lead, such as recommended for bream-fishing, be used instead of the ordinary round bullet, the weight is not so liable to bury itself and the bait with it. There remains, however, two other methods which the writer has found particularly useful.

The most important of these is heavy float fishing, and for this special apparatus should be used, consisting of a strong, springy greenheart rod about 12 feet long; a Nottingham reel carrying 40 yards of dressed line about

G size ; a float, around the bottom of which is wrapped sufficient lead wire to thoroughly cock it—say, about half an ounce ; a yard of medium salmon gut, and a hook, No. 6, if single, or a small trout size triangle if treble, on 9 inches of stout gut. This gut below the float has no lead at all on it.

A word or two must be specially said about the float. A good, large, self-cocking Nottingham cork or quill is excellent, especially if the ordinary float cap be replaced by about an inch of flexible rubber tubing (pulled half on to the quill) through which the line runs (Fig. 31.) The result is that a guide is provided which will pull the float safely through the thickest weeds without any hitch occurring; another favourite float used by the writer is a large albatross quill, about half an inch in diameter, with a ring at the top. Through this the line runs, so that it is improbable that the float should catch in the weeds. Many baits may be used for carp, such as honey paste, gentles, lobworms, wasp grub, &c., but the writer rarely uses anything except potato on a triangle, either a parboiled kidney potato about the size of a walnut, threaded on with a baiting needle or a lump of paste the same size, consisting of one-third potato and two-thirds bread paste worked up in a mortar.

This bait is undoubtedly the most killing, but requires to be made without touching by the fingers, and should be put on either with old gloves on, or with hands guiltless of tobacco smoke. The new potato should be baited by threading it on the triangle with a baiting needle and pulling it home on to the shank so that the hooks are concealed, and then taking a clean cloth and rubbing off the skin ; afterwards loop on the hook link to the gut trace, upon which no lead should on any account be placed.

The depth of the baited spot, which may be much further out than when using the light float tackle, must be known ; the gut between the float and bait should be 1ft. longer, so as to ensure the bait getting to the bottom. Cast out over the ground-bait, which may be thirty yards away, by coiling down the dressed line

Thames fashion, endeavouring to get, if allowable, a little beyond. After the float has reappeared, wait a moment or two to give the bait time to sink, then draw the float towards you till the line between it and the bait is taut—this may be known by the float tilting a little sideways. If the intervening space of water between the float and the rod-top be weedy the dressed line must be well greased to make it float, otherwise the line will, when sinking, get entangled, and you may lose the chance of striking; if, on the other hand, there be clear water between, the line had better sink, as if there be any breeze the floating line drags and disturbs the bait.

By clever casting, a hole two yards in width each way may be fished thus at twenty yards distance, though the rest be thick weeds and the bottom soft mud. Anyone using this tackle practically will be astonished at the way in which the float travels through thick weeds and brings the bait after it without anything hitching. The same holds good with a hooked fish; struggle, kick, and flounder as he may, keep a tight line, give him the butt, and he will come through everything. But there are many carp ponds holding heavy fish which waters are almost impossible to fish on account of the denseness of the water weeds. These may be worked with the fourth form, viz., that without float or weight. The tackle is simple, viz., one hundred yards of strong, undressed twisted silk pike line, stiff rod, Nottingham removable check winch, a yard of stout gut, and hook or triangle as before. How is the line to be got out? This entirely depends on the bottom. If it is hard, then put on salmon waders, take the baited hook, put the check off your winch, and walk out to the best clear space in the path the carp travels, drop it in and put several pieces of like bait loose around it. Walk ashore, put away your waders and brogues, light a pipe, and await events, having previously put your winch check on again, pulling off about a yard of slack. When a fish takes your bait he feels no check till he begins to move off; then the winch begins to scream. Lift the rod, strike and hold on. If he once gets a chance the carp will

wind that line in and out through the weeds so that no power on earth could disentangle it. On the other hand, if he is once turned he will come in to your feet. But supposing it isn't hard bottom, or, if it be too deep for wading, what is to be done then? If it is a small pond, go to the end, get a friend to help rig up two rods, and an inch above the baits tie the hook lengths together with rotten thread; one then walks one side and one the other, each letting out line cautiously. Get both baits over a hole, give a sharp pull, the thread breaks, and both baits drop into the hole. Stiffish rods must be used, as springy ones would switch the baits into the weeds.

Nothing has been said about carp fishing from a punt, and this omission has been intentional. Any advantage that may accrue from using a punt to get at the most likely spots is, in the present writer's opinion, counterbalanced by the constant disturbance caused by rocking the boat, etc.

A few words must be said in conclusion as to the best time of day for fishing. There is but little doubt that the first three hours after sunrise are the best. While the morning mist still lies the carp do not seem to feed, but when the rising sun has dispersed this they often bite fast and furiously for the next hour or two. In the evening, on some waters, the sport is best from sunset till dark; but on others the fish seem to feed best during the first hour of darkness. One of the best places within hail of London for carp fishing is undoubtedly Wimbledon Lake, where, when Mr. John Garlick was proprietor, the author has taken between 8 p.m. and 10 p.m. on one evening one carp over 5lbs. and next morning between 4 and 6 p.m., two more scaling exactly 10½lbs. The Penn Ponds, Richmond Park, the lake at Foots Cray (the late Sir John Pender's place), and Cheshunt Lower Reservoir (where Kelly took his great carp) teem with grand fish of this species; also in many old lakes throughout the country good carp are to be seen, although it requires more than local skill to capture them. Those fishermen who do not pursue fly

fishing as a recreation should, during the weary three months of the close season, try their hands at the clever, shy old carp, of which they all have knowledge.

On the Chess.—August 11th, 1897.

Some are in Ireland; some in Norway; others are doing a little sea fishing; meanwhile we wretched toilers are frying in London—in August London—where the glare, heat, and bustle of the city seems to me, as I step out of my office building into the street, like the opening of a furnace door.

Racing hither and thither to keep appointments, and close, careful consideration of momentous interests, combine together to produce that condition of things known as a nervous headache; so, at five o'clock, I determine not only to do no more work, but also to spend my evening by the river. In the course of some years' practice of an anxious and arduous profession, I have frequently heard the merits of the shady hammock and the quiet pipe extolled as nerve sedatives. From practical experience, however, I prefer fishing. Not that I mean standing up to one's waist in a racing torrent, playing an 18lb. salmon, or anything so exciting. No, the quiet hours on a dry-fly water, or an autumn day's roaching are to me—and, indeed, to most busy town dwellers—the most restful and soul-satisfying of all holidays. The nerves, kept at concert pitch, the over-weary brain that bustles about at the hour of dawn and refuses to be rested, can be pacified only by a complete change of scene and interest, such as we get in fishing. To the dry-fly fisherman there is no possibility of thinking about business and catching fish at one and the same time, and we are all savages enough to forget nearly everything in the pursuit of prey. See the clever cross-examining counsel by the trout stream; how he creeps and hides till he gets within hooking distance of his piscine witness, casting his apparently harmless fly over him, and eventually bringing him to bank. What cares he for the

stuffy court, where yesterday, or to-morrow, wigless from the heat, he may be endeavouring to entrap another and perhaps less wily subject? He is busy resting his overwrought brain by letting it lie fallow, while his lower faculties are being exercised in another manner, with benefit to both in the long run. Most of us have heard, seen, or read of the Indian fakir, who by muscular power maintains the body in one position for so long a period that at length it becomes fixed in the attitude, and unable to resume its natural pose. So it is with the mind; if we keep the mental bow too long strung it refuses to straighten; but allow it to relax occasionally and its original elasticity remains. A quiet evening's fishing is to the town dweller but the needful relaxation of the bow which enables it to do better work and retain its elasticity. So to cure my headache I jumped into the train, and away to my fishing.

"Where is it?" is the first question, and I will try to answer without saying too much. It is on the Chess, less than twenty miles from London, on a good cycling road, and is one of those strictly preserved short lengths, the rights of which are occasionally to be let. I have said "occasionally" because, as a rule, they are snapped up at once by the residents. I have a cup of tea at the mill on arrival, and sally out about a quarter to seven to fish the little tumbling bay. Putting up one of Holland's double-winged Coachmen on a 00 hook, I sit down to wait. Over against the camp-shedding, a short 20ft. way, there is a little boil, and the fly goes over it promptly. Down it floats cockily, sitting "the water like a thing of life." Another boil, a strike, a dash, and out jumps a nice little fish. I play him downstream, net him, and measure; his total length is not 13in., so back he goes, to grow bigger for next year. About a yard higher there is a good rise under the shedding, and a decent cast raises and hooks the fish first time. Away up into the rush of the weir he goes, with a little ten-foot Leonard nicely curved; then a plunge, and back he comes at full speed. There is no room below, for a great willow overhangs the water, which, indeed, passes at this point

below the road. A steady strain, and the little rod, now bent into a semi-circle, gradually brings him into the eddy, and after a few dashes he is in the net—a nice fish of 1½lb.

This performance has thoroughly disturbed the small extent of water, so off I go to the quiet, oily stream above the mill.

Right by the sluice gate, with trees behind and the overflow sill extending for twenty feet below, a pounder is rising, but I leave him to enjoy his well-chosen place of safety, and stroll along the water. Half-way up, on the opposite side, under some withies I see a nice, steady rise, then another, and, while one can count ten, another. A quick swish or two to dry the fly, a quiet creep of about ten yards to get within casting range, then a false cast to measure the distance, and out flies the Coachman, to alight about four inches above him. Instantly away it goes, and, butting him, I find I am into another fair fish, but no great fighter. Down to the bottom he bores, and one feels him digging in the weeds. But the pull is from downstream, and away we both go towards the sluice. A very little of this satisfies him, and into the net and out on the bank he comes, a fish of 1¼lb. It is already beginning to get dusk, for the evenings quickly draw in now; but higher up is another busy fish, one I have known before, a knowing card, whose position has been taken up at a spot above, and in the run of a willow branch that sweeps the water. I cast, the fish rises, and I strike, to discover—a fact hidden from me by the dusk—that my fly was at least two feet away from the fish. I let out more line, and cast again, this time I hook—the willow. By a series of gentle shakes I endeavour to free the line; these shakes become jerks, and I free everything, save the fly and an inch or two of gut. Then the fun begins. The fish keeps on rising, so I endeavour to thread on another eyed-fly, holding it against the darkening sky; just as patience is about exhausted, and despair is claiming me for its own, the gut slips through, and in a second or two all is again ready for the fray. Again a cast or two to try and judge

distance, and the fly is placed, as nearly as one can see, over the fish; again there is a rise, a strike on the off chance, a tremendous plunge, and the line comes back minus the fly. When one's views on the situation have been expressed it is twenty minutes past eight, and barely enough time is left to pack up and be off to catch the train. A little fresh grass is put with my brace, a little cursory remark is made about the last fish, a cigar is lit, and when, at nine o'clock, I step into the railway carriage the headache has disappeared, one's business worries seem less, and the world generally is brighter. "It's no use going fly-fishing in August," say some. Well, perhaps it is hardly the time to get a heavy bag, but to my mind it is the time *par excellence* when the jaded brain-worker gets most good from his hobby; it isn't the fish, but the fishing. The last time I was at my river, while I was waiting for my tea I peeped under the arch which carries the water from the mill tail, and I saw four trout of from 2lbs. to 3lbs. weight apiece. While I looked, out from under the arch swam a white-coloured chap, at least two feet long—and dry fly only is allowed. Well, well, with luck and ingenuity someone will get that fish, and planning for his capture will be nice employment for the winter months.

CHAPTER IX.

September

Dab Fishing off Shoreham.

NEARLY all London anglers now look forward to a day or two of sea-fishing during the late autumn or early winter at some of our near-at-hand South-coast watering-places. Few, however, have succeeded in finding any good sea-fishing in the months of July or early August, save and except at great distances away, such as Looe and Penzance, in Cornwall, or Port Erin and Ramsay in the Isle of Man. To those who can spare the time, probably these places afford as much sport as anywhere in the British Isles. There are numbers, however, whose only sea-fishing opportunity is an odd day now and then, or "between the Saturday and Monday," as the old song says. Such persons, though they do not seem to be aware of the fact, need not despair of September fishing if they only know where to go. All round our Sussex coast, from Newhaven to Bognor, excellent sport can be had with bass, pollack, mackerel, pouting, dabs, and small sea bream. A short account of a couple of days in the neighbourhood of Shoreham Harbour may be of interest to some.

Hearing that fair sand-dabs were to be taken in this neighbourhood, two of us—members, of course, of the British Sea Anglers' Society—thought we would explore this neighbourhood. Starting from London Bridge at 9.25 a.m., one o'clock saw us seated in the snug little hostelry, partaking of our mid-day meal, having first seen that our boatman had got everything in readiness for the

afternoon. At two o'clock we embarked, and, after rowing out of the harbour, we hoisted sail and stood out to the eastward to the Two-mile Rough, dropping anchor on a very favourite mark there. We were well provided with bait (lug worm and mussel), and decided to put in the afternoon dab-catching. The sand-dab, the most unjustly despised of flat fish, is perhaps the sweetest and best flavoured of that division of flat fishes which has the sole as its chief. Many persons are of opinion that any small and worthless flat fish is a kind of dab, and that every crown-piece-sized Pleuronectid which they capture inshore should be dignified by that title. This is far from being the case, although, perhaps, the much useless trash that is taken from many of our Southern piers has done much to confirm this idea.

Along this shore, whatever it may be elsewhere, the sand-dab runs to a good size, many being from 10 inches to 12 inches in length, and weighing as much as 1¼lb. Talking to an old epicure the other day, who has resided most of his life on the sea coast, he told me that he was of opinion that the dab eaten fresh was, if anything, a better flavoured fish than the sole itself; and that, if he had to eat either continuously, he would more quickly get tired of the sole than the dab. However this may be, as a sporting fish the dab is excellent value if fished for with appropriate tackle.

Of course, the rough hand-line of the professional fisherman hauls these fish up *sans ceremonie*; but at this time of the year such gear does but little execution. When the first frosts come the dabs will feed greedily, but at present they only play with the bait, especially the fathers of the flock, the only fish the true sportsman goes to capture. When sea fish are biting lightly, and inclined to play with the bait, single gut only should be used, and the hook should be placed as far from the main line as possible. The writer and his friend were each using one short boom, placed about six inches above the lead, with a six-foot trace, made of single gut, carrying four hooks each.

When we first let go the tide was running hard, and

for some time but little sport was experienced; but as the current eased the fish came on the feed. Pull, strike, an occasional miss or a steady strain followed one another in close succession, and a red-letter day was expected. Every now and then the fish, on being struck, made the rod-point jump as it darted hither and thither, and, on pulling up, a small sea bream would reward the gaze. Small rubbish was also taken, such as wrasse, bullheads, and occasionally a goby. These fish, though useless as food, still are of great interest to all lovers of nature. The beautiful colours of the wrasse beat those of the most wonderful tropical birds; the formidably-armed bullhead never fails to remind us of his ferocious Greenland relative, who chases and devours the lordly salmon in the glory of his prime; while the little goby, with his wonderful ventral fins joined together into a sucker-like organ on the breast, though useless itself to man, still, according to Professor McIntosh, furnishes, both in the adult and larval forms, food for some of our most important marine food-fishes, such as the cod.

As the tide eased so dld the wind, and about half-past four a slight haze came up from the west, which in half an hour had shut out the land.

As we were without any means of signalling, and the fog horns of steamers were heard in the vicinity, we determined to get ashore before the wind should drop altogether or change its direction. Before we got within sight of the shore the wind had veered northerly, and we were only enabled to keep our direction by the run of the waves, which still continued to roll from the W.S.W. As we got inshore the haze thinned and we ran into the harbour, where hardly a breath of air stirred the surface. Our total catch for the two and a half hours' fishing was thirty-three dabs and seven sea bream.

Next morning saw us off at 9 a.m. bound for a distant ground, over five miles from the harbour, known as the Billy Boy. Many years ago a coaster, laden with Portland stone, was ran into and sank in this place.

Time has disposed of the vessel, but the blocks of stone still form an excellent harbour for codling and large pouting. As the tide was running strongly when we left the harbour we decided, before going far off-shore, to have a turn at the dabs, and took about a score in three-quarters of an hour, but missed many bites, principally because the hooks used were too large, and we had none smaller with us. We baited with lug-worm, mussel, and soft-shelled crab. This latter bait, which is referred to more than once in this book, is a great favourite with most West-country sea-fishers, and is, in the writer's experience, undoubtedly one of the most killing and reliable of baits for flounders. The dabs, however, did not favour it, being taken in about equal quantities on the two first-named baits, while only two small specimens were hooked on the crab. As some may not be familiar with this bait, it may be explained that the soft-shelled, shedder, or peely crab is the ordinary shore crab when it is about to shed, is shedding, or has shed its outer covering in order to grow a larger one. When this is happening the wise crustacean, knowing that his fellow crabs are no more chivalrous than City operators, hides under a stone till his new coat is hard and dry. Here the fisherman looks for him, and drags him to light. If he has not yet changed his shell but has grown a new one underneath, and if the carapace be gently lifted about its junction with the tail, the soft body will separate and the hard shell may be taken off. After this is done the legs are pulled off and the soft body is then cut up into four pieces if fishing for flounders and into two portions if the crab is to be used for cod or bass. The crab, which has already denuded itself of its old shell, of course only requires cutting up. In the former condition it is only the "peely crab," in the latter the "soft crabs" of the Cheshire coast. With this bait, years ago, the present writer used to take bucketsful of good flounders from the channel inside the Hoyle Bank, near Hoylake, working two hand-lines with five hooks apiece, and hauling them alternately and re-baiting. The most favourable time for the capture of

flounders in that locality is just as the ebb tide is drawing through after high water and for, say, an hour after.

However, to return to our expedition. As the tide slackened sport fell off, so we hoisted sail and away to the Billy Boy wreck. When we got out we discovered that it was almost too hazy to see the marks ashore, but after some difficulty we managed to hit the spot by the simple expedient of drifting with the tackle down. My companion struck it first and remained fast. While enjoying his discomforture my joy was turned to sorrow by the hitching of my own gear. As a result of this method of exploration we found our wreck, but lost two swivelled ledger traces, one Clements boom, one Parker boom, eight eyed hooks on gut, and three pear-shaped leads. When we did find the wreck we got about seven large pouting. At 3.30 p.m. we left this spot, as the wind freshened and nothing more was caught, and tried a new pitch inshore. Here we fell amongst the pouting and hauled them out, as our boatman said, "like one o'clock." Four at a time was frequent, three at once was usual, and we never had fewer than two. The writer, as the fish left off, had a rather curious trio, consisting of a dab, a pouting, and a 2lb. pollack—a very excellent team, which pulled all ways at once, and thoroughly tested the excellence of the single gut trace. When the pouting left off the dabs started and gave us good sport till our bait gave out. At the finish we caught fish with any remnants of worms or mussel lying in the bottom of the boat, while the captured fish frequently had to be robbed of its last morsel to bait the hook for its successor. At six o'clock we got into harbour and turned out on the slip eleven score of fish, eight and a half score being pouting, thirty-seven dabs, eleven sea bream, a pollack, and a small red mullet. This latter fish, it has been frequently stated, is rarely taken on rod and line, although hardly a season passes without some angler reporting such a capture; on this occasion the hook used was of larger size than needful, and the bait was soft crab.

So closed the account of an all-too-short fishing

holiday, within two hours' rail from our baking city Many will look with scorn upon such fishing, and say how much they prefer the dashing pollack or the noble bass fishing, which we so often read of but so seldom experience. In their preference the writer joins them. but half a loaf is better than no bread, and a day's sea-fishing of the type described is certainly better than idling ashore waiting for grand sporting experiences which may never come.

Bream Fishing.

The average coarse fisherman is under the impression that he thoroughly understands the art and practice of bream fishing. He says, "What can I learn about catching them? Why, I've taken tons." And probably he has. But that does not prove that, if placed on a water swarming with these fish, he will succeed in capturing one.

The false impression of the ease with which bream are to be taken has chiefly arisen from the fact that the average angling author knows nothing about them, and has been chiefly dependent for information on the rustic night-fisher or our good old authority, Izaak Walton.

During the nineteenth century many books have been written for the better instruction of the angler, about three of which fulfil their object. The others are stuffed with information collected from various sources, none unimpeachable, partially digested by the author, and then placed before the angling public to mislead the unwary and become subjects of derision to the fisherman who has dearly purchased his practical experience.

Take, for example, the account written in Buckland's "British Fishes" of fishing the Norfolk Broads:—

"The first thing the fisherman looks for is the worms; they must be worms of the largest size, not those dug out of the ground; they must be picked up off the grass at night. The hole he fishes in is as deep, to use his own words, as 'two pair of reins and a plough line.'

His ground-bait is made thus: He gets half a pailful of bullock's blood, a pailful of fresh grains, half a pailful of very clear clay, a handful of dog's greaves well broken up, three handfuls of meal, and a little oil cake. This is well worked up into a pudding, and worked into balls not quite so large as a child's head, and partially baked in the sun. He proceeds to his hole at day break, say three o'clock in the morning, and fishes with the roughest possible tackle. Sometimes these louts will catch nearly a hundredweight of bream in one morning, before breakfast. This, then, is a good hint for any of our friends who propose to try bream fishing in Norfolk."

What rubbish! What perfect nonsense!

In Norfolk rivers, perhaps, twenty years ago bream might have been taken thus: but how can this be applied to the Broads?

Anyone who has ever fished these lovely waters well knows that the chief trouble there is to find the fish. Take, for instance, a broad one mile and a half long and three quarters across, not more than 8ft. deep anywhere except in the channel, and then only in parts. Most of it consists of 2ft. to 3ft. of water on 6ft. to 7ft. of mud; and hither and thither, according to the weather and strength and direction of the wind, huge shoals of bream and rudd ramble about. The cart-reins and the coarse tackle would look well here! The bucket of abominations would be wearily rowed about while the angler endeavoured in vain to find his fish. The fish found, perhaps by chance, and the load deposited, the presence of the boat and the splash of the clumsy tackle would scare them, and the sport would be nil. Far different is the actual method, which is as follows:—

Get overnight everything in the way of bait ready, such as worms (maiden dews from Nottingham), gentles, and about half a bucket of ground bait, consisting of bread, pollard, and bran, with a little rice if it be wanted to bind.

It is advisable if the fish are unusually shy that a

little boiled wheat should be used, thrown in after the ground-bait.

The tackle required will be:—

(1) A good stiff Nottingham float, carrying at least twelve largest-size shot.

(2) One or two No. 6 hooks on gut. If two hook tackle be used, place the shot almost ½in. apart, right at the lower end of the gut trace, which should be not more than a yard long, and of good lake trout strength, about 10in. between knots. One hook is attached to the lower loop, and the other looped on at the next knot above the shots. This gives nearly a foot between the baits. The upper hook may be omitted.

(3) The running or reel line deserves the greatest attention. It must be fine, strong, and dressed. The best lines the author has ever used are the well known Olinea line, G. or H. size (see Fig. 3); and a good dressed line recommended and sold for this special purpose by Mr. Nichols, of Stalham, a well-known professional and tackle dealer.

These two lines have been specially mentioned on account of the difficulty that the author has found in obtaining a dressed line sufficiently fine that will stand any wear at all. This line should be never less than twenty-five yards in length, and, preferably, ought to be forty.

(4) The rod should be strong and light, with a good whippy top, and ringed, preferably with bridge rings, to allow the line to run easily.

Thus furnished for sport, with a little hamper for creature comforts, start off, after a good breakfast, about eight in the morning, and row steadily over the water to where you expect the fish are. Bream on shallow broads usually get up wind and hence hug the windward shore. They feed also with southerly and westerly better than easterly breezes. If a north wind blow, better stay at home or go and fish some river, for you will find the Broad fish completely off their feed.

Now, how are you to find your fish? Quite simply. Bream always thicken the water when they are feeding

by routing in the mud. This routing liberates bubbles of gas, and the movements of the fish are shown by the bubbles released. These bubbles, when caused by bream, differ from ordinary bubbles from the fact that in passing upwards through the water they get coated with some of the slime with which these fish are so bountifully endowed, and therefore look like a minute bladder on the surface of the water.

Well then, the simple method of finding bream is to look for thick water, and see if there are any bream bubbles coming up. "There they be a-blubbering," as my old Broadman says.

In shallow water the fish, being by nature extremely shy, are easily alarmed, and will fly on the approach of a boat.

Therefore find your fish, get a nice open spot, put down ground bait, mark the place, and go away. Then proceed to get a shoal of fish moving, and drive them on to the bait, rounding them up like sheep; put down your poles twenty yards off, and make long casts as nearly over the ground-bait as possible.

How is this to be done?

Suppose your baited spot is in two feet or three feet of water, place your float at that distance from the lowest shot. Pull off twenty-five yards of dressed line, and then re-coil it in the bottom of the boat so that it will run easily. This line must not be vaselined, as it should sink as soon as possible. Bait your two hooks, each with the tail of a nice lob, and, casting either underhand or overhand, aim for the mark. This must be done while sitting, as standing up in the boat in this shallow water will at once scare the fish. Should the float go anywhere near the ground-bait—that is, within two yards—lay down the rod and wait. Suddenly, after a greater or lesser interval of time, the float bobs a little or perhaps lifts, and after one or two uneasy movements slides away sideways into the water. Strike hard and play lightly, getting the fish as quickly to the boat as possible. Fight it out under the rod point if possible, and get him into the net on the first opportunity.

L

Strike hard, because you have got a long line out sunk in the water ; and *play lightly*, because if the fish comes to the top and splashes amongst the shoal the others will make off. Get him into the net, in case he should break away and go and alarm the others. The least accident—an oar falling, a fish breaking away, or even missing a fish—and the retreating row of bubbles will mark the flight of the shoal, even if the most enticing ground-bait be put down for their delectation. So easily scared are these fish that it is as well not to moor the boat up-wind, as the fish seem somehow to make out its presence. Better get the wind abeam for casting, and moor the boat with her bow up-wind. This is the reason the line ought to sink, as if it floats the wind bellies it out, and drags on the float continually. The probable reason of the fish being alarmed by a boat moored up-wind is that, being fastened with her broadside towards the fish, the wavelets keep splashing against her sides, and these fish are most susceptible to sound.

This is a slight sketch of ordinary Broad bream-fishing, and certainly bears little resemblance to the quoted account, save and except that frequently a boat will take in this way a hundredweight of fish, all obtained by skill, patience, and hard work, without which fishing becomes fish-slaughter and not sport. Any angler therefore who, misled by erroneous impressions produced by reading books, has gone down to the Broads and had no sport, has only to engage one of the clever local professionals in order to see that, though not so simple as the authors state, still bream fishing is a good sport, and productive of good fish, if you go the right way to work with the right knowledge and tools. Fishing Barton Broad I have taken on single days catches of 26 bream, 58lbs. ; 22 bream, 64lbs., and 14 rudd, 22lbs. ; and one evening with five lob-worms 12 bream, 41lbs. But this is only one method of catching these fish ; each river and district has its own, which usually is successful, and is peculiarly suited to the local circumstances.

Another system, pursued at Wimbledon Lake and the Welsh Harp, is long casting with ground-bait. The

fisherman fishes from the shore, using a light float, preferably a large porcupine quill, carrying about four large shot, put close together a foot above the hook, an undressed line of medium plaited silk, and a short, stout rod. As it is no use fishing nearer than twenty-five yards, how is the float going to get out that far?

Very simple; the angler takes a lump of his bread and bran ground-bait, which has been well stiffened with pollard, and squeezes it on round the shots.

Then he lays down his rod, and begins pulling the undressed line off the reel, and arranging it in long rows on the ground. He then picks up his rod, takes the line below the rings in his left hand and the rod in the right, gives the point a swing back and then forward, at the last moment lets the left hand go, and the float—weighted with ground-bait—flies away out over the water to the appointed spot. On striking the water the whole affair sinks, but as the small fry worry the pollard and bran mass it falls off, and the float gradually rises to the surface.

The hook bait used is, as a rule, lob-worm, but stiff paste is sometimes successful.

This method is not so artistic as the last, and such close practice cannot be made in accuracy of casting, but a greater distance can be covered with lighter tackle.

Each has its own merits for its own waters. In Norfolk the fish are collected by ground-bait, and are easily scared by anyone standing casting a shadow on the water; but they are bold biters, snd do not require fine gut and few shots. At Wimbledon, on the other hand, the fish are practically confined to certain places, which lie well out from the bank, are not scared by the presence of anglers on the bank, but bite very shyly, owing to their being much fished. They bite best in the early morning.

These are the only methods of long float-casting that I am practically acquainted with, but in some places I believe they are fished for in the Nottingham style, casting from the reel, and in the Thames by floating down

from a punt, as when roaching, using lob-worm for bait.

In this method the tackle used should be little stronger than that in ordinary use for the roach, but it is well to use a larger hook, and to give the fish very much more time.

Long-corking is also recommended, but I have been unable to gain any practical information on this subject.

The system of float-fishing adopted on the rivers of Norfolk and Sussex are nearly identical, though the tackle in use is slightly different. On the Yare and Bure, at Cantley, Buckenham, Reedham, and Acle, the float-fisher works from a punt, using a long, stout rod, with reel and running line, a 2yd. length of gut, a No. 6 hook, plenty of shot, scattered equally down the line, a heavy goose-quill float, made fast at the lower end only, and an undressed silk running-line. He baits with lobs, and uses plenty of ground-bait, of greater or lesser degrees of beastliness.

The Arun and Avon fisherman is frequently a Londoner, who uses his roach pole and tackle, and sometimes, after a hard fight, brings his three or four-pounder to net. Frequently, alas! the victory is to the bream, who swims triumphantly away with a portion of cherished bottom tackle, the top-joint of a favourite Sowerbutts sometimes being included. Here I am inclined to think that the angler would be well advised if he adopted the running tackle of the Norfolk bream fisher.

And now it only remains to explain the methods used on the king of bream waters, the slow, deep, weedy Ouse, which winds its way through seven of the counties of England. Here time was when the pike-float, the haddock-hook, and the garden-worm accounted for tons of fine fish, but that day is gone. I say "day" advisedly, for this tackle will still, when the fish are madly on the feed, take bream during the night. The average night-fisher nowadays uses something better in the way of bottom tackle.

One thing must here be mentioned before going

further, and that is the local rod. This consists of a piece of natural bamboo of about 9ft. to 12ft. long, short for ledgering and longer for float-fishing. It is roughly fitted with upright rings, five or seven, and a good big top-ring. For bream fishing it is undoubtedly the most suitable weapon; of course, the quality varies, but a good rod ought to be light, about 1¼in. diameter at the butt, and taper at the point to the thickness of a lead pencil. When once obtained, have it well varnished and ring-fitted, keep it at the fishing, never lend it, and it will last a lifetime. Its especial advantage for day ledgering will be touched on later.

Float-fishing on the lower reaches of the Ouse is not much practised, owing to the great depth of the water, but when adopted is a sort of modification of the old system, but using much finer hooks, baits, and tackles.

In many parts the brandling has entirely ousted the lob-worm for hook bait during the summer months. The *modus operandi* of night-fishing has often been explained in angling books. Of night-ledgering little need be said, save that as fish can be taken in fair numbers (a sackful at a time) during the day in the same places, the writer much prefers spending his nights in bed.

For his night-fishing, however, the articles required are the rod, preferably raw bamboo; a running line, a pipe-lead, like that used for jack live-bait tackle; a No. 5 hook, fairly thick in the iron on an 8-in. hook-link; and a yard of gut, on which the pipe-lead is threaded ledger fashion with a shot nipped on eight inches from the lower end. Ground-bait with bread, bran, greaves, and meal, stirred into a lumpy mass. Place the ground-bait in the river about seven in the evening, and begin fishing at midnight, and fish till the fish stop biting. Use for hook-bait, lob-worm.

Light a dark lantern, and wait watching the point of the rod. Don't strike till the line runs away, then lift and hit hard in order to get the lead level with the fish, which always rises on taking the bait.

The new method, now very popular in the district, is day-ledgering for bream. It was first practised at the

Fourgate Pit, above St. Ives, at Hemingford, and resulted in the capture of over a ton of grand fish Use the same tackle as for night ledgering, but rather finer gut Ground-bait as before, and use brandlings as hook-bait. Immediately before fishing cast in about a quarter of a bushel of brewer's grains, if possible still hot, and fish in the cloud caused by their sinking. Taking fish in this method is a fine art, and not to be acquired immediately. The writer and a friend (an old and experienced angler

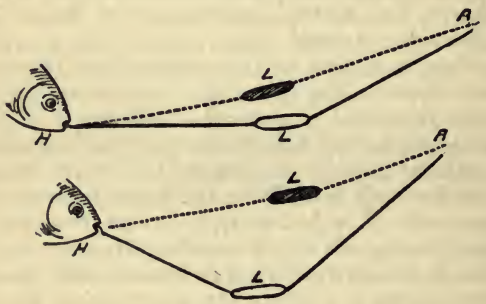


Fig. 33.

Two diagrams illustrating ledgering with tight and slack line. The line is practically in the line of strike with the slack line, whereas with the tight line the strike has to lift the lead through a greater interval.

for both coarse and game fish) had the novel experience of seeing two boys and an old gentleman take a sackful of fish, while they themselves only captured one between them, and that foul hooked. Every now and then one or the other got a tug, struck hard, and on pulling up found the hook was bare. After two or three unsuccessful expeditions the secret was discovered, viz., the strike must be done before the tug is felt, as then it is too late, I give here two diagrams which demonstrate how bream can bite on ledger tackle.

If the fish bite shyly, as they do in the daytime in the summer, then as soon as they feel the weight of the pipe-lead they drop the bait, and the tug felt is the lead

leaving the ground, and when the angler has overcome the angle formed by the lead the fish has gone. (Fig. 33)

How is one to know, then, of the bite before the tug? Very easily; the bream on taking the bait begin to rise, and a slight pull is given on the line which, if left slack from the rod point, runs freely through the lead, gradually tightening the main line. A corresponding movement is given to the line depending from the rod point, which is sometimes so slight as not to be felt by the fingers, though easily noted by the eye. Strike at once sharply and firmly, and the fish is yours. These fish taken in daylight in the late summer are in the pink of condition, and fight in a manner calculated to upset the fixed ideas of the sportsman who looks upon such fishing as unworthy of the name of sport.

This is the fishing for which the bamboo cane one-piece natural rod is so useful, as it will stand the incessant striking, is sufficiently whippy to save breaking the fine tackle in a heavy fish, and at the same time sufficiently sensitive to show the faintest touch. Of course, some days the bream feed madly all through the day, running away with the bait, as old Walton tells, but this does not last. In a day or two they begin this furtive biting, which has been the despair of bream fishers, but is now the delight of many. For those who have never tried it a pleasure still remains, if they will persevere till they acquire the knack. Hot dry weather seems only to improve the fun. With the sun overhead like a furnace, the earth hazy with heat, the woodwork of the boat so hot that the hand could not rest upon it for a moment, the river—without a breath of wind—shining like a burnished mirror, the writer one tropical August took one afternoon twenty fish, weighing 57lbs.

Of other methods of bream fishing, no doubt they exist, but they are not known to the present writer, who has written this article to prove that there are more ways of catching bream than those given in the angling books, which seem to give but two varieties, namely, the cart ropes of Buckland and the "fish as for roach" of a well-known angling author

CHAPTER X.

October

Drift-Line Fishing for Mackerel, Bass, and Pollack at Looe, Cornwall.

THE drift-line hand-lining methods have been popularised in the past by that chief of amateur sea-fishermen, the late W. J. C. Wilcocks; since the introduction of sea rod-fishing a further change has taken place, and now sea rod-fishing with a drift-line is practised at numerous places along the Southern coasts.

Perhaps one of the most satisfactory places where all-round sport can be obtained is at Looe, the quaint little fishing town hidden under the shadow of the Orestone. Here, even during heavy S.W. gales. one can run outside the harbour and enjoy a fair day's sport rod-fishing with light tackle. Indeed, during August and early in September, when heavy easterly winds are blowing, good sport may be obtained with large bass inside the little harbour itself. Looe is not perhaps the most easily got at of angling resorts, although the little branch railway is now in working order. Up to last year or so, however, Liskeard was the nearest railway station, some eight miles away. By this means one is enabled to spend a Bank Holiday spell in this neighbourhood, or leave London on Thursday night, fish Friday, Saturday, Monday and Tuesday and be back for work on Wednesday morning. Boats and reliable men can be got in fair numbers at 30s. per week.

The sport is pursued most successfully with the following special tackle which will be here described somewhat fully.

For bass and large pollack, the rod should be rather longer than usual say 9ft. to 10ft., and should spring right down to the butt. The winch should be not less than 5½ins. in diameter and the line, at least 100yds. in length, should have a breaking strain of not less than 10lbs. Between the hook (Minchin cod pattern) and the main line, there should be first a hook-link of at least 10-inch plaited gut (my favourite hook link is three strands of 18-inch lake-trout gut) and a 2-yard trace of strong plaited gut with two German silver swivels. On this may be put a Jardine, or other suitable pattern, spinning lead of from ½oz. to 3ozs. in weight, according to the amount of tide. For large fish the hook should be baited with a whole pilchard, tail-end up the shank and head cut off so that the entrails may float out.

The whole apparatus is used as follows :—

Getting a proper position either down the Bay, or under the lea of the Island, or round at Spotty, just as tide and wind may suit, enough lead (and no more), is put on as will suffice to take the line within reasonable distance of the bottom, well away from the boat. If too much lead be used, the bait will be at once destroyed by chads—the young of the red bream which infest the bottom at this part of the coast. If too little lead is used the fish will not come up for the bait and no sport will be obtained. The best method is to plumb the depth with a heavy lead, guess the line required by the angle formed by the line with the water, and mark the depth by opening the strands of the winch line and pushing through a little tag of coloured wool. It is well to occasionally work the bait a little and draw in or let out a little more line if the fish do not bite.

For harbour fishing for bass probably more or less lead may be needed according to the state of the tide.

A very ingenious lead has been invented by Mr. Hyde, a member of the British Sea Anglers' Society, which lead can be placed any distance from the bait,

and is released by the pull of the fish and runs down to the trace, thus allowing of the fish being winched in (see Fig. 34). This is made by Messrs. Carter & Co.

When a good fish is hooked, if he be a pollack, try and keep him out of the bottom at all risks; while, if he be a bass, he will run like a salmon and any check at first will be fatal. I have seen strong twisted gut snapped like packthread. The fish, especially in the neighbourhood of Rame Head, Bindown way (pronounced Bĭn-on), run very large, one day's catch in September, 1899, (two anglers) being 15 pollack, 150lbs; best fish 14¾lbs. Twenty sea-bream and a shark were taken, but were not counted.

Fig. 34. Hyde's Pollacking Lead.

As regards bass, the best catch with rod and line has never equalled the professional hand-liners, one fisherman taking ten good fish in an evening.

The writer's best bass was just upon 9lbs. and strange to say was taken near the point of Looe Island, on the pollack ground.

If the angler should get tired of the big fish, or should the weather prove unfavourable, grand sport can be had with the light rod and drift line for mackerel, gar-fish and small pollack. The method pursued is exactly the same as for the large fish, save and except that single gut replaces treble, the hook is Minchin's whiting size, the bait is a slice of pilchard, back and belly. With this, very little or no lead need be used. Grand sport may be enjoyed if a light Nottingham or fly rod be also substituted for the more clumsy weapon suitable for the big fish. I may say that, being imbued with the teaching of Wilcocks, we tried living sand-eels, rag-worms, &c., as alternative baits but found nothing to beat pilchard. Everything on land and sea in this part lives on pilchard. In fact it is the chief thing which strikes one on arriving at Looe, and the reek remains as meat and drink all through the visit. All sea-anglers, no doubt, love Wilcocks' "Sea Fisherman" (certainly all angling writers

do). If the reader turns up page 51 (3rd edition), he will find a diagram of how to cut up his bait; the full diagram shows half of the bait for large fish and the diagonal lines show the small pieces, each with a blue and silver half, as used for the small hook. Always remember, in baiting these pieces, to enter the hook on the flesh side of the blue, and back through the skin side of the silvery belly; this puts the gleaming portion on the outer curve of the hook. Should any enthusiast care to try the living sand-eel as bait, plenty may be got up the estuary by digging in the light shelly sand at low water. They should be kept in a courgé or sand-eel basket fastened to the stern of one of the boats at anchor.

In digging sand-eels it is useful to have a sieve on which to put the spadeful of sand, otherwise a large number of eels will escape by burrowing downwards. If a sieve is not to be had a common piece of matting will do at a pinch. With rag-worm as bait I have personally had but little sport, though the small pollack will occasionally take them. I am perfectly convinced that better sport is to be got out of drift-line rod-fishing than railing or whiffing can ever give; and am inclined to give it a trial round our other coasts.

Grayling at Hungerford.

"Tickets 2s. 6d. per day." This was the announcement that struck my eye, some years ago, when glancing idly through the pages of an October *Fishing Gazette*, "Kennet and Dunn. Grayling Fishing. Tickets 2s. 6d. per day." I thought it was worth trying, and have had many pleasant autumn days in consequence.

The spring and early summer trouting is indeed a form of angling without its equal in the writer's estimation, but July sees practically the end of it. Of course, exceptional days occur in August when the well-fed trout, which during that month usually disdain to look at the angler's fly, suddenly go mad for an hour or two,

and then fall a prey to yellow duns on ·00 hooks. But, alas! such occasions are rare. As to September trout, the less said about them the better; it seems a sin to kill female fish in which the ova are already the size of hemp seed at least.

But October grayling are in the pink of condition, that condition so graphically described by Charles Cotton. As he very properly observes, "a grayling is a winter fish." Poor old Izaak in his portion of the immortal work is not so correct in his natural history, for he says "He is a fish that lurks close all winter, but is very pleasant and jolly after mid-April, and in May, and in the hot months." That is to say immediately after spawning! It is not often that our ancient authority is wrong, but this is indeed a blunder. He evidently had but little personal acquaintance with the fish and in the early part of his chapter has confused it with the Mai-fisch, or Shad (*Clupea alosa*), or perhaps the Houting (*Coregonus lavaretus*) which, although one of the white fishes, is sold in this country to this day as "Dutch Grayling"; both these fish ascend rivers in May, and either may be the fish referred to by Walton, Rutty, and others as "Grayling."

But enough has been said here on these points, and we must return to the fish itself and how to kill him at Hungerford. Anyone who would desire to study the matters previously touched upon more closely should read "The Book of the Grayling," by the late T. E. Pritt, where an exhaustive chapter is given on the past history of the fish and some ingenious explanations are put forward as to the origin of the English names Grayling (grey-lines) and Umber (umbra, a shade; umber, the pigment; Humber, the river; Umbro, a river of ancient Italy).

It is allowed by all modern authorities and certainly by all grayling fishermen that in October, November, and December this fish is in the pink of condition. In order to enjoy the best of sport the grayling should be, if possible, taken with the dry-fly. But for this form of angling it is necessary that some kind of fly should be

upon the water, although but a sparse rise will induce grayling to take the artificial freely. During the whole winter on our southern streams,even on the coldest days, there is usually some rise of fly, although the period of the rise may be very short. In this respect, however, October is a better month than either November or December, although the writer has seen a fair rise of fly between the intervals of snow showers on Boxing Day, between twelve mid-day and two o'clock in the afternoon.

The tackle used for this class of fly-fishing is exactly that recommended for trout except that the gut for wet-fly should if anything be a little finer.

As regards flies a very different standard must be adopted than has been found satisfactory for the capture of trout. In the writer's opinion in nine cases out of ten a fancy fly will be found most killing even where natural insects are being freely taken. By "fancy fly" is meant an artificial bearing no apparent resemblance to anything ever seen on the surface of the water. Thus for centuries, at one time always wet and nowadays occasionally dry, the Red Tag has been found the most generally-killing fly for grayling no matter what little alterations have been made in its tying materials or name. Bradshaw's Fancy, Marryatt's Pattern, Rolt's Witch and Dazzler, and a host of others are only modifications of the old red-tag referred to by Izaak Walton, "a fly made of the red feathers of a parakita, a strange outlandish bird." From personal experience, most success has been made with the Red Tag; next comes the Witch; next the Green Insect; next Wickham's Fancy; while occasionally a good fish has been taken, especially in October, with the Pale Watery Dun.

In order to fish successfully for grayling it is necessary to have some knowledge of the fish and its habits. Although inhabiting the same rivers as trout in many instances this fish takes up its position in the deeper and more slowly running portions, and indeed when in prime condition avoids the shallower and

swifter runs preferred by trout. Its anatomy will demonstrate this better than any description can. The large easily-raised back fin and the capacious swim-bladder, dilatable by the raising of the fin, together with the oval upward-glancing eye shows a power of suddenly rising to the surface which is not possessed by trout. Hence the difference in the habits of the two fish : the trout, if in deep water, seems to hover near the surface when feeding and rises but slightly as the fly passes over him ; the grayling, on the other hand, hugs the bottom and comes up at the fly with a turning-over motion, not dropping back as the trout does but making what is known as a "head and tail" rise. The late Dr. John Brunton had this well illustrated in a case containing a trout and a grayling, each hooked and returning after taking the fly. Dr. Brunton, by-the-bye, always spelt the name of this fish as "Greyling," and defended his spelling on the score that "grey" not "gray" was the correct spelling of the root-word. The habit of living in deeper water accounts for the fact that grayling are found more frequently than trout in the middle of the stream. Grayling also exhibit another peculiarity over trout which may be accounted for in the same manner. A fish rising at a fly will frequently miss it, but will come again and again, and may at last be hooked ; whereas a trout under similar circumstances usually only makes one or, at most, two offers.

The most feasible explanation of this fact is that the trout, when he misses the fly, means to miss it, having discovered the deception ; whereas the grayling, rising from a depth, miscalculates his shot and misses the fly by mistake, and goes on rising even more eagerly until he gets it. This explanation is also borne out by the fact that these fish are not so particular as trout as to the pattern of the fly, and evidently prefer bright and gaudy patterns.

There is little doubt that the grayling is much more a bottom-feeder than the trout, although, in my opinion, not usually a fish eater, despite the opinions of Messrs. Pritt, Walbran, Seeley, and others. After spawning,

these fish will feed on almost anything, as they are ravenous: as Walton says, "very pleasant and jolly." Indeed, in Mayfly time I have frequently taken, on one stretch of the Kennet below Newbury, five or six grayling for every trout hooked on the Mayfly, dry and floating.

On the other hand, the grayling takes a wet fly well on all streams, and is, if anything, more apt to bulge at larvæ even than a trout.

As I have no scruples as to the method employed for fair fly-fishing for either trout or grayling, I am therefore inclined to advocate the use of one wet fly for grayling if they are not rising at the perfect insect. It may be said *en passant* that the chief objections in the writer's mind to the use of wet fly for trout in chalk streams are (1) because it does not catch as many fish, and (2) because, as trout lie near the surface, it shows too much to the fish of the *modus operandi*, and renders it shy for the next angler.

These objections do not, however, apply to grayling, for three reasons:—

1. Grayling lie at a greater depth than trout, and much more frequently out in the centre of the river, and hence are not so easily scared.

2. Grayling take a dragging fly when trout will not look at it.

3. Grayling feed best during the winter months when there is but little surface food about.

For wet fly fishing various favourite patterns are recommended, but the writer has never found any fly equal for all-round work to Rolt's Witch on Nos. 1 to ·00 hooks. Having said something about the fish and its food and the best fly to use, let us now consider the actual fishing itself. I will here make no reference to bait-fishing for grayling, such as is so extensively practised in the North of England. On the Kennet grayling are prized as game fish, and give sport to the fly-fisher when the trout do not. Under these circumstances, bait fishing is much akin to poaching, save and except when it is intended to clear certain stretches of

the water, or the bait-fisher is sole proprietor of that portion of the river.

Well, then, fly-fishing for grayling is our theme, and Hungerford our locality.

Hungerford is over sixty miles from London on the Devizes line; it is in quick communication with London, and a good day's sport can be obtained by leaving Paddington by the 9.20 a.m. train. If the day-ticket has been obtained beforehand, the angler can be on the water by 11.30, going direct from the station. Between that hour and 3.30 the sport of the day is to be obtained as a rule, though occasionally, especially with wet fly, a good fish can be picked up from 9 to 11.30 a.m. Should the fly-fisher wish to put in these hours he may leave Paddington at 6.30 a.m., or go down by the 7.15 overnight. Fair accommodation may be had at the Bear Hotel, from the proprietor of which the fishing tickets may be got.

Arrived at the water, the best plan is to walk up to the town bridge and see what is moving. Standing on the bridge and looking down stream, below the left-hand arch, working about just where the water deepens, a fine shoal of grayling is always to be seen. These fish never seem to rise to the fly; I have never heard of one of them being taken, although they seem quite careless of the presence of man. I have frequently—when they have been a little lower down their beat than usual—waded in above and waited while they have gradually worked back almost to my feet. In fact I have stirred them up with my rod-point before they condescended to again drop back. From this bridge down to and beyond the island, right to the deep slow bend where the footbridge crosses, there are plenty of grayling, and these may be taken with either wet or dry fly, according to whether they are feeding under water or on the floating fly.

At this time of the year the true sportsman ought never to cast over a rise close in to the bank, as odds are that the fish is a trout and a good one. It is an unfortunate fact that trout, that all season through have not looked at the artificial, will suddenly rise and fasten

in October on a Red Tag or some other grayling absurdity. Some anglers take a pride in landing these fish only to return them; but this is hardly good for the fish or sportsmanlike. Of course, the grayling fishers have no chance at these fish during the season, as, by a very shortsighted policy, the Committee of the Hungerford Angling Association have stopped the issue of daily or weekly permits for trout-fishing from May 1st to June 30th, after which date Hungerford trout are, as the ghillies say, "gey and dour." The stopping of permits during the Mayfly rise has been an old custom and quite understandable, as no subscription water can stand heavy Mayfly fishing; but the stopping of all permits till July 1st has driven away a number of good sportsmen from the river, and has made some of the winter fishers a little careless about the handling of trout.

Below the little footbridge runs a long, slow, weedy canal-looking reach, where I am told some good grayling are to be taken with wet fly, although it appeals to me mainly as a haunt of big trout or pike. It is indeed full of the latter, as unfortunately the rest of the river is getting to be owing to the restrictions of the Committee. Several grayling fishers have sought permission to take to pike-fishing when the grayling are not on the feed, but this has been consistently refused. It is hard to discover what useful object the Committee can have in view in preventing the destruction of pike in a river where the annual trout permit is valued at £10 10s. a rod (the day ticket when issued was 5s.) and the grayling ticket is 2s. 6d. per day.

Above the town bridge a fine stretch of water runs up to the mill, and here, especially near some stumps in midstream, some good grayling lie and these occasionally rise freely to the dry-fly.

In fishing wet in any of these situations the fly should be cast across stream and slightly down, and worked deeply round to the angler, a firm strike being made at the least resistance. Try at once and get below the fish as the big back fin and the tender lip combine to

make a parting almost inevitable should the fish get the full strength of the current in its favour.

In fishing dry, practically trout methods should be employed save and except that such care need not be taken to avoid drag; and if a fish is risen and missed. the angler may go on casting with a fair hope of hooking him sooner or later.

The grayling at Hungerford run to a good size, although perhaps the largest specimens do not rise freely to fly. Six or eight fish from ¾lb. to 1¾lb. each may be looked upon as a fair day's work, while occasionally a fish of 2lbs. may be got hold of. Higher up the river, I was informed by a friend who was netting a private water above that they had taken in one draw of the net, 30 large grayling from 2½lbs. to 3lbs. apiece, but such have never fallen to the lot of the writer or any of his brother fly-fishers.

The sport is practically over for the day at 4 p.m., when a cup of tea at the "Bear," and a change out of waders into warm dry clothes will fill in the time until the fast up-train at 5.15 p.m., getting the grayling-fisher back to London by a minute or two before seven.

In conclusion a word is necessary about waders. In the trout section, it was recommended that the waders be occasionally turned down during the day; when grayling fishing, wear thick long stockings and knickerbockers under the waders, keeping a pair of dry trousers and stockings in which to travel home. *Don't move the wading stockings till you take them off.* The risk of chill is too great. Breast waders should never be worn for this work; they are unnecessary and dangerous. It should be remembered that frequently during winter grayling-fishing, the water is warmer than the air, therefore don't stand about on the banks, especially if there is any wind.

Some fishing can be done without waders, although knee-boots are necessary to keep the feet dry and are nearly as much trouble as waders.

CHAPTER XI.

November

Sea Fishing at Leigh.

FOR the late autumn sea angling I purpose describing a near-by resort, easily accessible to the metropolitan angler. This is Leigh, in Essex, a small fishing village at the mouth of the Thames in close proximity to the renowned Southend-on-Sea, whose shrimps and pickled cockles are the delight of the cheap tripper. The little old village is rather further up the estuary of the Thames than even Southend-on-Mud, as some wags describes the Essex watering-place. Here one cannot expect to capture the giant cod of the more southerly fishing stations, but one can always count on some sport amongst the flat fish. Flounders, plaice, and dabs are plentiful, while out in the fairway, by the Swatch Way Buoy, not only dabs but also codling and whiting are to be taken during the winter months. As every Londoner is aware, Leigh is the headquarters of the shrimp trawlers, or bawleys, as they are called. This latter term is evidently only a corruption of the word boiley or boiler, so called because they sort and boil their shrimps on board. On the other hand, the cockle gatherers boil their captures on shore, and along the west side of the village are to be seen their quaint boiling sheds. These are frequently nothing more than a roof built over the hull of an old bawley. The nature of one of these sheds is easily recognised by the gigantic pile of shells which adorn one side, thrown out after picking over and removing the cockles.

The Leigh cockle-gatherer alwas packs his produce in bulk, and Leigh pickled cockles, are, I believe, a well-known article of trade, particularly beloved of the thousands of trippers to Southend during the season, and most of them boiled and pickled and sent over daily to the Southend vendors. These shells are also not a waste product, but are used for cement making and other industries, while their most valuable application, namely, for crushing and spreading on garden paths is illustrated by the poet in those beautiful lines of our childhood :—

> Mary, Mary, so contrairy,
> How does your garden grow?
> With cockle shells and silver bells,
> And pretty maids all in a row.

Leigh and its inhabitants will well repay a visit, even without any attempt being made to fish, for it is a little bit of old England within an hour's hail of the capital. When we come to consider that it is without any definite water supply, save and except its wells—at which each morning one sees the population gathering with pails and frames for their daily supply—and that the inhabitants are mainly amphibious, and live by such pursuits as sand-heaving, lightering, shrimp-trawling, cockle-gathering, and the like, it is only to be expected that the artist, the photographer, and the student of out-of-the-way types of humanity will all find ample employment for hours, and even days. But it is of the sea-angling that I would specially write. From June to February the fishing at this station is good of its kind, although November, the month when the approach of winter begins to make itself felt, is undoubtedly the best time for flounders. Moreover flounder catching is a very excellent pastime, and from the nature of things is bound to yield more sport than many other forms of sea-rod fishing (such as, for instance, whiting or pout catching), and given a fair tide and wind, a moderate day's sport can always be relied on. The former factor, which does not absolutely need to be taken into

consideration at Deal, must here be specially noted, as about three hours before and after low-water it is impossible to get off, owing to the large expanse of mud-banks and the little water that remains in the gut or channel. The most favourable tides are the neaps, as then there is not so much ebb and flow, and hence the distance gone over by the boats in order to cover the fish is not so great. One of the secrets to my mind in success while fishing for these flat-fish, is to get well out to sea with the ebb, and come gradually in on the flood, because these fish especially have a habit of keeping in shallow water, gradually working up the creeks and over the mud banks with the advancing tide, after the shrimps, and dropping down again towards the open as the tide recedes. The question, then, of tide should be settled before any arrangements are made as to the day's fishing. If one finds on inquiry that the Southend times for high and low water are suitable, the same figures can practically be taken for this place. This reminds me that in my introductory remarks I have not said anything as to how to get at Leigh. Situated in Essex, it is, as I have said, within three miles of Southend, on the Tilbury and Southend line, and is easily reached from either St. Pancras or Fenchurch-street. From the latter station a third-class day return ticket may be had for half-a-crown. Of hotels there are several good, although I can only speak by personal experience on one, "The Ship." I dined there the last time I was down, and the landlord, who is the local agent of B.S.A.S. gives a tariff to the members. There is no difficulty in hiring boatmen, and capable and competent men can be got at a fair charge for boat and bait.

The baits in use at Leigh and Southend are lugworm, ragworm and shrimp, the latter either alive or boiled, and the tackle used varies from the paternoster to a sort of miniature trot line, armed with ten hooks.

For Leigh I am inclined to think that the best rig is witn two hooks above the lead and two below. Many anglers use all their hooks below, and state that this is the correct and natural method. This may be so, but

nevertheless I use two above and catch quite as many, if not more, above the lead as below. Probably those who catch their fish on hooks, all below the boom, bait mainly with lug. If this be so, I can perfectly understand that the sight of a lugworm struggling against the tide at a height of a foot or so would repel rather than attract any fish. But, on the other hand, what can look more natural than a shrimp struggling to get free from some entanglement a little off the bottom?

I therefore always bait my two hooks above with

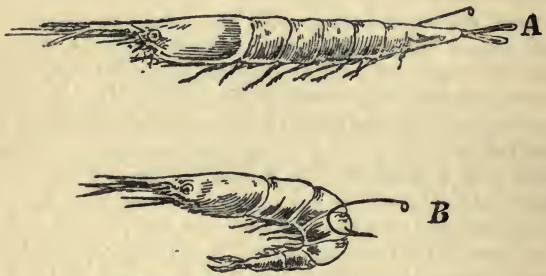


Fig. 35. Methods of Baiting Shrimp.
A. With the Live Shrimp.
B. With the Boiled Shrimp.

shrimp, which, if alive, should be hooked through the tail, and if dead, through the middle of the back. The usual method so frequently advocated of baiting with dead shrimp—to pass the hook through the body so that the head looks up the shank, and the point comes out under the tail—is, to my mind, unscientific, and apt to break up the bait; whereas by the method here shown the bait does not wash off with the tide, but lasts till a fish takes it. (See Fig. 35, B.)

There is little doubt that the live shrimp is more deadly than the boiled, and still less that the shrimp, whether alive or cooked, must be used whole and in no way peeled, the head being the most attractive portion for flounders. That the shrimp is a better bait than the lug

may be easily proved by anyone who cares to examine the stomachs of his captures. Of thirty-three fish—twenty-four flounders, five plaice, and four dabs—whose stomachs I cut open one evening, all save two dabs contained shrimp partially digested. Only a few of these were bait shrimp, as the great majority were uncooked, whereas those on the hooks were boiled.

The best size of hook for these baits differs, in my opinion according as one is using lug or shrimp. For the latter, either alive or dead, I prefer No. 4, while for lug I require No. 9, with a specially long shank, a hook sold by Peek and Son as "Mr. Minchin's pattern," after the well-known Deal sea angler. The reason of the long shank will, I think, require no explanation to those who have had to get lug-baited hooks from somewhere about the cardiac region of various flat fish, as, without the long lever of the shank, a hasty vivisection has to be undertaken.

And now a word or two as to the gut, which should be single, Lake Trout quality, above and below the lead. This is quite strong enough, as the average of the fish is not over 1lb., and a 2lb. fish is a great exception, though such are sometimes taken. In working the tackle, arranged and baited as suggested, it should be noted that the depth of water is but very little, hence only a gentle strike must be given, as the rod point is close on the lead, sometimes not more than 7ft. or 8ft away. The slightest touch must be struck, however, as otherwise the flat fish gorge down the bait, and may take one or two hooks when swimming up tide, and swallowing those below the ledger hook one by one. On several occasions when I have been out I have caught flounders which had wolfed a lug-baited hook below the boom, and then swam up and took the lowest shrimp above.

The lead used should be the lightest possible, except in the strong tideway of the Ray, as it is essential to get the tide to carry the bait well away from the boat, owing to the shallowness of the water. In flounder fishing the remarks made when speaking of cod in the next chapter apply even more strongly. If it is necessary to employ a

light rod and line in order to thoroughly enjoy the capture of heavy fish, how much more is this so when the average is only 1lb. apiece? Therefore a light, limber weapon, certainly not heavier than a light modern pike spinning rod is to be recommended. My own rod is a light Thames punt rod weighing six ounces.

In using this rig it will be often found that the presence of a fish on the tail hook is not known, save when one gives a slight draw, and this draw also will often cause an otherwise hesitating fish to seize one of the shrimps. The superiority of live shrimps over boiled, I am inclined to think, is threefold, viz., they are lively, darting and kicking; they are the colour the fish is accustomed to find shrimps to be; and, thirdly, they are of the right consistence, and crumple up on a bite taking place, while, at the same time, they last better on the hooks than do the cooked.

Dead and unboiled, I personally have never had any success with them, and think they are certainly useless for the Thames estuary.

During the past year or so the tackle used has still further been lightened, the line has been reduced to a No. 2 silk Nottingham line, and a Nottingham roach rod has been substituted for the pike rod with excellent results.

The reasons for the changes here enumerated are as follows:—

In the course of several seasons it has been gradually forced upon one that in clear, shallow water the simplest of fish must be, to a certain extent, scared by any complicated tackle being within sight, and that even the gut used might, with advantage, be lightened. Further, it was found that flounders so frequently took the hook very quietly and thus swam upstream, thus not giving any sensation of a bite until they had pulled the bait off, or had swallowed bait and hook both, By the reduction of the weight the least touch was transmitted to the rod point, and, if a light rod be used, to the hand of the angler. Thus a light lead necessitated a thin line; and a thin line required a light springy rod, which permitted of

lighter gut being used on the bottom tackle. The lead used in the run of tide was only enough to keep the baits dribbling along the bottom, so that the least pull would lift it, and thus be transmitted to the rod top. In deepish waters (from 10ft to 18ft.) this tackle worked admirably, and even in shallow water was not to be despised when the tide ran strong; in slack water, however, in the shallows, it required to be cast out and gradually worked towards the boat, so that the flounder following the moving bait might be induced to lay hold. Thus worked it certainly killed a fair number of fish, and hooked fish well if they were feeding freely. During last season, however, whether owing to climatic changes, or possibly arising out of the persistent fishing taking place, the flounders off Leigh and Southend, although feeding, seemed to be biting a little shyly.

During the last two visits I have seen three old hooks and portions of tackle taken from the mouths of flounders who have fallen a victim to self or companion's gear. Of course, we all know that sea fish, as a rule, are not shy; but even the boldest of created beings is inclined to learn wisdom by experience, and flounders are possibly, under modern conditions, to be considered under the headings of both sea and fresh-water fishes. Be that as it may, the fact remains that during the slacks last winter, in the shallows, more fish have been pricked than hooked with all paternoster and leger tackles. It will be noticed that the phrase "in the shallows" is used. In the writer's opinion, half the sport of flounder fishing arises from the fact that the fish may be taken in shallow water, and, indeed, seem to prefer such water. Thus, at Leigh, in the spring tides the best sport may be had on the flats inshore, from two hours before until two hours after high water, and during the neap tides two hours before to two hours after the low water may be profitably spent at the lower end of the Ray. During all this fishing there is no necessity to at any time fish in a greater depth than 12ft., and the majority of the time in about 4ft. to 6ft.

In such a depth during slack water, float-tackle has

been found very killing, especially if used with the live shrimp as bait. The rig-out may be briefly described as follows:—

1. A 10 foot three-piece Nottingham roach rod, the butt and middle joint of whole-cane, and the top of greenheart.

2. An easy-running 3¼-inch to 4-inch Nottingham winch, with adjustable check, and holding 50 yards of No. 2 square plait silk line rubbed down with a preparation of King's ceroleum.

Fig. 36. Nottingham Traveller Float.
A. Cap (if required.)
B. Rubber Band Stop.

3. A large Nottingham float which which may, in deep water, be used as a traveller; this should, for reasons which will appear later, carry a good amount of shot, or preferably a small bullet. (Fig. 36.)

4. About four feet of trout gut, looped at each end, and with a few shots or a small bullet at the lower end.

5. A crystal roach hook on ten inches of fine, undrawn gut, stained brown with permanganate of potash solution.

As has been said, the bait for this tackle is live shrimp, although boiled brown shrimp will often kill as well, especially if the tide is making.

Live shrimps can always be obtained by sending word to the shrimpers to keep some, and members of the British Sea Anglers' Society can get their wants supplied through the Society's agents at Leigh or Southend.

The best method of keeping shrimps alive is undoubtedly the courgé, or sand-eel basket, so well described by the late J. C. Wilcocks; of course, this is anchored off, or attached to, the stern of some boat till it is wanted for use. If such an appliance should not be handy, the best

receptacle is a wooden bucket in which they are put dry and kept alive by an occasional rinse through with sea water; they live much better in this way than in a bucket of sea water in which the oxygen is quickly exhausted, and which the dead shrimps soon foul. Sea water and a galvanized pail are fatal, as I found out very quickly. The bucket, also, should be placed out of the sun, as even a wintry sun beating down on the top layer of shrimps soon kills them.

And now, having prepared tackle and bait, the next step is to go and fish. Many people who go in for flounder fishing at the mouth of the Thames prefer to work from their own small boats; this is, I am inclined to think, a mistake, as for delicate fishing there is but little room to manipulate rod or landing net in a 14-foot boat. It is much better to make friends with one of the crew of a "bawley" (shrimp-trawler), and get him to allow you to fish off his boat as she lies at her anchorage on the flats, or in the Ray, according to whether the tides are neap or spring. The best plan of any so far to arrange is to time your visit to pick up a "bawley" coming in to her moorings, and, if not previously arranged for, see if they can let you have a pint or two of live shrimps. If they have had a good catch, and are not quite finished boiling, they will be pleased to do so for a few pence. If you don't worry them when they are packing up to get ashore, they will make no objection to your fishing off the trawler, where you get a steady platform and plenty of elbow room, besides which, the washing-down, done by the crew before leaving, ground-baits the vicinity, and certainly attracts the fish.

Entre nous, it may be said here that, before leaving, any mess made by the rodsmen should be cleaned up, and the free use of the mop and pail indulged in, else the privilege may not be renewed at a future date.

It is concluded, then, that the angler has arrived on board, with the rush of the tide slacking off, and the boat lying in about five feet to six feet of water. Now is the ideal time for the live shrimp. The first step is to plumb carefully, so that the bullet or shot may clear the bottom

by about nine inches or even ten inches, the length of the hook link. This plumbing is to be frequently done, as the tide is constantly altering. A medium-sized live shrimp is then taken and the roach hook is slipped through the second joint from the tail, literally from side to side. (Fig. 35 A.) This is important, as many recommend the end joint. It is found, however, from practical experience that the tug of the fish often, in the latter method of baiting, results in the loss of the shrimp, minus the tail, while the hook has never been inside the mouth.

If, on the other hand, the shrimp be hooked higher up, or more deeply through the body, the power of free movement is impaired and the bait is not nearly so attractive; in fact, a brown boiled shrimp is a much better bait than a half-dead fresh one, and a wholly-dead unboiled shrimp is, as has been said, useless.

In this fishing the float is dropped gently over the side, and the heavy bullet sinks the bait, which streams out downstream if the current is slight, darting from side to side; thus it is carried over the flounder, which rises at the bait and drops again, frequently just checking the float. Occasionally, but very occasionally, the fish follows the bait and grabs it, pulling the float right under, like a perch would do. In either case, unless the tide is dead slack, strike, or the bait will be abandoned or pulled off the hook. In most instances, if these directions have been followed, the flounder will be hooked just inside the lip, or in the soft palate, and give splendid sport, darting hither and thither uptide, and giving the light rod and tackle all they can stand. The largest fish the writer has landed this winter by this method weighed 1lb. 13oz. It afforded ten minutes' good sport, and certainly played harder than a 12lb. cod taken this autumn.

A great advantage of this fishing is that the crab nuisance is practically done away with, although some months ago, at the slack water, I took a crab with live shrimp. He pulled down the float slowly and steadily, but responded to the strike with a feeble shuffle.

That the float-fishing method of catching flounders is not new the writer is well aware, although up till three years ago hardly an angler at the Thames mouth had ever heard of such a thing. That it is deadly many now know, as several anglers have killed large bags by this method. On one occasion in 1899 the writer and a friend took over seven dozen sizable fish; and many others which would have been gladly retained as specimens by the "sportsmen" of Southend Pier were returned to their native element.

This season, four of us (two novices) with paternoster ledger and float tackle took thirteen dozen, one dozen over 1½lb. each.

And now a last word as to boating. In my opinion this place is unsafe for persons not knowing the peculiarities to go out unaccompanied, as the tide is frequently just awash on the flats, and sufficient depth is only obtainable in the gut, the only marks for which are single branches of trees stuck in the mudbank every hundred yards or so. If caught in the dusk with a rapidly-falling tide, unpleasantness or even danger would be bound to accrue. I asked one of the men, when we were returning one night, how he knew where we were. He said by the splash of the oar in the water, and that he kept near the steep bank so that if his oar went into deeper water he could tell the difference in the sound it made when striking the water.

Surely, while this is the case, and experts can only find their way with difficulty, amateurs should be very careful and take no risks. The moral is to take Leigh boatmen; they are good and trustworthy.

In conclusion, any angler intending to try Leigh, who has never been before, should write and tell one of the boatmen to prepare for him, mentioning what sort of bait he wants; or he should send word to Mr. Holmwood, the proprietor of the Ship Hotel, asking him to arrange. This is specially needful if the angler wishes to stay all night or for a day or two, as the accommodation is limited. Plenty of good bait both lug and shrimps, can be got, but notice must be given a day or two beforehand.

Pouting Fishing off "Our Wreck."

"Pouting Fishing." I can see the lip of the scornful curling up as he reads the words.

"Pouting! Stink-alives!! Any fool can get out in the summer and catch those." Quite so! but not in the winter, and, for all practical purposes, not the same fish.

As most of us are aware the Pouting (*Gadus luscus*) is also known round our coasts as Whiting Pout (South East Counties), Bib or Blind (Devon or Cornwall), Rachan (Wales), Blen (West Country), and other local names. It is frequently confused with the Power or Poor Cod (*Gadus minutus*), known locally to the East Coast men as the Bastard Pout. Between small specimens of Pouting and this little fish some confusion may arise, although the more tubby shape of the former at once distinguishes it to the practised eye. As the little Poor Cod rarely grows over five inches in length, it is not likely to be confused with the specimens which we are likely to catch off the wreck. "Our Wreck" lies off Deal, but I am not going to give the marks. Pouting marks are on the South Coast the inheritance of ages, and are handed down religiously from father to son or confided to the fisherman's *fides achates*, usually when under the influence of liquor.

Under other circumstances the directions given are not liable to err on the side of accuracy. As most are aware, special pitches for inshore fishing are found by means of "marks." Thus, suppose there is a good reef or patch of ground about abreast of a pier or building on shore, and some distance out; by taking certain objects on those as fixed points and their bearing on other fixed points in the background, exactly the same spot may be found time after time.

Thus let A represent a boat at anchor, B a church spire, C a factory chimney, D a chimney on a house, E a chimney on another behind. If the spire is in a line with the south border of the factory chimney the boat is in the direct line of the ground, and if she goes far

enough out so that the chimney D is in line with the chimney E, she is bound to be on the spot where the original bearings were taken from. This can be varied by putting in a third bearing; and, unless convenient, none of the marks need be absolutely abreast. The point aimed at is to get at least two sets of marks not less than an eighth of a circle apart, and where the two imaginary lines cut each other is the bearing sought for.

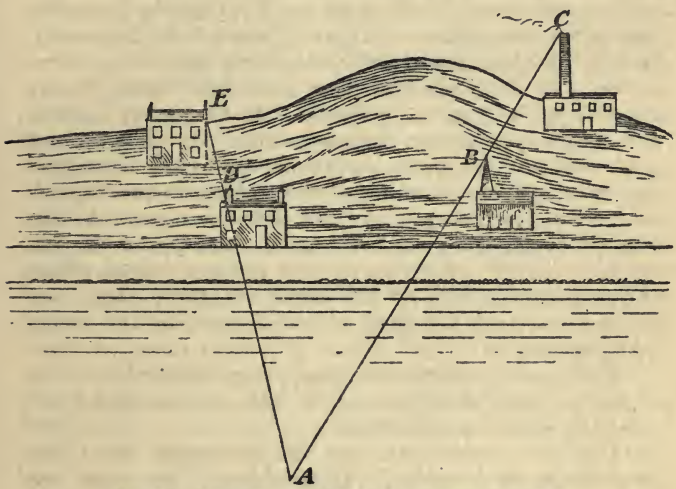


Fig. 37. Diagram, explaining the taking of marks.

In the light of this it was very amusing for the writer to hear of the directions given to an enthusiastic sea-angler by one of the boatmen, from whom be enquired the marks of this special wreck. "D'ye see them there three cows? Well, get them on the corner o' Deal Castle, and that there chary-bank (charabanc) on the flag-post o' the pier, and ye have it." Let's hope he "had it." Most of us thought the old chap had him.

Well, to get back to business, "Our Wreck" is a favourite ground with those of us who, when cod are

few and far between, get tired of the catching of interminable numbers of whiting. The "Wreck" is full of variety in more ways than one. Sometimes one gets on the wreck and is able to stay there; sometimes with wind against tide the boat slews about, and half the time the tackle is boat's-lengths away from the desired spot; sometimes one loses tackle, sometimes not; sometimes one gets good pouting, sometimes only the small ones put in an appearance; sometimes one gets only pouting, sometimes cod, conger, whiting and other oddments are taken; altogether a day's fishing on the wreck is a novelty and quite worth trying.

For the last year or two, probably owing to the blowing-up of the s.s. "Patria," in the close vicinity, the wreck has been a little out-of-court. This is, however, only a temporary inconvenience to the fisherman, and no doubt the remains of the sunken steamship will, in a very few years, prove another bit of broken sea-bottom which will turn out a good "mark" for the sea-angler. It will, however, always possess a melancholy interest locally, for two Deal boatmen, poor chaps, met their doom when the ill-fated vessel sank for the second and last time.

In fishing rough ground of the character which "Our Wreck" possesses, the writer has always found one form of tackle most successful, namely, a three-hook paternoster made up, not with booms, but with Jephcott's treble swivels. (Fig. 15). If booms are used they are apt to hitch and thus lead to the loss of the bottom tackle. The lead also should be made fast with a piece of old boot-lace, which does not chafe through, and breaks if by any chance the lead gets caught; of course the lead is lost, but the paternoster itself is saved Personally, I prefer for this fishing to make up my paternoster with single stout salmon-gut, but several excellent anglers—notably Mr. H. Edwards, who has fished this mark for years—always use twisted-gut on account of the off-chance of getting something very heavy. On the other hand light bottom-tackle allows of a lighter winch-line, and hence a light rod can be

used. This adds to the sport. On heavy rod and line, a 1lb. to 2lbs. pouting makes but little fight, whereas on the light tackle he struggles gamely. Other fish, cod or even conger, of course, may smash the tackle; but surely, at slack tide (the best time on "Our Wreck") it should be possible to kill such fish on single gut, if on on the same material salmon can be taken in the rapid rush of a Scotch river.

To give some idea of the kind of sport obtained wreck-fishing, a short record of two days at Deal may prove of interest.

One November day, the tide slacking at mid-day, three of us started off for "The Wreck" at 10.30 a.m. We got on our marks at eleven, and at once started fishing. We were all using three-hook paternosters, the writer fishing with single-gut, the others with twisted, small hooks being used on the top loops, and a good big Minchin cod pattern on the lowest. The top two were baited with sprat and the lowest with lug—good old perfumed lug, such as cod love. At once we started getting pouting, two and three at a time. This continued until the tide eased; in the dead water one of our party got into a cod, 8lbs., which was duly gaffed; almost immediately another hooked another good cod, 7lbs. Then one of us got a horse-mackerel when pulling up. Again the pouting started. Suddenly, just as I had hooked a small pouting, I had a drag at the rod top, and after playing him a little landed another 8lb. cod. Then one of my comrades got another fish, which gave good sport and which I gaffed. This, to our surprise, turned out to be a whiting, 3lbs. weight, one of the finest I have ever seen. The tide by this was again coming through, and we got four more cod, though none so big as we had already taken, and another three score of pouting, many of 1½lb. weight I hooked a small pouting, and left the line down a moment to see if another cod would take hold. Suddenly my line commenced to travel out; seizing the rod which I had laid down for a moment, I struck sharply and felt I was into something heavy. "Winch in, let go; winch

in, let go" was the order of the day for some time. Every inch I gained slowly and laboriously would be gone suddenly with a rush. By the sudden slackening of the line, which occurred every now and then, succeeded by another downward drag, I knew I was in a conger. After ten minutes I got him to the surface, and another five minutes got him within gaffing distance. A clever stroke from my veteran friend landed him in the boat and the game was won, 18½lbs. on single gut.

This practically closed the day's proceedings, as the bottom of the boat was pretty well covered with fish, and, as she was only a 14-footer, and there were three of us and the conger, we were a little cramped.

On getting ashore we totted up our catch:—7 score pouting, best 1¾lb.; 5 whiting, best 3lbs.; 2 horse-mackerel; 7 cod, best two 8lbs. each; one conger, 18½lbs.

We were ashore by 2.30 p.m., and had been just four hours and a half afloat.

This, I think, was my record day on this mark for weight and variety of fish.

Fishing here on another occasion with Mr. R. C. Clements, of "boom" fame, we had a record day among the pouting.

We slipped out to "Our Wreck," quietly determined to try and find the mark, but, owing to a slight and rather foolish mistake, we roamed about for an hour or more before we got the right spot. Once in position the fun soon commenced, and we pulled up pouting anyhow. We were keeping no fish under a 7in. standard, and had very few to return. Again at slack tide we got amongst the cod, Mr. Clements taking three and the writer two good fish, from 6lbs. to 9lbs. each. Owing to not getting on the ground at once much valuable time was lost, and, as during the second half of the time the tide ran against the wind and the boat kept sheering off the mark, we did not get nearly as many fish as otherwise we should have done. The ultimate result was that my boatmate got 61lbs. 4ozs. of fish, and my own catch was 55lbs., the difference being made up by his extra cod, which, curious to say, weighed exactly 6lbs. 4ozs.

One or two hints as regards this fishing may prove of interest:—

Always if possible get a good man who knows the marks.

Should you find out any new marks (and the writer has hit upon several), endeavour at once to get the bearings, fixing upon some natural feature rather than an artificial landmark which time may alter.

A strong endeavour should be made to get accurately upon the exact spot, proper allowance being made for anchoring, &c. If in charge of the boat always put a "nettle" on the anchor, as fouling is apt to occur amongst the debris at the bottom.

When playing pouting it is as well to give no slack line, as the little chaps have a wonderful facility for getting off after being hooked. If running short of bait, it should be borne in mind that the merest scrap will take pouting.

Lastly and not least, a word must be said as to the best method of disposing of the fish. Summer pouting I never touch, but good winter fish are a treat for the gods, *if eaten fresh*.

In summer, they are, as most of us know, tainted before they are dead almost. In winter, if cleaned at once, they will keep good in a cool larder for 24 hours or even longer. They will not, however, stand packing, and should on no account be sent as presents to friends. Whiting are very little better, while, of course, cod are all right.

If grilled or fried, I, and indeed probably most other people, will be found to prefer pouting to whiting, although Deal whiting fresh caught, split, and grilled are allowed by the majority of fish epicures to be a most delicate dish.

In the course of my narrative, I mentioned that we had caught a 3lb. whiting. We had it plain boiled like cod and ate it. It bore about the same relation to cod that boiled lettuce does to cabbage; that is to say, there was a family likeness, but the substance was softer and the flavour much more delicate. We also tried the horse-mackerel. It was beastly.

CHAPTER XII.

December

Sea Fishing at Deal.—November.

WHEN we have, within eighty-four miles of London, a fishing ground, where can be taken by rod and line congers of nearly 30lbs., cod of 20lbs., pollack of 13lbs., whiting of 2½lbs. and plaice of 3lbs.; it must be allowed that the stay-at-homes are well catered for.

Deal may be said to be the metropolis of marine angling, and from early spring right on through the winter months the sea rod is strongly in evidence. A quiet stroll on the pier in the month of August will show dozens of persons intent upon watching their rods on the lower platform, while the view of the pier end from a boat resembles nothing so much as a marine fretful porcupine, the quills being represented by the forest of projecting rods; at the same time, the boats out with rod fishers are seldom fewer than a dozen if the weather is at all favourable. The regular sport for which the place is renowned rarely starts before October, when the advent of the sprats into inshore waters brings quantities of large cod and whiting within easy reach of the beach. At no time during the year can Deal be said to be devoid of facilities for fishing; but in the early summer months the rodsman is practically dependent on the small codling, hatched probably in the spring of the previous year, and not exceeding more than ½lb. to ¾lb. in weight; the whiting pouts, whose habitat is pretty well localised to the rock patches south and north of the pier; and small whiting of about 7in. or 8in. in length. As the

autumn passes, the codling are taken from 2lbs. to 5lbs. in weight; these are from two and a half to three and a half years old. The whiting also increase in size, some being taken from 11ins. to 12ins. in length, while pollack of from 2lbs. to 4lbs. are frequently taken from the pier. If the water is clear a very good class of plaice is taken some seasons with the rod, running up to 3lbs. apiece. Should, however, the weather become stormy, these latter fish suddenly disappear, and frequently the season abruptly terminates in August. As regards codling, on the other hand, in favourable years many good fish, ranging from 3lbs. to over 6lbs., are during September taken on the lug-worm. When, however, the sprats come inshore about the beginning of November, the adult cod, whiting, and coalfish accompany them; and from then on—till the disappearance of the winter herring, about the end of January, when the cod betake themselves into the deeper water, preparatory to starting their spawning season—grand sport is obtained by the angler. One peculiarity of the fishing may be here pointed out, viz., that as a rule the autumn cod are all killed with lug-worm, whereas the winter fish usually fall victims to the seduction of "white bait," *i.e.*, a strip of sprat or herring. I have been catching fish rapidly on lug in the month of September, and, bait running short, have tried fish, but could not get a touch; whereas in the winter exactly contrary has been the case.

The winter months, then, are *par excellence* those in which sea angling may be enjoyed at Deal; and, any day that wind, tide, and weather permit, the rod fisher can count upon a day's sport with whiting averaging from ¾lb. to 1½lbs., with a cod or two, which may be any weight from 6lbs. to 20lbs. apiece.

Sea fishing may be indulged in either from a boat or from the pier, though I am bound to say that the lion's share of the sport falls to the boat fishers. It has been suggested either that sea fish even are learning wisdom by experience and avoid the pier, or else that not only do they find it impossible to steer their way clear be-

tween the innumerable multitude of lines that connect the pier platform with the sea bottom, but also that they are constantly being beaten about the back of the head with falling leads; for one or both of these reasons they give this vicinity a wide berth. Be this as it may, the boat will get three fish per head for one per head taken from the pier, though occasionally very fine examples are hooked from the latter. A rather unique specimen was captured from the lower platform by a boy hand-lining a year or two ago in the shape of a 5½lb. lobster.

Deal, owing to the difficulty of getting off, is only to be recommended if the wind be light or blowing from the S.S.W. to N.N.W., as the beach is very exposed, and anything over a gentle breeze from eastwards, especially E.N.E., brings in a heavy sea, and moreover drives the fish out to sea. Also, if a strong S.S.W. gale blow, though the wind be all right for embarking and landing, yet the water is so thickened that good sport cannot be counted on. It is therefore wise that all intending fishermen should be members of the B.S.A.S., as the agent, Mr. Edward Hanger, "The Napier," Beach-street, Deal, will be pleased to answer a prepaid telegram, giving information as to fishing prospects, to any member who may apply.

The Deal boatmen are legion, and good men can be got at either end of the town.

The boatmen's charges are, as a rule, moderate, the British Sea Angler's Society having a tariff with their own men. This sum includes the services of a man and bait, but occasionally the average supply of both has to be supplemented if the tides are unfavourable or the sea rough.

On the pier a charge of 3d. a day per rod is made, and bait can sometimes be obtained from the pier officials or from Mrs. Williams, locally known as the Baroness de Worms.

As I have previously said, the baits most in use at Deal are lugworm, and sprat or herring, though I have occasionally used mussel with fair success in times of

scarcity. Of the lugworms (*Arencola piscatorium*) there seem to be two varieties, one of which, distinguished by the thin tail portion being yellow, is esteemed much the better bait for cod than the other form. Other good baits for cod are the hermit crab or crab whelk, and better still the soft shell, peely, or shedder crab, which is merely the shore green-crab when changing its shell.

Now we come to the question of tackle, to me the most important portion of the whole matter, as upon it depends entirely whether sea-rod fishing shall be merely skull-dragging with a pole or a sport. Firstly, then, as to the rod, which, in my humble opinion, should be of very different lengths, according as to whether you are fishing from pier or boat. For the former from 9½ft. to 10ft. seems to me most suitable. while I cannot put up with a boat rod of over 8ft. I have before stated that a tendency exists to make sea rods too stiff. It is to be remarked that I have said "too stiff" and not "too stout," because I am anxious to emphasize the fact that stiffness is the objectionable quality. A certain amount of give-and-take must exist in every rod if light tackle is to be used, and, to my mind, light tackle is the only thing that lifts sea angling into the region of sport. To those who deny to it such a title I say, and say unhesitatingly," Try playing a November Deal cod, say, of 16lbs. weight, on line the thickness of snooding with a 2oz. lead and a salmon-gut ledger, and if you do not find the chief spice of sport, namely, uncertainty as to the ultimate result, present to a sufficient extent, I shall be much astonished." The slow, heavy, lifeless drag of the fish at the end of a few fathoms of window cord, with 2lbs. or 3lbs. of lead appended, is exchanged for heavy plunges and circlings, which make the rod bend and the fine line sing. One winds him in, and again perforce must give him line, till at length, after a stout resistance, he is brought alongside, the boatman sticks the "iff" or gaff, into him, and lifts him neatly into the boat.

My ideal rod has the butt and tops of lancewood, each

3ft. 7in. in length, giving, when put together with bottom button (Fig. 19), a total of 7ft. The butt and top are carefully whipped at intervals of an inch, and have a fitting of porcelain rings on each side with a two-sided winch fitting. The end guide is also adamite (a hard porcelain), fitted on the American principle. The rod is limber, and springs right down to the butt. With this rod, a light braided silk line (83½ gauge), and 1¼oz. of lead, the author, on November 28th, 1903, killed a conger weighing 18¼lbs. at Deal.

The leads used at Deal should run from 1oz. to 6½oz., the handiest being a 3oz., a 2oz,, and a 1½oz. These can be used either singly or in combination, to make 1½oz.,

Fig 38. The Deal Lead.

2oz., 3oz., 4½oz., 5oz., 6½oz., 8oz., 8½oz. and 9½oz., the last two only in exceptionally heavy tides. Personally, I use pear-shaped leads, (Fig. 39, 1 A) but some prefer other shapes, which they think are not so apt to be carried away by the run of tide. The Deal lead in which portions are removable is popular with many anglers (Fig. 38). The best forms of tackle to use at Deal for the capture of cod and whiting are undoubtedly the paternoster and the ledger ; or the two may be combined, either with or without booms. In heavy tides booms are useless and can well be omitted, but in slack water they serve to keep the bait away from the main line when it is running down.

The hooks should never be more than three in number, and for the bottom the best size is undoubtedly the No. 2/0 of either Minchin or Clements pattern, both of

which are long-shanked, slightly curbed, and strongly eyed. For the upper two hooks Minchin's whiting hook is most convenient. It is No. 10 new scale.

In Deal fishing the best system to pursue is to fish on the bottom when the tide is running, hence ledger; and off the bottom when the tide is slack, hence paternoster. Just, however, as the tide eases, or as it again begins to

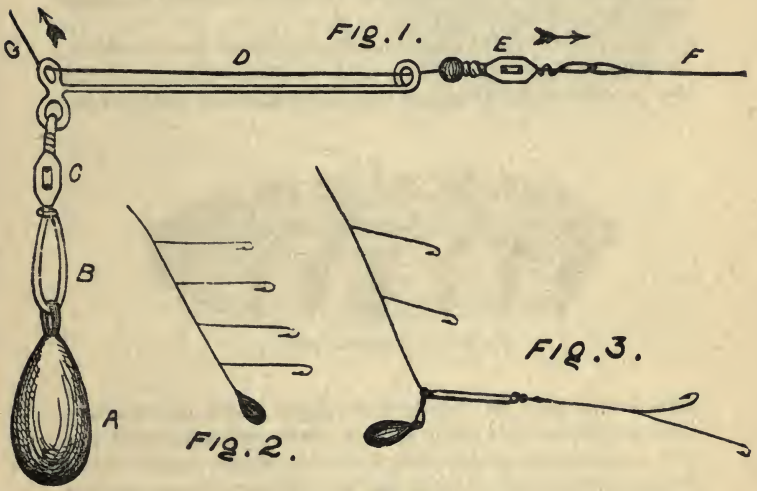


Fig. 39.

(1) Clement's Boom with Pear-shaped Lead.
(2) As Paternoster. (3) As combined Paternoster and Ledger.

draw gently through, the cod feed best; and then, I am of opinion, the best tackle is the Kentish-rig boom described in the chapter on tackle (Fig. 40). The paternoster should be made of plaited gut, not twisted, and the hook link for the lowest hook, which may well be 1½ft. to 2ft. long, should be of the same material. In the summer time the other hook links may be of single salmon gut; indeed, the author rarely uses anything else even during the winter, although it must be allowed that very light

hands are necessary, if one hooks a big fish. Many use the combined ledger and paternoster, which may have two hooks above and one below, or vice versa. (See Fig. 39.) The use of this outfit is perfectly simple; the appropriate rig is chosen, and the hooks are baited; if for summer, with lug-worm, if winter, lug and sprat, the lug being used on the bottom hook or hooks. If there is a check on the reel it is taken off, the edge of the reel held with the hand, and the weight and trace dropped overboard, and the line allowed to run out, the forefinger of the right hand skidding the edge of the reel. On striking bottom a distinct knock will be felt, upon which the check may be re-adjusted and the rod grasped just

Fig. 40. The Kentish Boom Rig.

above the reel in the left or right hand, according to which side of the boat the angler is fishing, the butt of the rod resting against the left hip. Here a pneumatic button will be found most useful to prevent over-pressure. (See Fig. 41.) The grasping hand should control the reel by pressing on the rim. On getting a bite (a sharp, double knock for a whiting and a slow draw for a cod), wind in any slack due to movement of boat, etc., and strike firmly, not hard, and steadily wind against the fish, being prepared to skid the edge of the reel if the fish be powerful and run off line. Never, if possible, permit slack line for an instant, as the flesh of these fish being tender the hook soon enlarges the wound, if in the mouth, and the hook works out. It is to be remembered that no more lead should be used than will keep the bait at the bottom, and it is as well that the lead should

move freely, as the bite of the fish must shift the position of the lead before the angler can possibly strike, and hence fish may leave the bait if the resistance of the lead is too great. Of course, the pull necessary to laterally displace a pendulum weight of, say, four or six ounces at the end of a cord of eight or ten fathoms, already borne in the same direction by the tide, is infinitesimal; but if the lead is too heavy and lies buried the case is much different. It is as well occasionally to lift the lead clear of the ground, say, three or four feet, and let it drop again; this clears the bottom hook if caught up in rough ground, and sometimes tempts a fish to run at the baits; a further advantage is that such a manœuvre often discovers the presence of a big cod, which has laid hold of the bottom bait and is lazily sucking it without giving any sign of his presence.

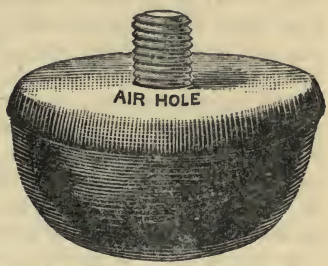


Fig. 41. Pneumatic Rod Button.

In order to illustrate this kind of sport enjoyed amongst the cod and whiting, the following extracts from note books may prove of interest.

In November, 1897, the British Sea Anglers held their competition late in the month, and I had the pleasure of fishing on one of the days with a gentleman who was judging. After the last of the competitors had gone off we decided that, as nothing more remained to be done till the return of the boats, we might as well go and do a little fishing ourselves. So, hailing our boatman and getting our things together, we launched about ten o'clock and hoisted sail.

The nice northerly breeze quickly took us to our ground north of the Brake Buoy, and, dropping anchor, we presented our baits to the fishes, sprat on the upper and lug on the lower hook. The tide was nearly slack,

and rapidly failing; nevertheless, the whiting bit freely, and we quickly commenced to fill our fish-tub. As is usual at Deal, each fisherman had a large hook near his lead baited with lug, on the look-out for cod, and as the ebb set in my boat companion hooked a fine fellow. Time and again did our angler wind up his fish, to be obliged to let him run ten or fifteen yards off the reel with a rush during his downward plunges. Five minutes brought our fish within reach of Bob's gaff, and a dexterous move tumbled him into the boat, where immediately the hook came away. He was in good condition, and weighed about 15lbs. After this our other fish, which were small, appeared smaller, and but little enthusiasm was shown when, on pulling up, an extra tug was felt and a fish of about 1½ft. in length was drawn close up to the boat and lost: there is little doubt, from the play and also from the brief glance one got of him, that he was a "Fordwich trout," as a sea-trout, bearing all the characters of these fish, was taken the week previously by one of the Deal amateurs, boat-fishing with sprat bait. (This fish is now in the special department of the Natural History Museum at South Kensington). The tide becoming stronger, the fish turned shy, while the breeze that brought us out was conspicuous by its absence; so getting to our oars we started for home, there to await the returning competitors. Our little take, in four hours, was eleven score of whiting, a few pout, seven dabs, and one cod of 15lbs.

Of the competitors' takes that day the following may be noted:— One cod 18½lbs. (on sprat bait), one cod 18lbs. (on soft crab bait), one cod 17lbs., and one conger 15lbs. Such sport may be enjoyed by any fair angler during the months of November and December, if the sprats are in and the weather is favourable. It may be said here that during the last few years magnificent sport has been had at Deal during the month of November with conger. The large congers seem to follow the whiting inshore, and specimens of from 14lbs. to 20lbs. are frequently taken.

In 1898 specimens of 18½lbs., 19½lbs., 21½lbs., and

26¾lbs. were taken ; while in the British Sea Anglers' Competition, 1899, the gold medal was taken by a gentleman with a conger of 29½lbs., and another competitor took one 24½lbs. The winner, Mr. W. T. Green, also took another fine fish 21½lbs. the same day.

As far as I am aware the 29½lbs. fish was up to last year the largest ever taken with rod and line in the United Kingdom.

During 1899 the record catch for Deal for one day was made by Mr. Litchfield and two friends. On December 10th, these three gentlemen and the boatman, all rod-fishing, in three-and-a-half hours took 237 fish, weighing 278½lbs. The catch was made up as follows :

21 cod and codling	121lbs.
2 congers (28½lbs. and 12½lbs.)	41lbs.
214 whiting and pouting	116lbs.
237 fish	278lbs.

The largest cod was about 14lbs., and the largest whiting was 3lbs.

I am informed that one of the anglers was quite unskilled in rod-fishing, and a number of fish were therefore missed which should have come to hand.

During 1900, the fishing has been good as regards whiting, but there has been a noticeable scarcity of cod, especially north of the pier in Pegwell Bay. A little sport has been obtained towards Walmer, very possibly on account of an eddy which gives slack water by St. Margarets, and a set in of the strong fairway current. The reasons why cod have not been at Deal are unknown, but various causes are alleged, such as the blasting on the wreck of the "Patria," the carbolic acid and other disinfectants in the drainage discharged into the sea in front of the town, and last, but not least, an ingenious theory that the absence is caused by the prevalence of south-westerly winds, which back up and retard the rate of progress of the great southerly current of cold water in which the cod mainly travels. Be this as it may, the fact remains that cod were scarce,

the best fish the writer landed being one of 17lbs., foul-hooked in the top of the head, and the best day was with a friend and the boatman all rod-fishing, when they took twenty-four codling up to 7½lbs. A short record may interest my readers:—

A day or two before Christmas, on a bright, still morning as the spring tides were beginning to weaken, we started off just about high water for Walmer Hole with a few sprats of yesterday's catching. We intended, however, as stale sprat is soft and not attractive, to get some fresh bait from the sprat drifters, which were gradually working down towards us as we rowed south. The first drifter we met was shaking out his nets minus any fish, a poor look-out for our fishing; the next had got about a score, and his temper, in consequence, not being of the best. we left him without further parley.

Finally we met a small boat working a shore net; the fisherman had got about a beef tin full, and half of these we purchased for sixpence. Equipped with fresh bait we rowed on with renewed energy, gradually discarding neck wrappers, coats, sweaters, &c., as the sun grew hotter and hotter and the sea more glassy, A quarter before twelve saw us at our destination close in shore, abreast of the bungalows beyond Walmer Castle, a fair row with a fore-sail mizzen punt against a spring tide. We dropped anchor, baited, and started to work at once although the tide was by no means done. Owing to the peculiar eddy referred to, the current, however, never runs so hard in this part of the bay as it does Ramsgate way. We therefore fished paternoster all the time, the writer using a linked wire pattern with Diamond booms which had proved most effective all season; the little swivel-head on the end of the boom permits the scraps of fish bait to revolve freely if put on with a half turn; this seems to be very attractive to the fish, and if the point of the rod be steadily raised in slack water, the twirl of the bait frequently tempts fish to bite, that otherwise would probably not take hold. As the tide had distinctly eased we did not use wire lines, although when fishing further out during the previous month my boatmate and I had found them

indispensable, as, when we could no longer hold the bottom with fifteen ounces of lead on an undressed pike line, the braided wire fished easily with three ounces. However, a silk line with 2½ ounces of lead did very well here and is certainly nicer to work with than the wire, which needs special pulley-tops and rollers along the rod and tends to spring off the reel unless carefully handled. We had not got our baits properly down and started to light a pipe, before my boatmate's reel commenced to sing, and in another moment he was into a fish; one or two digs at the rod top showed he was something better than a whiting. As soon as he came to the surface the net was under him and he was tumbled into the boat, first fish, a nice little cod of 5½lbs. It has always been a puzzle to the writer to know where a cod begins and a codling leaves off. Most sea-anglers, if other people catch such fish, call them codling; should they happen to fall to their own rods, they call them cod. The safest system seems to take the average of sexual maturity (3½lbs. to 5lbs), and then to call all over 5lbs. cod. My boatmate and I had arranged a little gamble per codfish before leaving, and this gave him first blood; while he was unhooking his fish, I felt a pull and struck into something better, which proved to be another cod of 7lbs. We then took each a few largepo uting, and then my rival got another two codling, increasing his lead by one. Meanwhile, Captain Doughty, of Walmer, the then local agent of the British Sea Anglers' Society, came out and anchored alongside us in his little 12 foot yawl. Just as he arrived I got a couple of whiting, and my friend another codling. The cod, however, would have nothing to say to the Captain's stale sprats, although he got hold of a few nice whiting. We, however, kept hooking codling, my boatmate getting another 7-pounder to match mine. By a quarter-past three the ebb tide came through, and fish left off biting; and as there was no wind we started to row back to Deal again over the tide. By the time we got half way darkness was setting in, and we required all our wraps, even when rowing, to keep out the cold. By a few minutes past four we were ashore and hauling

the boat up. Our total catch on fresh sprat bait was 24 codling, of which my friend took ten, the writer seven, and the boatman seven, and seven score of fine whiting and large pouting, altogether a fair day for so late in the year in a very disappointing season.

I took the best two cod away to the North of England, where I spent Christmas; and they were very acceptable, fish being very scarce everywhere owing to the gales. I am told that the same day at Billingsgate 15/- was paid for an 11lb. codfish, and that 2/6 a pound was offered in vain for fresh turbot. The crews of the fishing boats, weatherbound by the storm of the preceding week, preferred, no doubt, to spend their Christmas ashore, like the rest of us all.

In 1901 and 1902 the scarcity of cod was even more marked than it had been in 1900. This winter (1903), however, seems to be better in this respect. Quite a number of large codfish have been taken in the Downs, up to 35lbs. in weight each, while one angler, on November 28th, had nine cod, weighing 67lbs., fishing close inshore off Sandown Castle.

And now my task is ended. The year of angling has gone by, and a number of different methods of rod-fishing have been dealt with to a certain extent. There may be nothing strikingly novel in the methods advocated, but they have borne the test of personal experience, and have, in no instance, been advocated merely on the authority of some other angler. They may be faulty, but they certainly catch fish, and that in a sportsmanlike way.

That my readers may take as much pleasure in reading these scrappy chapters as the writer has had in putting them together is the farewell wish of their fellow-angler, the Author.

TIGHT LINES.

R. W. Simpson & Co., Ltd., Printers, Richmond and London.

JOHN COOPER & SONS,

SPECIALISTS IN

FISH MOUNTING,

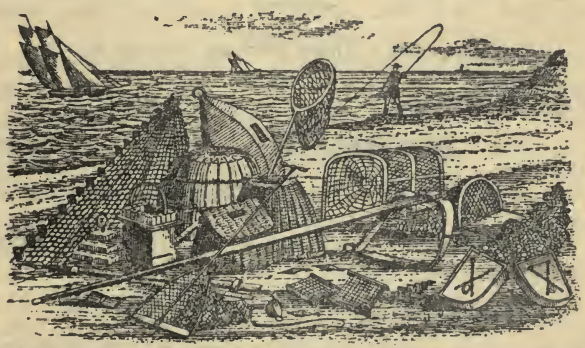
28, RADNOR STREET,

ST. LUKE'S, LONDON, E.C.

AWARDED FIVE GOLD AND SILVER MEDALS.

PRICE LISTS FREE

Highest Awards. Est. 1770.



15 Gold Medals and Special Awards.

WILLIAM HEARDER (Hearder & Son)

195 UNION STREET, PLYMOUTH.

SPECIALIST IN MOUNTED LINES AND BAITS. "Devon" Minnows "Squash" Devon, "Plano Convex" Baits. TROUT AND SALMON FLIES for all Parts. Sea Tackle, Sand Eels and Spinners. Otter or Beamless Trawls, Trammels Seines, &c.

ILLUSTRATED GUIDE TO FISHING GRATIS.

BY APPOINTMENT TO THE ADMIRALTY.

INFORMATION ON FISHING IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD.

W. R. RUSSELL & Co's. LIST.

Saxon's "Everybody's Series."

A LIBRARY of 40 BOOKS for ONE SOVEREIGN.

SHOULD BE IN EVERY HOME.

Entertaining, Instructive, Educational, and Technical.

CLOTH, 6d. LEATHER, 1s.

1. **Everybody's Pocket Cyclopædia.**
2. **Everybody's Book of Jokes.**
3. **Everybody's Scrap Book of Curious Facts.**
4. **Everybody's Book of Short Poems.**
5. **Everybody's Book of Correct Conduct.**
6. **Everybody's Guide to Music.**
7. **Everybody's Letter Writer.**
8. **Everybody's Acting Charades.**
9. **Do you know it? If not you Should.**
10. **Everybody's Guide to Gardening.**
11. **Everybody's Book of Proverbs.**
12. **Everybody's Book of Outdoor Games.**
13. **Everybody's Book of Indoor Games.**
14. **Everybody's Book of Irish Wit and Humour.**
15. **Everybody's Book of English Wit and Humour.**
16. **Everybody's Book of Scotch Wit and Humour.**
17. **Everybody's Book of Epitaphs.**
18. **Everybody's Cookery and Household Guide.**
19. **Everybody's Pocket Lawyer.**
20. **Everybody's Book of Riddles.**
21. **Everybody's Book of Recitations.**
22. **Everybody's Book of Confessions.**
23. **Everybody's Guide to Poultry Keeping.**
24. **Everybody's Guide to Chess and Draughts.**
25. **Everybody's Cycling Law.**
26. **Everybody's English Song Book with Melodies.**
27. **Everybody's Medical Guide.**
28. **Everybody's Guide to Public Speaking.**
29. **Everybody's Guide to Photography.**
30. **Everybody's Guide to Ball-Room Dancing.**
31. **Everybody's Guide to the Violin.**
32. **Everybody's Guide to Conjuring.**
33. **Everybody's Book of Parlour Games.**
34. **Everybody's Book of Anecdotes and Gleanings.**
35. **Everybody's Guide to Carpentry and the Doing-up of the House.**
36. **Everybodys' Pocket Gazetteer of the World.**
37. **Everybody's Ready Reckoner.**
38. **Everybody's Book of the Dog.**
39. **Everybody's Book on Angling.**
40. **Everybody's Book on Training and Health Development.**

LONDON: W. R. RUSSELL & Co., LTD.

JUST PUBLISHED.

Handsomely Bound in Cloth Boards.

PRICE 6S.

The Black Rock of Trenwith.

BY

R. H. STARR.

A Cornish Story of Exceptional Interest.

The scene is laid on the Cornish Coast . . . . . exciting record of struggle between the forces of Man and those of Nature. . . . . *Morning Leader.*

W. R. RUSSELL & Co., Ltd., Paternoster Row, E.C.

C. FARLOW & Co., Ltd.,

Manufacturers of all kinds of Tackle, etc. for all parts of the World.

191 STRAND, LONDON, W.C.

THE "NORFOLK" PIKE SPINNING OR TROLLING ROD.

The butt and joint are East India cane, the tops are greenheart and of different lengths.

Cork grip, universal winch fittings, snake rings, pronged guard butt ring with inner revolving ring of phosphor bronze, similar revolving head rings, straight metal suction joints double brazed. Division bag.

They are made in the following lengths, viz.:—10 ft. 6 in., 11 ft., 11 ft. 6 in., and 12 ft.

PRICE, WITH DIVISION BAG AND RUBBER BUTTON, **32**s. **6**d.

We call special attention to this rod as being a really good serviceable one which we can strongly recommend.

PRICE LISTS GRATIS AND POST FREE.

C. FARLOW & Co., Ltd.,
191 Strand, LONDON, W.C.

TELEGRAMS:
"GREENHEART LONDON."

TELEPHONE:
No. 2620, "GERRARD."

REDUCED FROM THE HEADING OF THE PAPER.

ESTABLISHED 1877.

A JOURNAL FOR ANGLERS

EDITED BY R. B. MARSTON.

"Under the editorship of Mr. R. B. Marston the *Gazette* has attained a high standing."—*Daily News.*

"An excellent paper."—*The World.*

PUBLISHED WEEKLY, PRICE 2d.

Inland Subscription, 10s. 6d. per Annum.

The "Fishing Gazette" contains every week Original Articles, Reports, &c., often Illustrated, on Salmon, Trout, and General Fishing Reports from the principal Rivers, and Correspondence.

THE "FISHING GAZETTE" contains the latest

ADVERTISEMENTS of the leading Fishing Tackle Houses, Angler's Hotels, Waterproof Makers, Fish Culturists, &c., &c.

London: St. Dunstan's House, Fetter Lane, Fleet Street.

Can be obtained through all Bookstalls and Newsagents.